

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
JOINT MEETING WITH CITIZEN BOARD CHAIRS
SEPTEMBER 18, 2014

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Joint Meeting of the Citizen Board Chairs on Thursday, September 18, 2014, in the Board Room, in the Township Building in King of Prussia. The meeting was called to order at 7:36 a.m., followed by a pledge to the flag.

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Waks, Erika Spott and Carole Kenney. Also present were: Dave Kraynik, Township Manager; Sally Slook, Assistant Township Manager; Dan Russell, Director, Park and Recreation; Joe Powell, Buell, Kratzer Powell; Howard Hoffman, Vice Chairperson, Media Communications Board; Frank Rodrique, Vice Chairperson, Police Advisory Board; Scott Sibley, Chairman, Economic and Community Development Committee; M. Jonathan Garzillo, Vice Chair, Planning Commission

POWER POINT PRESENTATION OF UPPER MERION COMMUNITY CENTER BY DAN RUSSELL, PARK AND RECREATION DIRECTOR AND JOE POWELL, ARCHITECT

Dan Russell, Director Park and Recreation, stated the Upper Merion Community Center project has been in the planning process for seven years. It began with a feasibility study and is culminating with anticipated approval of the contract at the Board of Supervisors business meeting tonight. Joe Powell from the architectural firm of Buell, Kratzer, Powell has been the architect for this project through the design phase as well as project manager.

Mr. Powell narrated a PowerPoint presentation which featured various design aspects, ingress, egress, and internal circulation of the Upper Merion Community and Senior Center. Highlights as follows:

- The existing entrance off of Valley Forge Road will be maintained and improvements are planned to make it a safer entrance.
- The left turn off of Valley Forge Road will be eliminated and there will be a right turn in and right turn out of the site.
- There will be approximately 220 parking spaces.
- Many sustainable features including rain gardens and porous paving so that runoff is handled on site.
- A patio is featured off of the senior center so they have their own private outside space.
- Plantings will be selected so that a year after the building opens there will be substantial landscaping.

- The seniors' area is being built over an existing bleacher area and they will have all the features they have in their current senior center at the school.
- The seniors will be separated from the children and noisy activities.
- Construction should begin on or about October 1st with completion within 8-9 months sometime next summer.

Mr. Waks commented it would be helpful to have this presentation at a future business meeting, possibly in January, so that it can be viewed by the general public on UMGA-TV and rerun at designated times on the government channel.

A question was asked if other various community centers were visited during the planning stage. Mr. Russell responded in the affirmative. He said the needs of the community as well as ideas gathered from investigating other sites, including an on-site visit to Boulder, Colorado were incorporated as part of the design and planning process.

A question was asked if there are other anticipated uses of the facility for the community. Mr. Russell responded as part of the business plan they have included rental spaces as well as facilities for running small scale tournaments and other events.

Mr. Waks commented the Business Improvement District has indicated they would like to start publicizing the community center and said it will help attract business interest in corporate memberships which would help financially.

Mr. Waks noted another item being discussed is a countdown sign at the location of the Upper Merion Swim and Tennis Club. Mr. Kraynik commented in advance of that the Public Information staff will compile some facts, figures and illustrations leading up to this so people can get educated and excited about it.

Mrs. Kenney suggested the landscaping include evergreen shrubs for winter greenery and also asked about the garden area for the senior center. Mr. Powell responded the garden area for seniors is located in the back patio area.

Mrs. Kenney asked about the small kitchen downstairs on the main level. Mr. Powell responded it is for a cooking class. Eight stations will be available for the class to cook along with the teacher.

Mr. Russell said a café is planned on the lower center of the facility. This will not be a full scale restaurant, and it will be leased out to a private enterprise for such offerings as coffee, smoothies, energy drinks, and sandwiches.

Mrs. Kenney asked if Wi-Fi would be available. Mr. Russell responded this is a top priority and he is working with the IT Department in obtaining some

quotes for running fiber for the Park and Recreation Department and also the Senior Center. Mr. Waks suggested engaging the Media Communications Advisory Board in this process. Mr. Hoffman indicated he has had discussions with the IT Department about some of the challenges at this location. Mr. Russell noted the café will have a lounge and the Wi-Fi will be important there as well.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there is a senior center kitchen, and Mr. Powell responded in the affirmative.

Mrs. Kenney asked if there will be some kind of separator between the track and the courts. Mr. Powell responded when there is an activity spillover separators will be deployed.

