

## ***PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP MEETING NOTES***

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*June 21, 2011*

The Planning Commission Workshop on the Issues Report convened at approximately 7:03 p.m. on Tuesday, June 21, 2011. Recommendations pertaining to the proposed commercial chapter of the Land Use Element were the focus of the workshop. Present were Commission Members Brian O’Leary, Tony Vale, Charlie Howland, Brian Hirsch and Marc Vitale. Also present from the Board of Commissioners were Commissioner Cheryl B. Gelber, Esq. (Ward 5) and Commissioner George T. Manos, AIA (Ward 9). Township staff present included Bob Duncan, Director of Building and Planning, Chris Leswing, Assistant Director of Building and Planning, Eric Persson, Economic Development Specialist, Colleen Hall, Planner/GIS Technician and Carissa Koll-Hazelton, Planning Technician.

Civic Associations were also invited to attend. Representatives from each of the following civic associations were in attendance: Gladwyne, Merion, Wynnewood, North Ardmore and the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd.

### **Planning Commission Public Workshop**

Mr. Howland called the meeting to order and stated that he would like to welcome everyone to this informal workshop discussion. Mr. Howland explained that the agenda sets forth items in 15-30 minute increments and that the order of some of the agenda items have been revised. Mr. Howland stated that he has read the Issues Report and he has looked not just at the recommendations portion, but also the background section. Mr. Howland stated that as he read through the report he thought that some of the conclusions were obvious and made sense and other areas were not as clear and occasionally he did not agree with what was stated. Mr. Howland stated that he viscerally disagrees with one statement in the report on page 140 under the planning assumptions. Mr. Howland stated that the planning assumptions states that development will likely be transit-oriented, mixed-use development in future years and he disagrees with that assumption, because the community will have to decide that is the type of development they want and it will take vision and willpower to make that type of development happen. Mr. Howland stated that one very real discussion in the Township right now is the City Avenue rezoning. Mr. Howland stated that although it may be at the forefront of everyone’s minds, that it is not the focus of tonight’s discussion. Mr. Howland stated that over the years the Township has focused on individual commercial areas, but tonight the discussion will focus on commercial districts Township-wide in the context of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Howland stated that Mr. Leswing will begin with a presentation.

Mr. Leswing stated that he would first like to introduce the new Planning Commission member Mark Vitale. Mr. Leswing asked Mr. Vitale to provide a little background about himself.

Mr. Vitale stated that he has been a resident of the Township for over 40 years and that he was previously a member of the Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Vitale stated that he has a litigation practice in the Township and that he has children in the school district right now.

Mr. Leswing stated that recently there have been many things coming forward at once and people have had a hard time understanding how it would all fit together. Mr. Leswing stated that a challenge of the Comprehensive Plan is to tie all of these ongoing projects. Mr. Leswing stated that the Comprehensive Plan process provides a chance to evaluate how these commercial districts work together. Mr. Leswing stated that the Issues Report was funded through the Community Development Block Grant program and prepared with help from the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Mr. Leswing stated that no outside consultants were hired and the Township is working with the resources available. Mr. Leswing summarized the agenda for the evening.

Mr. Leswing stated that the central question is what the community wants its commercial areas to be and everything will fall from that. Mr. Leswing stated that the vision will be implemented through the policies, programs and projects and it directly relates to the Township's Capital Improvement Program ("CIP"). Mr. Leswing stated that through the CIP the Township may be able to invest in the civic spaces in commercial areas. Mr. Leswing stated that public-private partnerships are also necessary to make the commercial areas function.

Mr. Leswing stated that the Comprehensive Plan is a community plan to realize a shared vision and the business improvement districts, such as the City Avenue Special Services District, and non-profit agencies, and residents all play a role. Mr. Leswing rhetorically asked if it would be great if efforts were tied together to solve the big issues. Mr. Leswing stated that many people plugged into this process, because of concerns over the big items, such as the rezoning of City Avenue and Bryn Mawr, but the small things are equally important. Mr. Leswing stated that he is glad to see Ms. Vilardo, Executive Director of the Ardmore Initiative at the workshop, because she can explain how important the façade easement program is. Mr. Leswing stated that the reason Lower Merion works is because the community has a number of dedicated extra-governmental people who undertake a lot of the behind the scenes projects.

Mr. Leswing stated that the community does need a vision, but instead of creating a vision statement that can be wordsmithed that he would like to try another strategy. Mr. Leswing stated that the community can create principles to promote attractive commercial streetscapes. Mr. Leswing stated that he is proposing that the commercial areas be separated into five categories. Mr. Leswing stated that an example of a "Regional Center" is City Avenue and it functions differently than other commercial areas because it's a bigger commercial area located along the Township's boundary on a roadway that has a significant amount of through traffic. Mr. Leswing stated that the community also has "Village Centers", such as Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, and Bala Avenue. Mr. Leswing stated that "Village Centers" should contain cultural centers and commercial uses. Mr. Leswing stated that the "Transition Areas" are extensions of the "Village Cores". Mr. Leswing stated that the "Shopping Centers" play a unique role in the Township and they are typically owned and managed by one individual. Mr. Leswing stated that in the "Village Cores" the assemblage of property owners have to work together and then there are also the "Neighborhood Commercial Districts". Mr. Leswing stated that the small commercial area

in Penn Wynne along Manoa Road may be considered a “Neighborhood Commercial District” and perhaps this area should not be zoned the same as a commercial area located along a highway. Mr. Leswing stated that the policies and uses should match the characteristics of the area. Mr. Leswing provided examples of each type of commercial area.

