

**MINUTES
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #3
HIGH SCHOOL PARK / OGONTZ PARK MASTER PLAN
CARRIAGE HOUSE AT THE RICHARD WALL HOUSE
APRIL 30, 2008**

Welcome, Amy Steffen, Chair, HS/OP Master Plan Committee

The meeting started promptly at 7:00 PM with Ms. Steffen welcoming the Steering Committee members, the Township Staff and the consulting team. Ms. Steffen noted that in the past 2 months, the Committee had reached several milestones with the Ecological Master Plan including a first public meeting, the collection of several months of ecological data, and the completion of several major public outreach tasks (e.g., community meeting #1, key interviews and community survey). She invited those present to introduce themselves.

Brief Introductions, All Attendees

The following attendees were present and introduced themselves: Steering Committee members/FHSP Affiliates; Amy Steffen, Jo Fagan, Cynthia Blackwood, Jeannine Vannais, David Cohen, Gina Craigo, Rosemary Porter, Diane Ehrlich, Mark Kaplan, Joanne Dahme, Mickey Simon, Gail Korostoff, Patricia Miller, Barb Duffy, Paul Gordon, Cheltenham Township Staff: Bryan Havir, John Hoover, Joe Baxter; Consulting Team; Suzanne Forbes & Phil Perhamus.

Adoption of Meeting #2 Minutes & Community Meeting #1 Minutes, Amy Steffen, Chair, HS/OP Master Plan Committee

The minutes from Community Meeting #1 were unanimously accepted by those in attendance. The minutes from Steering Committee meeting #2 were also unanimously accepted as written.

Overview/Discussion of Findings (Needs Assessment) for One-on-One Interviews and Community Surveys, Suzanne Forbes, Forbes Environmental & Land Use Planning

Ms. Forbes explained she previously completed two memos to the Steering Committee (e.g., findings overviews for the one-on-one- interviews, findings overview for the Community Survey) for review before the meeting. Ms. Forbes asked the Steering Committee if they had received and reviewed the memos. Committee members noted they had. Ms. Forbes noted that extra copies were available this evening and that the community survey memo had been revised to indicate findings that arrived after the memo was distributed.

Ms. Forbes thanked the Steering Committee members for both their participation (e.g., interviews) and for their volunteer efforts with the community survey (e.g., Mr. Cohen for creating a means for digital distribution and collecting information, Friends of High School Park and Cheltenham Township for advertising/distributing/collecting copies). She noted that both the interview and community findings were distributed to the consulting team members; they had reviewed them and would consider all findings throughout the planning process. The findings would also become part of the needs assessment component of the Ecological Master Plan, as well as the Technical Appendices to the Plan.

Interview Findings

Ms. Forbes noted the many highlights/findings of the process and invited comments. Ms. Forbes reinforced that she was presenting findings this evening and that later in the planning process, the Committee would be categorizing, discussing, and prioritizing all findings/recommendations. Ms. Forbes went through numerous highlights of the interview effort. The following comments and discussion items were brought forth during the meeting:

- Areas in Need, More Specific Recommendations (page 5) – Ms. Steffen noted that a number of very specific recommendations were received. She asked the Steering Committee to note them and the consulting team to be sure they were incorporated.
- Trail System (page 5) – Mr. Havir noted that a trail plan was in place and that the consulting team should be sure to consider the plan in unison with trail findings.
- Suggested Improvements (page 7) – Ms. Forbes noted that parking issues were noted throughout the interview process (e.g., access, park use, handicapped accessibility, improvements) and that interviewees (and community survey respondents) noted that lack of parking for the park and business community is an issue. The feedback noted that commuters were using parking spaces meant for the park and business community. A discussion ensued (e.g., perception depends upon users, historic and on-going issue) with all agreeing that we will discuss further as we are formulating goals and recommendations for this plan.
- Biggest Issues/concerns (page 8) – Ms. Forbes noted that the RFP and community outreach efforts are showing that some park users are concerned that the park would be closed to dog walkers. They also showed support for enforcement of leash laws. Discussion amongst steering committee members ensued (e.g., enforce leash laws, keeping the park clean, user security, ecological impacts, creating a designated area, other dog-walking parks in the area etc) with everyone agreeing that we will discuss further as we are formulating goals and recommendations for this plan.
- Lighting (page 11) – Ms. Forbes shared that lighting was an issue area discussed during the interviews (e.g., security, park use, aesthetics) With regard to security about half of the interviewees felt secure in the park and many of them noted that the park is closed after dark and this should be enforced. A member asked how people know the park is closed after dark as it is not posted. Mr. Hoover agreed this should be advertised to the community better (e.g., sign). Ms. Forbes said that the other half of interviews (those that did not feel especially secure) suggested additional lighting at park entrances and perhaps low-lighting along certain trails might be a good idea. The committee members again discussed that increased lighting is a “hot” historic