Mrs. Spott followed up about the location of the café and thought it should be in a more visible and centralized location. Mr. Powell said he envisioned the café as an adjunct service that would supplement what is going on at the community center and not as a primary activity. He said the thinking was not to take away from the excitement at the entrance of watching and having people moving and exercising.

A discussion followed about the pros and cons of having a café near the entrance.

Mrs. Spott pointed out the community center cafés she visited reported two to three times as much revenue than originally anticipated.

Mr. Garzillo asked about the administrative management of the new community center. Mr. Russell responded the Park and Recreation staff will be expanding from 2 full-time staff members to 11 full-time staffers. There will be a new Assistant Park and Recreation Director who will serve as a facilities manager, a Marketing Specialist (advertising and PR not only for the facility, but also the Park and Recreation Department). The marketing person will be responsible for membership, making people aware of all the amenities and signage. There will be a staff dedicated to certain areas such as programming, fitness, customer service, and maintenance of the facility. Talent search and interview process is ongoing.

Mr. Powell stated he has been involved in similar processes in developing community centers for a number of years and the biggest issue is construction. Long term viability is another issue. The team that is assembled is critical to success. He said there is an extremely high failure rate of fitness facilities [exclusively devoted to fitness]. Mr. Powell said he is pleased the community center is [envisioned as a multi-faceted] facility, with the right people in place to secure its long-term viability.

A member of the group said there is a lot of space devoted to basketball courts and asked what would be done when this space is not being used. Mr. Russell responded the spaces in the facility are based on the feasibility study. He said there is a very high demand in the Park and Recreation Department for hard core basketball space and the school district facilities are used year round. There is also a demand for tournaments in the area which is a high revenue generator. Based on the feasibility study there is a definite need in this community for "hard core" gym space. It is also recognized there are sports needed in this community that cannot be played on a hard court such as roller hockey, baseball or lacrosse which is why the multi-sport area was added which will be a combination of a tile floor and a roll out synthetic turf area for baseball. Currently the baseball association has over 800 children in their program.

A member of the group commented that the facility will also be able to attract sports social club leagues which used to play at the old Gold's Gym but stopped when conditions deteriorated.

Mrs. Spott asked about the location of the spinning room. Mr. Russell responded it is located on the first floor (the small aerobics room). As the program expands it would be possible to move spinning upstairs quickly.

A member of the group asked about parking for the senior center. Mr. Russell responded there are five or six spaces at the front entrance and there will be assigned spaces for senior center parking only. He said it is important to note the senior center hours will occur during community center off peak hours.

Mrs. Spott commented it is hoped those who can will bike or walk to the center.

A question was asked about security to monitor entrances and the parking lot. Mr. Russell responded he has been working with the IT Director and Chief Nolan about cameras within the facility and the parking lots. There will be a very high level of security and surveillance of this facility. Chief Nolan is more interested in having additional cameras outside the building. There will also be cameras in the elevators.

Mr. Sibley asked if the trail is part of this project. Mr. Russell responded in the affirmative. He said the Upper Merion Transportation Authority is taking the lead on all the traffic improvements (including traffic light at Valley Forge and Caley Road) and coupled with that are the two trails that will connect the middle school property through the woods to the back of the community center and then in the area of the "Generals" there will be another trail coming through the woods and around the poolside ending at the top of the pool area. Sidewalk connections are being proposed as well as ADA ramps.

Mr. Waks asked if it is still anticipated that the traffic light will be operable at the same time as the Community Center. Mr. Russell responded in the affirmative.

Mrs. Spott asked for clarification on the full-time staffing. Mr. Russell responded there will be 11 full-time positions (9 new full-time positions planned with the facility plus the 2 full-time positions which currently exist).

Mrs. Spott asked if that was already in the feasibility study. Mr. Russell responded in the affirmative and said it is also in the budget as well. This includes the Director, Assistant Director, Recreation Superintendent, Marketing Specialist, two programmers, two front desk supervisors, head of building maintenance and two janitors totaling 11.

Mr. Waks stated there are two important economic considerations that are not in the business plan. He pointed out the township currently pays rent to the school district for the Senior Service Center. This obligation will be eliminated with the move to the new Senior Center. Mr. Waks also noted in previous years there were discussions about expanding the township building because of space constraints. With the move of the entire Park and Rec Department to the new community center and the tax collector's decision to move her office off township property there is no longer a need for an expansion of township building space.