Mr. Leswing asked those present what they would like to see in the “Transition Areas”. Mr. Leswing stated that everyone knows where the “Shopping Centers” are in the Township because that is where a lot of residents do their shopping, but going forward “Shopping Centers” could change in 20 years and be completely redeveloped. Mr. Leswing rhetorically asked what the residents want those areas to look like. Mr. Leswing stated that many of the “Village Cores” were built before the automobile, but now they have to be accommodated for.

Barry Polis, a resident of Bala Cynwyd, stated that he sees that Bala Avenue is designated as a “Village Core” and Merion Cynwyd is a “Neighborhood Commercial District”. Mr. Polis stated that he thinks that Bala Avenue should be a “Neighborhood Commercial District” and not a “Village Core”.

Mr. Leswing stated that these categories were established for discussion purposes and they are not set in stone.

A resident stated that he agrees with Mr. Polis.

Mr. Polis stated that the commercial area along Bala Avenue has never compared to the commercial area at Old Lancaster Road and Montgomery Avenue.

A resident stated that it did at one time, but does not anymore.

Mr. Polis stated that no one can change the fact that the market determines the tenants and that he has obtained approximately 460 signatures of residents who say that is a residential area and not a commercial area.

Lori Salganicoff, a representative from the Lower Merion Conservancy, asked if these categories reflect future conditions or existing conditions.

Mr. Leswing responded that they reflect both.

Mr. Howland asked what folks think about the typology.

Ms. Vilardo stated that one of the things that doesn’t work in the Township is treating all the children the same. Ms. Vilardo stated that there are different needs and wants for each commercial area and painting everything with the same brush can slow down progress.

Steve Selinger, a resident of Penn Valley stated that this is a great report. Mr. Selinger stated that the first thing that should be looked at is who the commercial districts are serving and where they are they coming from. Mr. Selinger stated that all the major roads go from the northwest to

the southeast. Mr. Selinger stated that he lives in Penn Valley and he doesn't need to see any more stuff on Old Gulph Road or Lancaster Avenue. Mr. Selinger stated that he knows that tonight we are not talking about City Avenue, but since the Expressway doesn't work people will be driving down Conshohocken State Road or Lancaster Avenue if they work on City Avenue. Mr. Selinger stated that he is worried about the impact this would have on the western end of the Township. Mr. Selinger stated that there is not a commercial area in Penn Valley, because it is a residential neighborhood and that City Avenue is huge in terms of land area and could significantly impact the amount of traffic driving through the Township.

Mr. Howland asked if there is anything in the Comprehensive Plan that would increase traffic.

Mr. Leswing responded that this report is not promoting development.

Mr. Selinger stated that his worry is the northwest to southeast flow of traffic.

Carol Strickland, a resident of Wynnewood, stated that she agrees with the typology concept, but that she is concerned because some of the areas that have deteriorated are now called "Neighborhood Commercial Districts" and not "Village Cores". Ms. Strickland stated that if you look at Merion Cynwyd it is a "Village Core" and not a "Neighborhood Commercial District". Then there is Bala Avenue which has a lot of residents who would like to have more stores that would meet their needs and they are not currently a "Village Core". Ms. Strickland stated that the Township has to be careful about typecasting "Neighborhood Commercial District" or "Transition Areas", because 20 years ago they may not have been that.

Mr. Howland asked Ms. Strickland if it would still be appropriate to call them "Neighborhood Commercial Districts" if there were people living on the second floors and fewer vacancies and if the areas looked better.

Ms. Strickland stated that if there were a better name than "Neighborhood Commercial District" then she thinks that it may be more amenable. Ms. Strickland stated that she views these areas as villages.

Mr. Leswing asked those present to help define the term "village".

Ms. Vilaro asked why that word is being used. Ms. Vilaro stated that an editorial a few years ago indicated that "Village Cores" is an insular and outdated term.

Mr. Leswing stated that commercial areas were originally built to serve the needs of the community. Mr. Leswing stated that they contained the post office, grocery store, pub and restaurants. Mr. Leswing stated that it has a certain level of intensity that is different from other commercial areas and it has a distinct character.

Mr. Howland stated that when he thinks of a village he thinks that it means that you can get all your needs met there and that there is residential use in the upper stories and that it is integrated with surrounding residential community.

Mr. O’Leary stated that he likes the typology of categories and that this can help to drive revisions to the zoning and provides a basis for planning efforts. Mr. O’Leary stated that he would suggest considering commercial areas such as Manayunk and Narberth and some other nearby communities where residents shop.

Michael Sieden, a resident of Merion, asked if there is a relationship between the typology and the existing zoning.

Mr. Leswing stated that he thinks that one of the things of this exercise is meant to do is to ensure that the zoning matches the desired community character.

Mr. Sieden asked if the typology follows the existing zoning.

Mr. Duncan responded that it does not.

Mr. Howland stated that right now a strip mall could be built in some of the “Village Cores”. Mr. Howland stated that it seems that if the zoning matched the typology that the commercial areas may function better and new development would fit better within the existing built environment.

Allison Graham, a resident of North Ardmore, asked why the “Village Cores” and “Neighborhood Commercial Districts” aren’t merged together. Ms. Graham stated that the only reason to separate these categories would be if different zoning is proposed in the future.

Mr. Leswing stated that in “Neighborhood Commercial Districts” the community may not want to have additional housing whereas by the “Village Cores” it may be more appropriate to have higher density and mixed-use near transit. Mr. Leswing stated that the “Neighborhood Commercial Districts” may have the uses such as a pizza shop that residents would want to walk to.

Ms. Graham stated that the community may want residential uses in the “Neighborhood Commercial Districts”.

Mr. Leswing responded that the community may not want the same level of density.

Mr. