

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
JOINT MEETING
MAY 10, 2012

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Joint Meeting on Thursday, May 10, 2012, in the Board Room, in the Township Building in King of Prussia. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by a pledge to the flag.

VICE CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS:

Vice Chairperson Waks commented on executive sessions held on Thursday, May 3 and on Tuesday, May 8, 2012 to discuss personnel matters and a brief executive session prior to this joint meeting to discuss a legal matter. He also announced a number of township meetings and events.

DISCUSSIONS:

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Bill Jenaway, Greg Waks, and Carole Kenney. Also present were: Ron Wagenmann, Township Manager; Rob Loeper, Township Planner; Judy Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Robert Krutsick, Chairperson, Planning Commission; Jaquelin Camp, Planning Commission; Justin Friend, Administrative Intern. Supervisor Spott was absent and Supervisor Philips arrived late.

PLANNING COMMISSION:

Mr. Robert Krutsick, Chairperson, reported, in 2011, the Planning Commission held 17 meetings, representing 7 more meetings than were held in 2010. Although Upper Merion development activity in 2011 was at a slow pace because of the national economy, there were some significant projects proposed during the year including the Target development at the Valley Forge Shopping Center and the Wawa/Chick-fil-A development directly across Route 202. Both projects have had important considerations in terms of review because of traffic and pedestrian issues. In the case of the Target development, the developer made significant accommodations, in response to issues raised by the Board of Supervisors, in order to move the project forward. The Planning Commission also reviewed the following projects:

- Next Door Bar and Grill project currently underway and located to the rear of Wegman's.
- Construction of a commercial laundromat and renovations to a former restaurant as an office building at the Village Mart.

Other activities of the Planning Commission during 2011 include:

- received updates on the progress of the Business Improvement District
- continued update of township zoning ordinances
 - Single Family Attached and Single Family Detached reviewed in February and recommendations submitted to Board of Supervisors
 - Reviewed Multi Family Residential District
 - Reviewed digital signs
 - Reviewed Residential Office District
- Montgomery County Planning Commission made a presentation on several model ordinances during the month of May dealing with residential design and portability with open space, environmental issues, landscaping and mixed use and they also reviewed several alternatives for alternative energy.
- In June, focus was on steep slopes, development plans and zoning administration.
- Planning Commission unanimously recommended two additional members be added to the Zoning Hearing Board.
- reviewed outdoor lighting, noise ordinance
- Reviewed Unit Residential District, High Rise District, Small Suburban Metropolitan, Administrative Research District
- Reviewed minor projects
- Throughout the year continued focus on Business Improvement District with various meetings and workshops.

Ms. Camp commented on her first year experience as part of the planning process.

Mr. McKee stated it has been a real benefit having two new members, both architects, to join the planning commission. He said their experience will be particularly helpful as the commission reviews design standards and continues the ongoing ordinance updates.

In order to move forward on the ordinance updates, Mr. Loeper stated a system has been worked out whereby weekly meetings are held with the Township Solicitor's associates, the Zoning Officer, Township Planner and Associate Planner. At the last meeting, the Township Solicitor's office provided revisions to the outdoor lighting ordinance to which the planning staff made a few changes.

Mr. Loeper reported next week will be the final meeting with the Business Improvement District (BID) land use committee and its consultants at which time it is hoped to obtain draft recommendations which deal primarily with non-residential districts and focus on the business district on the Route 202 corridor.

Mr. Loeper indicated there are several districts ready to move forward

pending comment and decisions by the Board of Supervisors. He gave the example of a new district replacing the Agricultural District. Planning staff is coordinating with the Solicitor's office; some decisions need to be made because of certain parcels currently in the Agricultural District.

Mr. Loeper stated the finishing touches are being made on small scale renewable energy regulations addressing sustainability issues. He said the Planning Commission echoes the same comments and concerns expressed by the supervisors concerning quality developments, sustainability, and different forms of transportation.