topic, and adjoining landowners often don't want it. Another point was that lighting should be discussed further, but there are not many places in the region where one can see the night sky. Ms. Forbes shared that two adjoining property owners suggested increased lighting (e.g., tennis courts, track, and security at night). All agreeing that the Committee will discuss further as the Committee is formulating goals and recommendations for this plan.

- Additional Discussion- Several committee members provided detail on historic efforts regarding walking dogs, park use, lighting and parking. Another member noted the need to include bike racks.

Community Survey Findings

Forbes noted the many highlights/findings of the process and invited comments as she presented findings on the community survey. The following comments and discussion items were brought forth during the meeting:

- Additional Discussion- (1) Streambank restoration; Mr. Hoover noted the major, positive role historically provided by Mr. Havir; (2) Lighting; Ms. Steffen noting the night sky is an important item to consider; (3) Safety; Mr. Cohen noting we should enforce night use regulations, but perhaps more lighting at all entrances might address some safety concerns.

Overview of Ecological Component, Status Report & Key Tasks, Phil Perhamus, AMEC Earth & Environmental

Mr. Perhamus, team ecologist, presented maps, drawings and a power point presentation on his ecological findings to date. He noted the positive finding that the site is at the 50% mark for native plant species implementation (e.g., historic *Andropogon* study, Bowman's Hill study, Township restoration efforts). Mr. Perhamus stressed the fact that with continued implementation of those recommendations, and those provided through this study, the Committee will be augmenting continued implementation efforts rather than needing to start from scratch.

Mr. Perhamus provided an overview of how the team and steering committee would be creating a seasonal calendar and "menu style" approach to continued implementation of ecological restoration in the 5 major ecological areas of the parks (e.g., upper and lower meadows, streambank, woodlands, edge areas, and floodplain). He provided some hypothetical examples of how the final product would work (e.g., plant selection based on ecological area, invasive plant eradication, problem areas like the berms, trail width revisions based on avian behavior, recommended augmentation of perimeter areas of Ogontz Park, highly sloping areas of High School Park covered with English Ivy).

With regard to streambank restoration, Mr. Perhamus noted that recommendations would be discussed, however the consulting team is taking into consideration what has historically taken place, what is currently being recommended (e.g., Township and other consultants), and current research regarding effective methodology.

The attending members provided the following questions/feedback:

- Funding/Eradication of Invasive Plants in Large Areas- Mr. Havir noted that eradication of invasive plants like English Ivy had been suggested for Grove Park (Cheltenham Township), however without adequate funding for sweeping eradication and then replacement with native plants, it was not wise to use that approach. Mr. Perhamus agreed and noted that for a like situation on this site (e.g., English Ivy on sloping areas), another recommendation would be more affective (e.g., spot broadcasting of herbicides and re-planting in phases).
- Lesser Celandine- Ms. Steffen asked about the extent of threat for this particular problem area where it is simply not feasible to pull it out. Ms. Vannais of Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve shared that this is a very threatening plant and that the Preserve is spraying consistently to eradicate this invasive plant.

Wrap Up & Close, Amy Steffen

With no further comments/discussion, Ms. Steffen closed the meeting at 8:55 PM. There will be no Steering Committee Meeting on May 28, 2008 7:00 PM. This will allow the FHSP to concentrate on the Arts in the Park Event scheduled for Sunday, June 1, 2008. It will allow for the team to write up existing findings and progress to the ecological landscape design/GIS mapping phases of the project. The project team will be meeting on the site to apply research and community outreach findings and to begin mapping findings and designing recommendations. The next Steering Committee meeting will take place in July. A date and time will be circulated to all members.

David G. Kraynik
Township Manager

Prepared by: Suzanne Forbes
Bryan T. Havir