May 17, 2019

Dear Homeowner:

As you are aware, the Bucks County Planning Commission (BCPC) facilitated an open house on Tuesday, May 14, 2019, from 3:00 PM until 8:00 PM. Residents whose property is immediately adjacent to the trail, were specifically invited to review plans for proposed landscaping and fencing along the trail corridor.

The open house was facilitated by Richard Brahler, our Director of Transportation Planning, Paul Gordon, Senior Trails Planner, and, Christian Regosch, Transportation Planner. As the BCPC Executive Director, I attended the open house from 3:00 PM until 4:15 PM, when other commitments required that I leave. Staff was there to answer questions and provide guidance on the specifics of the trail project.

By way of background, the proposal to build the rail trail, was voted on, and approved, by the Upper Southampton Board of Supervisors at their public meeting of May 5, 2015. Since that time, the County and the Township have worked closely together to design the trail and prepare the construction documents so that the trail can be let for bid and built with a projected completion of summer 2020.

We fully recognize and appreciate that there are residents who are genuinely concerned, if not outright opposed to the project. We also fully recognize and appreciate that a prior inactive rail corridor will now be transformed into an active community recreation facility. We understand this brings fear of the unknown, and with that legitimate concerns regarding safety, liability, privacy, and trespass.

Rails to Trails (RTR) are not new phenomena, with over 21,000 miles of RTR projects in the country, and nearly 2,000 miles of RTR projects right here in Pennsylvania, the closest being the Pennypack Trail which will soon terminate at County Line and New Roads. BCPC Staff has expended countless hours of research in developing Bucks County's RTR program. We have looked at the successes, as well as the lessons learned from our neighbor Montgomery County along with others. While we recognize we will not win everyone over, we do believe that concerns over safety, liability, privacy and trespass can, and will, be mitigated and based on empirical research, in nearly all cases, will likely never become issues.

During the open house, staff made sure to fully and clearly document all resident concerns. We have three pages of notes, with property addresses as applicable and broken down into trail sections. We heard the praise, the criticism and the opposition. We specifically noted the questions about the perceived disparity of the landscape placement, the location of the proposed fence, the type of fence, as well as the issues of safety, privacy and trespass. ***Based on all this valuable feedback, as well as criticism, we will be re-evaluating the placement, composition and extent of the proposed landscaping and fencing.***

What I will share as a reminder, is that the plans you may have seen, either on-line or in person, represented graphic depictions and not necessarily final placement of vegetation and fencing. The design consultant and BCPC staff fully recognize that there are numerous existing field conditions which will

necessitate the field verification and placement of all proposed landscape and fencing as conditions may warrant. This is a normal and expected process within the construction sequence. Furthermore, the installation of the landscape and fencing will be completed before the trail is officially opened. It will not happen months later. I only ask that you please keep this in mind as you look at current or future design plans. *You will receive further correspondence once proposed changes have been finalized.*

As to communications, BCPC staff as well as the Township have made every reasonable attempt to be inclusive and transparent in our dealings regarding the trail. We understand this was not the case with SEPTA's recent activities and we have addressed this with our representatives at SEPTA. In a further effort to ensure improved communications, we are offering to start a trails email distribution list for those who wish to receive updates about the progress and any other specific updates regarding the trail. Additionally, the BCPC maintains an open data portal where trail updates and information will be posted. The trail information can be accessed here: http://trails-bucksgis.opendata.arcgis.com/

Moreover, we created a Frequently Asked Questions section which is also accessed at the above noted web link. This document will likewise be updated, as necessary, to address common concerns or questions generated by the public.

Lastly, the main contact person on our staff for any trail related questions, is Senior Trails Planner, *Paul Gordon*, who may be reached via email at pwgordon@buckscounty.org, or via telephone by calling (215)345-3400. If you wish to be included in the e-mail distribution list, please send your contact information to Paul at the above noted email address. If you do not have access to email, please call Paul to make alternative arrangements. We'll be happy to mail you the updates. If for some reason you can't reach Paul, feel free to contact Director of Transportation Planning, *Richard Brahler*, at rgbrahler@buckscounty.org or by calling (215) 345-3400. I am, likewise, also available.

We have truly listened. We heard you and will be working to further improve our plans to address a number of concerns. On behalf of staff, I thank you again for your participation, input, patience and understanding as we finalize the trail plans.

Sincerely,
Bucks County Planning Commission

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