Mr. Waks stated this Board of Supervisors has worked hard to get the Township Solicitor involved in discussions related to planning and development issues "sooner rather than later." He pointed out one particular advantage of his expertise on these issues is a way to mitigate future litigation.

Mr. Waks also indicated this Board heavily emphasized the importance of installing sidewalks along Route 202 and thanked the Planning Commission for its involvement in raising this issue with Target as well as matters involving the Target/Wawa/Chick-fil-A.

As Board of Supervisors liaison to the Planning Commission, Mr. Jenaway commented on the focus this commission has provided in bringing the livability issues to the forefront such as sustainability which will help build the future for the next generation. He also concurred with the Township Solicitor's role in assisting with the planning process and providing a fresh perspective on all of the zoning issues.

Mrs. Kenney asked if alternate energy zoning ordinances would be grandfathered in for homes already equipped with geothermal or solar energy and, secondly, would proposed ordinances affect existing alternate energy. Mr. Loeper responded it was his understanding something already in place would be grandfathered unless changes were made. He explained the goal is to find reasonable standards and protections, and not just encouraging people to look at alternative energy, but making sure what they do would not negatively impact a neighbor. Mr. Loeper commented on small scale wind energy and said the technology is moving along so fast, and while a year ago some who may have had doubts, now believe it is probably worth looking at.

Mrs. Kenney commented while she is not aware of anyone who has a wind turbine in the township, there are a number of solar and geothermal houses.

Mrs. Kenney noted the school board and township held a joint meeting last week. One of the discussions focused on the possibility of students walking and riding their bikes to school more frequently and the need for more continuous sidewalks. As was done in providing sidewalks as part of the Target development, Mrs. Kenney emphasized future developments should be reviewed

with a view toward providing a more continuous sidewalk system.

Mr. Loeper commented coincidentally he received a phone call from a property manager on First Avenue with over 700 people on their campus. The caller mentioned this business campus has some areas with trails and other places with sidewalks. The caller asked about changing the trails to sidewalks so they could provide better pedestrian connectivity between their buildings. Mr. Loeper noted there is a trend in corporate developments to acknowledge such considerations.

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES BOARD

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Bill Jenaway, Greg Waks, Carole Kenney, and Greg Philips. Also present were: Ron Wagenmann, Township Manager; Judy Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Bill Daywalt, Deputy Fire Marshal; Pam Forster, Chairperson; Jim Gallagher, King of Prussia Fire Company; Chris Camarda, Swedeland Fire Company; William L. Gittins, Secretary; Charles Rossi. Supervisor Spott was absent.

Ms. Forster discussed the major 2011 accomplishments:

- manage the fire apparatus acquisition fund purchase plan. A working five year capital plan is being developed in conjunction with a twenty year replacement schedule.
- completed the implementation of the Fire and EMS computerization of all vehicles as well as the Fire Marshal's vehicle.
- continuing to look at the standardization of Standard Operating Guidelines for the three fire companies and ambulance with township policy.
- reviewed the strategic plan for adoption in conjunction with accreditation.
- Developed criteria for volunteer pension plan which the Board of Supervisors adopted in 2010.
- fire companies united last year to represent Upper Merion Township at the State Firemen's Parade. Highlights include:
 - First Place award for Best Appearing Marching Fire Department. The three fire companies came together and marched in uniform as a group.
 - Four individuals from Upper Merion Township Fire and

Rescue Services received scholarships through the State Firemen's Association.

Ms. Forster outlined the 2012 objectives:

- update the strategic plan for adoption for presentation to the Board of Supervisors.
- pursue international accreditation for all four agencies. Currently King of Prussia Fire Company is the only agency that has international accreditation.
- maintain working five-year capital plan in conjunction with the 20-year replacement schedule to manage the fire apparatus acquisition fund.
- continue reviewing Standard Operating Guidelines
- participate with all four agencies in the State Firemen's Convention to be held in Norristown.