Mrs. Kenney asked about the rental cost for the senior center. Mr. Russell responded it is approximately \$37,000 a year for the senior center rent to the school district. Mr. Waks pointed out there is also an additional \$60,000 to fund their operating budget. It amounts to approximately \$100,000 for the operating budget and rent.

A member of the group asked if there are any long range plans down the road to have a community pool. Mrs. Spott commented at the moment the current pool is a public/private partnership. Her preference would have been for an indoor pool which was not possible due to space constraints. Mrs. Spott said a pool is a vibrant addition to a community. Whether it continues on a public/private partnership, goes completely private or taken over by the township, it is still up in the air. She feels the community needs a pool and would urge that everything be done to keep it maintained.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION – ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTEREST AND COOPERATION

Mr. Howard Hoffman, Media Communications Advisory Board, reported on the fine-tuning of various township publications, the Comcast franchise negotiations coming to a conclusion, and the proposed LED sign in front of the township building.

Mr. Frank Rodrique, Police Citizen Advisory Board, stated recently there have been more contacts with various civic associations in different parts of the township to keep them advised of current happenings.

Mike Trachtenberg, Chairperson, Park and Recreation Board, following up on the community center discussion at this meeting, noted at this evening's business meeting it is anticipated that the contract will be awarded with construction to follow shortly thereafter. He also reported on the first Master Plan Subcommittee meeting with T&M Associates. They are working on the Master Plan for all active and passive recreation in the community. Also noted was the trail going out for bid very shortly. Mr. Kraynik indicated the bids are going out now in anticipation of a contract award in early October. Mr. Trachtenberg also said the Park and Recreation Board is working on preparations for the sports funding awards.

Mrs. Spott stated the trail connecting to Valley Forge National Historical Park will open up a tremendous access for the biking and walking community. She also commented on the broad spectrum of talented people on the subcommittee for the Master Plan headed by John Tallman.

Mr. Trachtenberg stated a whole series of town meetings will be held on the Master Plan as well as a questionnaire developed so that organizations and individuals will have an opportunity to provide input of their special needs.

Mrs. Spott commented on T&M's mention at last night's meeting about the diversity of the township in terms of demographics.

A discussion followed about the community outreach regarding the Master Plan. Also noted during this discussion was the over usage of Heuser Park and how field turf might be the answer since it can be used over and over again and far less of a maintenance expense.

Scott Sibley, Chairman, Economic and Community Development Committee, discussed having community activities such as First Friday and Restaurant Week.

Jonathan Garzillo, Vice Chairperson, Planning Commission, provided an update on the two major issues the Planning Commission has been working on -- the Mixed Use District and the Transit-Oriented Development.

A question was asked about the traffic light just above the Community Center. Mr. Waks responded the traffic light which has been approved by PennDOT will be located at the Caley and Valley Forge Road intersection. Installation is anticipated at the time the Community Center is opened.

As the Board Liaison to the Library Board, Mrs. Kenney noted the indoor mini golf fundraiser planned for March 2015. She also reported on Eric Medrow's open space report at the recent workshop meeting. He suggested updating the open space plan that was done in 1999 and researching possible grant money to purchase additional open space. Mr. Trachtenberg indicated that was discussed at last night's Park and Recreation Board and it would definitely be part of the Master Plan.

Mr. Waks stated once the LED sign is installed at the intersection of Henderson and Valley Forge Road, it will be possible to feature citizen board events and other announcements. The V-shaped LED sign will be visible from all four corners of the intersection.

Mr. Trachtenberg commented there is another LED sign proposed in front of the Community Center.

Mrs. Spott mentioned the Shade Tree and Beautification awards will be presented at business meeting this evening and shown on UMGA-TV.

NEXT MEETING AND DISCUSSION TOPIC

Mr. Waks anticipated the next joint meeting of the Citizen Board Chairs would occur early next year. Mr. Kraynik asked the Citizen Board Chairs to email their suggested topics and every effort will be made to accommodate the requests.

Mr. Garzillo mentioned Ms. Camp suggested the use of an email chain to facilitate communication among the various citizen board chairs and vice chairs. Mr. Waks said he would want to first check this out with the Solicitor.

Mrs. Spott asked if the next meeting date has been set as yet. Mr. Kraynik responded he will look into this and offer some suggested dates.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved by Mrs. Spott, seconded by Mrs. Kenney, all voting "Aye" to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 a.m. None opposed. Motion approved 3-0.

DAVID G. KRAYNIK
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: