

KENNETT TOWNSHIP TRAILS & SIDEWALKS COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

February 25, 2021 Minutes

Held virtually via zoom.

Present:

Committee Members:

Christina Norland, Chair
Diane McGovern
Tim Peterson
Rudy Karkosak
Abbie Kessler

Township Representatives:

Eden Ratliff
Amy Heinrich
Gretchen Flack

Guests:

Peter Doehring
John Wilkens
Michael Guttman
Jeff Whittle
Kathryn Pearlstine
Rob Daniels
Claire Agre (Unknown Studios)
Dana Kash (Unknown Studios)
Jennifer Dowdell (Biohabitats)
Edward Leo
Tom Biedekapp
Jake

Ms. Norland called the meeting to order shortly after 12 pm.

NEW BUSINESS:

Administration:

- Ms. Norland announced that all February meeting minutes will be approved at the first March meeting. Ms. Flack provided notice that the meeting was being recorded for the Supervisors to remain informed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Kennett Greenway Updates:

Kennett Greenway Survey Results [notes presented as the back-and-forth conversation had to capture the variety of questions and concerns discussed]

Consultants introduced themselves as a refresher to new guests. Ms. Agre reviewed everything and then delved into the schedule, current status, and the survey results. Overall people seem to want to see a trail network for exercise and park/preserve usage and most people expect to use it for recreation and enjoyment rather than for commuting or resource access (shopping, etc.).

Takeaways: connect to neighborhoods, natural aesthetic, walking is #1 priority, access to green spaces (physically and visually), maintenance, and broad range of users for moderate activities.

Ms. McGovern questioned when we would see the traffic survey results, which were confirmed to be out in March.

Follow up question as to how much traffic such a greenway could draw from tourists in the area for other sites such as Longwood. No clear answer, but Ms. Agre can look into comparable sites such as C&O canal and others.

Any sense of how many years to build the 14-mile circuit? Ms. Agre stated that it can move as quickly as funding is available.

What were the negative comments? Ms. Kash said most were about being against the one-way option on CM Rd and then some were about costs. The CM Rd ones were often supportive of the greenway, but not of the specific CM segment discussion.

Ms. Norland opened the discussion up to public questions.

Mr. Doehring asked whether there was a question on how people currently use the existing area trails? Ms. Agre said no, but they did ask how people thought they would use it in its entirety. Funding concern about the segments that do not have the right to cross the properties yet. Mr. Doehring suggested looking at the greenway trail in Lancaster County along the Susquehanna. Ms. Norland followed up about number of landowners potentially with pending linkages. A few larger properties are left open with only a few concentrated areas left to focus on to get the connection in place. About 80% is secured.

Michael Guttman- no sense of amenities in the survey so did anyone ask what amenities residents would want to connect to? Ms. Agre said they don't like to provide a list up front because they want to get the general concept of what people want the system to be and then they will follow up with more focused concepts.

Mr. Guttman sees the typical pattern in Kennett being to go to the areas where you can hike by driving to them and the Kennett Greenway will provide the promise of parking in one spot and walk to another or walk directly to the preserves/parks. Few comments about parking in the survey, but a plan for parking needs to be considered and should be shared with interested parties.

Ms. Heinrich asked about considering a parallel comparison to the CVT as it leverages different amenities and it gets a lot of visitors using it and brings people to the locations.

Mr. Guttman reminded that most if not all of the grants KT has received were for alternate transportation. Ms. Agre pointed out that the next big push for grant funding will be coming through public health initiatives due to the impact of Covid and how we have clearly seen the need and usage for them.

Mr. Peterson asked if the results about people using the trail said they would largely use it solo or with partners and whether that was due to the impact of Covid, but Ms. Agre said this was pretty standard replies across the projects they have done. They only see large groups when there are large focus parks or features as part of the trail network.

Mr. Doehring requests that the active transportation plan be placed over top of the Greenway plan to make sure the benefits are there and help encourage residents to see it as an active transportation option. Right now, the Greenway doesn't connect directly to the schools, Longwood, the high school, etc. Ms. Norland said there are planned trails to the high school and other sites in the larger vision plan for the region. This is part of the regional trail plan and there will be a presentation for the BOS soon that will highlight the priorities that that committee has identified across the Township, Borough, New Garden, and East Marlborough.

Mr. Wilkens is concerned over the new issues coming up. People came for the beautiful countryside and thought there would be a natural trail in the woods so talking about tourists

and bringing in lots of outsiders is concerning. He thinks it is getting beyond what most people in the area would like to see or expected. Ms. Norland responded that the sense seems to be that the CM area would stay and maintain the look and feel of its current existence and doesn't want to see the tourists come in. Mr. Wilkens is concerned that people's input being received so far down the road seems to be too late. Ms. Agre reinforced that the plans being presented in March will be feasible plans, but not set plans. Mr. Wilkens said those designs will be done by people who don't live or have a connection to the land. Mr. Ratliff thanked Mr. Wilkens for his participation and concerns and highlighted that people learned of the meetings and discussions because the process allowed for that and encouraged it.

Mr. Doehring pointed out that the trail will be an asset for the community and they are often transformational and improve the community. Ms. Agre pointed out that the design is meant to fit the capacity for the location so that it isn't a negative impact. Ms. Heinrich commented that she feels that the active element is more for the northern portion of the Greenway where people are closer to the borough and other amenities and are more likely to use the Greenway for that purpose.

Mr. Guttman pointed out the impetus for the western side was alternate transportation funding for the closure and rehab of the bridge for pedestrians.

Ms. Agre said everyone they talk to appears to love where they live, but the point is to create the connections so the next generation has the connections and will fall in love with the land and steward it.

Mr. Doehring asked if there is any data about proximity to trails improving the value of home values in a similar way to protected open space? Ms. Agre said she has no numbers, but the trails and open space do regularly provide a gentrification effect. Ms. Dowdell said there is also research into the ecosystem benefits and such where the protection of the land allows the natural resource benefits to continue to work in the way they are supposed to naturally.

Mr. Doehring asked for the information regarding gaps to be less on parcels and more for mileage gaps left open. Ms. Norland said she can look at that, but it changes with every concept discussed and whether the side shoots and spurs are considered and so on.

Mr. Ratliff thanked everyone's involvement including the consultants and the public.

Chandler Mill & W South Street Public Engagement Plan: Ms. Norland reviewed the schedule one last time.

Land Acquisition Updates: All discussion held in executive session due to nature of private land deals.

NOTE: Next meeting will be March 12, 2021 at 2 pm rather than the normal 1st Tuesday.

Respectfully submitted,

Abbie Kessler, Secretary