Ms. Forster reported the 2011 response data for the entire emergency contingent totaled over 4,000 calls as compared with 4,082 calls in 2010.

Other activity highlights include:

- state and county regulations require more mandatory specialized and skill based training.
- Community public relations as well as providing emergency medical, fire and police services at community events.
- Outreach at Upper Merion Area District schools.
- Community/business partnership providing Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training.
- Fundraising for all four agencies since allocation from township does not cover operating expenses 100%.
- Required attendance at local, county and state meetings
- Miscellaneous administrative tasks.

Ms. Forster noted volunteers save Upper Merion taxpayers approximately \$8.8 million in tax dollars and have a huge impact on the township.

Mr. Waks noted the \$8.8 million per year in savings for taxpayers amounts to hundreds of dollars savings per household per year because of volunteer services. He emphasized more importantly are the lives saved because of the emergency fire and rescue services in Upper Merion Township.

Mr. Jenaway outlined several shared regional resources and services, such as:

- his service along with Jim Gallagher on the county's incident support team supporting other fire chiefs with logistics and planning.
- regional response task force
- regional rescue task force consisting of Norristown, Lower Merion, and Upper Merion

Mr. Jenaway commented on an issue mentioned at the planning commission about alternative energy sources and particular hazards to be concerned about such as with solar power. As more people look to install solar power, there is a need to understand these devices cannot be stopped from being energized. He explained in time of an emergency while electric power can be shut off, solar power cannot be cut; and as a result, creates challenges for fire and rescue services. Mr. Jenaway emphasized the importance of understanding the pros and challenges coming with this particular type of device.

With regard to revision to the strategic plan, Mr. Jenaway stated if the supervisors have any specific comments, to pass them on to him or Ms. Forster.

Mr. Jenaway discussed his presentation at the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS).

Mr. Jenaway pointed out the contribution from the Board of Supervisors as well as the state's 2% foreign fire and insurance tax does not completely fund the fire and rescue system. As a result, there will be challenges going forward in always needing to have a fundraising component; and at some point in time, there will have to be a serious look at the comprehensive funding system for fire and EMS services. Modifications to the Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement program will pose additional challenges to the EMS funding model.

Mrs. Kenney reminded the group of the upcoming Tricentennial celebration and expressed the hope another parade in the fall of 2013 can be arranged.

Mr. Waks asked how residents could make a contribution to the fire and emergency services. Ms. Forster responded all agencies have a mailer subscription fund drive every year which brings in about one third of their operating expenses. Residents are welcome to stop by one of the stations with their donations. For businesses, it would be appreciated if they would be willing to offer volunteers discounted services. Also partnerships have been formed with businesses to promote local businesses as well as volunteerism.

Mr. Jenaway reported last month a representative of the fire service went to the high school's volunteer fair, and 19 high school students signed up to become members of Upper Merion Township Fire and Rescue Service. On May

29, at the King of Prussia Fire House on Allendale Road there will be a meeting of high school students who are interested in joining the volunteer service.

Ms. Forster stated during the summer Bill Daywalt conducts a fire camp for young people 10 years to 17 years of age during which they tour all four agencies and learn about specific firefighter and EMS services. They are also taught basic first aid and CPR.

Mr. Waks asked for information on registration for the summer camp. Mr. Daywalt responded registration is handled through the Park and Recreation Department.

Mrs. Kenney asked about the age requirements for volunteers. Mr. Jenaway responded the minimum is 15 years of age for fire service and 16 years of age for EMS. There is no upper age limit as a job can always be found for someone willing to volunteer.

Mr. Philips called attention to a scholarship program offered by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce to incentivize young people to either get involved or remain involved with fire and EMS services.

TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Bill Jenaway, Greg Waks, Carole Kenney, and Greg Philips. Also present were: Ron Wagenmann, Township Manager and Executive Secretary; Judy Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Justin Friend, Administrative Intern; Tad Hershey, Treasurer, Transportation Authority; Mike Santillo, Chairman, Transportation Authority. Supervisor Spott was absent.

In his capacity as Executive Secretary of the Transportation Authority, Mr. Ron Wagenmann provided an update of transportation projects. He outlined the main projects the Authority is involved with as follows:

- US 422 River Crossing Complex (4 projects)
- North Gulph Widening
- I-76 West ramps/Henderson Road Widening/South Gulph Road Widening (4 phases), including the widening of Henderson Road and also a portion of the widening of South Gulph Road
- Church Road Bridge over SEPTA Route 100 Line - This is a project which has been ongoing since it was ordered by the PUC almost 40 years ago.
- Upper South Gulph Road Widening

Some future projects:

- PA-23 Trout Creek Bridge Replacement
- DeKalb Pike, Henderson, Prince Frederick - these are some

improvements to be occurring as a result of the recently approved Target/Wawa/Chick-fil-A.

- Village at Valley Forge Road - some improvements have been completed and others will be going into their second phase.

1. Overall River Crossing Complex Project

- a. Project 1 - US 422/PA 363 Interchange Improvements Project (PennDOT)
- b. Project 2 - US 422 Schuylkill River Bridges Widening and PA 23 Interchange
- c. Project 3 - Old Betzwood Multi-Use Trail Bridge. (local stakeholders with PennDOT funding) - replaces the "Singing Bridge" - It will not be a vehicle bridge, but a bicycle/pedestrian bridge.
- d. Project 4 - North Gulph Road Relocation - this project can only occur if project #2 occurs because the Route 23 exit ramp eastbound has to be relocated in order for North Gulph to occur the way it is proposed.

With regard to the Trooper Road portion, it will become a full directional interchange. It is currently limited as you can get off westbound and get on eastbound; and as a result, there is a lot of traffic coming over to Upper Merion and then backtrack. Once the project is completed traffic congestion in Upper Merion will be eased as well as the traffic loading on the Betzwood Bridge. Project is in final design and will likely go to bid late this year with construction in 2013 (one construction season).

The bicycle/pedestrian bridge will extend across the river and obtain a new superstructure. The trail will be constructed along the entire portion and will tie into the East River Trail.

Project 2 involves a widening of the US 422 corridor from Trooper Road to PA 23. Upon completion there will ultimately be two new four-lane bridges. The new bridge will be constructed first downstream and traffic will be relocated to that location. The current bridge will be demolished and then rebuilt.

The projects to go to construction by the end of the year are Trooper Road and the Bicycle/Pedestrian bridge. There will be a two-year construction schedule (2013 and 2014). North Gulph Road is in design, but there is no estimate on when it will go to construction. Mr. Wagenmann pointed out this is 100% federal funded if completed in a short time frame.

The township is in the process of designing the Heuser Park trail from Heuser Park to Route 422 and connect with another trail. This is under design and construction is anticipated late this year.

2. The I-76 West ramps Henderson Road Widening South Gulph Road Widening Project (4 phases)

Phase 1 - I-76 West ramps Henderson Road - completed 2011

Phase 2 - South Henderson Road - North Half - went out to bid and contract awarded to Glasgow. Peco to start relocating poles on Henderson Road mid-May and Glasgow can start construction within about 45-60 days.

Phase 3 - South Henderson Road Widening - Some preliminary engineering completed; however no construction money.

Phase 4 - South Gulph Widening is pending a traffic study upon completion of Balligomingo project in order to get accurate counts and assess traffic situation on South Gulph Road. There will be a sidewalk installed on the west side of Henderson Road along the entire length of the project.

3. Church Road Bridge over SEPTA is a joint project by Upper Merion Transportation Authority, PennDOT, Montgomery County and FHWA. This bridge is being funded 95% with 80% of the funds coming from the federal government, 15% from the state government and a 5% local match which Upper Merion is splitting with Montgomery County. Montgomery County is contributing 3% and Upper Merion contributing 2% on this project. It is currently in final design, but has experienced another delay because PennDOT wants entire wing wall sections and retaining walls completed. There will be an amendment to the design contract for the additional work and cost. Detour to be established.
4. Upper South Gulph Road Widening project going into final design. Project limits from Church Road to Long Road. On Church Road, there will be improvements made to the very west end of Church Road at South Gulph so there will be a left and right turn lane for Church Road to turn out onto South Gulph Road. There will be improvements made for this section of South Gulph Road to better delineate and mark the left turn slots for Church Road itself.

A question was asked if there will be a signal at Church Road. Mr. Wagenmann responded most likely there will be, but this will not be known until final design when the engineer does traffic counts and runs the models. Federal warrants must be met for a signal, but it will be part of the study to determine if there is sufficient traffic.

Mr. Wagenmann pointed out, when completed, there will be two exiting lanes on Brooks Road and he explained other aspects of the design to improve capacity through this intersection.

The right of way has been obtained from the cemetery to widen South Gulph Road through past Brooks Road and up the hill toward Long Road where it will then narrow back down. By bringing the two lanes through the intersection, dual left turn movements can be made off of Brooks onto South Gulph and then

merge coming up the hill toward Long Road. Going the other way, there will be two lanes from Long Road down to Brooks providing a thru lane and a right turn lane.

A question was asked why South Gulph would have to be narrowed [going up the hill toward Long Road]. Mr. Wagenmann responded it was not possible to get the necessary grading. It was agreed with the residents not to move the curb horizontally. It will move vertically when cutting a hump out of a portion of the road to improve the sight lines on South Gulph Road; however, the curb line where it is located as far as distances from homes will stay where it is. The residents will have new curbs and new sidewalks. Adjustments will have to be made to driveways for some of the properties where cuts and fills take place. This project is in final design. Temporary construction easements must be obtained from the homeowners, and it is anticipated to get this project out to bid late this year for construction in 2013.

5. PA 23 Trout Creek Bridge Replacement - future project on the 12-year plan. Transportation Authority authorized Preliminary Engineering of this project so that it will be "shovel ready" when funding is available. Estimated cost of this project is \$10 million.

Other Projects:

Mr. Wagenmann discussed the Target development in the Valley Forge Shopping Center as well as the Wawa and Chick-fil-A development plan across Route 202. He explained various improvements will be made for vehicular and pedestrian access.

The next project discussed was Realen Valley Forge. Mr. Wagenmann detailed the significant amount road work done during the first phase.

Mr. Wagenmann noted, since the establishment of the Transportation Authority over 26 years ago, Upper Merion Township and the Authority have been involved in 118 projects totaling \$1.2 billion. He reviewed in detail several completed projects and improvements to the traffic signals, roadways, sidewalks and bicycle and pedestrian trails.

Mr. Waks asked for an update as to the traffic counts on the number of vehicles using the Henderson Road on and off ramps. Mr. Wagenmann responded these counts are not available as yet. PennDOT requires a study because of the Rhythm signal system. This will be made available to the supervisors when completed. Mr. Wagenmann cautioned when the study is conducted the Rhythm system will have to be turned off in order to get a baseline to ascertain the improvement the system provides.

Mrs. Kenney asked if the signal at Balligomingo Road is temporary and if the timing can be changed. Mr. Wagenmann responded it is a temporary signal required by PennDOT as a part of the official detour for the Balligomingo/River Road project. The timing issue has been reported and looked at, and Mr.

Wagenmann will ask PennDOT to take another look to see if the equipment is operating the way it should.

Mrs. Kenney referred to the Secretary of Transportation's comments at the PSATS conference during which he discussed standardizing specifications for some or all bridges to be 48 feet wide so prefab steel beams could be used. She asked if such standardization would impact the cost of the Trout Run Bridge, "singing bridge" or any future bridges that were discussed. Mr. Wagenmann responded the "singing bridge" is too far along and will be a design build for the River Crossing portion. Abutments are not changing for the two existing bridges to receive new superstructures, and beam lengths have already been predetermined by what they are now. They just have to be replaced. With regard to the Trout Run Bridge on Route 23, it might be possible, but he suspects it will be longer than a 45 foot bridge because it is crossing the road, and the stream on a skewed, curved angle. Mr. Wagenmann said where it will help and what the Secretary said is it could expedite the construction of bridges and you could do a design build and lower the cost and speed up the process. Mr. Wagenmann indicated it will not work on the Allendale Road bridge because the abutments are not changing and the superstructure is just being replaced. As an aside, Mr. Wagenmann discussed the detour while the Allendale Road bridge is under construction. He indicated it was discussed to keep the two lanes southbound open at all times. The detour would be for northbound traffic to go down Mall Boulevard to Wills Boulevard. Mr. Wagenmann explained the reason is if the southbound traffic is detoured when traffic gets to Wills/Mall intersection there is no left turn slot so it makes sense to keep the southbound traffic detoured throughout the construction cycle on Allendale Road out to Route 202.

Mr. Philips asked when the construction will take place. Mr. Wagenmann responded he would have to get a final date, but it is anticipated to go to construction this year.

Mr. Philips asked if anyone discussed, from the BID's point of view, a slip ramp off of the turnpike into the business district. Mr. Wagenmann responded it was recently indicated the BID was compiling some information and would then discuss this with township staff.

Mr. Jenaway commented about the questions he received from the public about the adaptive signaling system and reminded the viewing audience this is a system which monitors traffic build up and then adjusts to allow traffic to flow faster.

Mr. Wagenmann commented a study was done at North Gulph Road and Mall Boulevard and Route 202 and there was a 40% improvement during the peak hour after the traffic adaptive signals were installed. While the manufacturer indicates a 10-20% improvement, the study indicated a 40% increase. Under the previous system, everybody could anticipate the next phase and this cannot be done with this equipment.

Mr. Jenaway commented Upper Merion Township is active in two task forces dealing with the future planning of I-76, which he previously chaired, I-476 and US 422 which he currently chairs. These two task forces have been in place for about ten years with meetings held quarterly to keep up-to-date on traffic changes.

Mr. Hershey commented the reason the \$1.2 billion was achieved was because the Transportation Authority has been proactive and has had outstanding guidance from the Township Manager and Board of Supervisors. He provided the example of the Henderson ramps; the plans were ready when the funds became available and the project could begin.

Mr. Waks commented on the award presented to Upper Merion Township by PennDOT for the adaptive signalization.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Bill Jenaway, Greg Waks, Carole Kenney, Greg Philips. Others present were: Ron Wagenmann, Township Manager; Judy Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Lydia Dan-Sardinas, Chairperson; Scott Sibley, Vice Chairman; Michelle Gallagher, Secretary; Sheryl Smith; Thomas Kohler; Russell Swisher. Supervisor Spott was absent.

Ms. Lydia Dan-Sardinas, Chairperson, stated consumers have been concerned with the economic and environmental impact of energy production and consumption. People are interested in alternative energy solutions, but often are confused as to how to find low costs answers to their energy needs. The ECDC in conjunction with the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) and the Business Improvement District, is presenting a series of four programs to help Upper Merion residents and businesses save money while benefitting the environment. The first presentation was in February and focused on energy efficiency, energy audits. The April forum presented renewable energy options and emphasis on geothermal heating. The June forum will focus on waste and recycling collections, single trash and multi-hauler systems. The last program in November will discuss stormwater management.

Mr. Scott Sibley reported the ECDC has been coordinating with the Business Improvement District (BID) on several projects, among which is on a tax study the BID has commissioned to compare taxation in Upper Merion with other comparable townships in southeastern Pennsylvania. Data was first compiled, reviewed by the BID and is now being studied by a consultant. After the study is completed the Business Improvement District will develop a plan to present the data to correct misunderstandings about the tax structure in Upper Merion and to promote the township as a good place to do business. The ECDC will continue to participate with the Business Improvement District on this study.

Mr. Sibley stated another area of study undertaken by the ECDC is the historic Moore-Irwin house. This township-owned property is located in the middle of the King of Prussia Business Park off of Moore Road. The previous ECDC Subcommittee determined there was no viable reuse for the house, but recommended preserving a portion of the house and enhanced use of the property so the residents can enjoy the property. This past year the Board of Supervisors and the King of Prussia Players completed a Memorandum of Understanding for the preservation of the house and construction of a theater on the property. The ECDC continued to coordinate with the King of Prussia Players, and the next step is for the Players to raise money for its construction. Mr. Sibley noted this has gotten off to a slow start. The next step is for the township to contract for the renewal of the deteriorated portions of the house and stabilize the areas to be preserved. This was recommended by the earlier subcommittee and is included in the Memorandum of Understanding and needs to be completed regardless of the other plans for the property. The house continues to deteriorate in the meantime. Mr. Sibley noted the previous and current ECDC urges the Board of Supervisors to find the funding to move forward on this preservation effort.

Ms. Michelle Gallagher provided an update on the community center subcommittee which is a joint venture with the Park and Recreation Department, community members and ECDC. The subcommittee was formed to investigate the needs of the community in establishing a community center within the township. Utilizing information the committee had already obtained, a feasibility study was produced reviewing three separate sites within the township. Earlier this year, the township acquired the former Gold's Gym property and the focus for the future center has now changed to this location. The ECDC will be examining the best use for the site and will await the decision of the Board on how the subcommittee should proceed once the findings are established and this proposal can move forward.

Mr. Russell Swisher discussed the ECDC's work to provide better functionality of the township website as a resource for residents and businesses.

The township website is a low cost, high impact means to produce tangible results in enhancing communications. Based on suggestions received from various sources a list was compiled with a view to determining which ones could be implemented this year, such as promoting application to open citizen boards and committees and next year's Tricentennial. The ECDC will continue its involvement and cooperation with the Media Communications Advisory Board to prioritize remaining features to enhance the township's website.

Ms. Sheryl Smith reported on her collaboration with Scott Greenly, Russell Swisher, Supervisor Kenney and other members of the ECDC to incorporate a dashboard on the Upper Merion Township website. She explained dashboards have long been used in business to offer consumers an "at a glance" look at key performance indicators. More recently dashboards have been used in academia to attract prospective students with easily assessable information about tuition

costs, future student ratios, etc. Recently dashboards have been used for a similar purpose at the municipal level to provide and package accessible, useful information not only for residents, but also those contemplating a move to the area to live or establish a business. Township dashboards typically are organized into a single interactive website offering information about fiscal accountability, infrastructure, quality of life issues, such as population demographics, housing, parks and recreation, etc. While such information can already be compiled on the website, the dashboard proposal would repackage the information; make it visually more appealing and more interactive. Ms. Smith indicated this is a step toward a larger goal of making information about the township more accessible and transparent to current and prospective residents and business owners of Upper Merion Township.

Ms. Smith provided the members of the group examples of a municipal dashboard.

Mr. Thomas Kohler stated one of the main aspects of the ECDC is to continue to create strong community ties in Upper Merion Township. He said many years ago, most neighborhoods had a local welcome wagon greeting new residents to the community and informing them of the services, amenities and events occurring in the community. Several months ago, ECDC discussed the idea of restoring this tradition in a more 21st Century way. A subcommittee has been formed to determine a cost effective way to welcome new residents, inform them of all the township has to offer as well as provide an online home for new residents to become involved in their community. Joining Mr. Kohler on this new subcommittee is Robin Ross, and it is hoped to have a proposal by this fall for a launch in 2013.

With regard to the dashboard, Mr. Waks stated it is planned to hire a new public information officer (PIO) incorporating webmaster duties for the township. He suggested ECDC coordinate with the new PIO as well.

Mr. Waks commented on the “welcome wagon” idea and suggested finding out what other communities are doing that have similar programs.

Mrs. Kenney asked for clarification about the cost of a dashboard, including any licensing fees and/or yearly cost. Ms. Smith did not have that information readily available; however, she said there is software available that would enable potentially doing this “in house,” and there are also firms that can be hired to accomplish this. Ms. Smith commented she will continue to work on this.

With regard to the tax study, Mr. Sibley commented the Business Improvement District met in January and reviewed the material that had been prepared and had some additional questions for the consultant. He said the tax study is anticipated this year, possibly by the summer.

Mr. Waks commented he had an opportunity to see some of the early

numbers and the ECDC does a good job of dispelling the myth that our commercial tax burden is out of balance with everyone else.

Mr. Philips commented he had an opportunity to read the draft and was impressed with how competitive and market driven the township is with tax structure compared to some of the surrounding municipalities with much higher taxes.

Mr. Wagenmann commented some of the things they [consultants] were asked to look at were fees, charges, different assessments added by communities toward the total cost of doing business in the community.

Mr. Jenaway commented he joined Mr. Philips and Mr. Russell in reviewing 17 sets of proposals from architects for the community center. The list has been narrowed down and architect interviews will be held on May 24th.

Mr. Waks noted the interview workshop is open to the public. Although it will not be televised, anyone can come in and listen to the presentation.

Mr. Philips encouraged interested citizens to attend the interview workshop. He said both he and Mr. Jenaway have selected five finalists from the pool coming with some very unique and intriguing design capabilities.

With regard to dashboards, Mr. Jenaway commented he sits on the National Board doing public safety analysis and offered his help in the public safety area since he looks at dashboards quite frequently.

Following up on the “welcome wagon” discussion, Mr. Jenaway stated while doing a project in Texas he became aware of a fire department having a unique way of welcoming new residents. They would take a fire engine, with sirens blaring down the street to the new resident and deliver baskets filled with different items such as municipal map, application for the volunteer fire department and other informational material.

ZONING HEARING BOARD

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Bill Jenaway, Greg Waks, Carole Kenney, Greg Philips. Others present were: Ron Wagenmann, Township Manager; Judy Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Mark Zadroga, Zoning Officer; Robert Montemayor, Chairman; Lynne Z. Gold-Bikin; William Clements; Stephen Levine. Supervisor Spott was absent.

Mr. Mark Zadroga reported in 2011, the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) received 31 zoning hearing board applications. Of the 31 applications, 26 were requesting a variance while the remaining 5 were for special exceptions. The ZHB met approximately twice a month for a total of 20 meetings. The ZHB voted

to approve 26 applications, 4 were denied and 1 was withdrawn. There are no outstanding appeals currently. Work continues on updating the zoning code. Posted on the township website since 2009 are all ZHB applications and decisions as well as the application filing fee and zoning map.

Mr. Montemayor commented the new application, in place for the last two years, is working well. It has been beneficial to the applicants and the Board and provides applicants with an outline as to what they should be prepared to present to the Board. The ZHB continues, to the extent possible, to render a decision on the night of the hearing. So far this year, only one case has been taken under advisement; however, it worked out since the applicant subsequently was able to secure the change required for approval.

With regard to zoning changes, Mr. Philips asked if there are any changes needed to provide an immediate fix for something not working. Mr. Montemayor responded he will come back to the Board of Supervisors with a memo in this regard.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there are any long term zoning changes needed. Mr. Montemayer responded the work on the total revision of the code to reflect contemporary needs.

Board Action:

It was moved by Mr. Philips, seconded by Mr. Jenaway, all voting "Aye" to adjourn the meeting at 9 p.m. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.

RONALD G. WAGENMANN
SECRETARY-TREASURER
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: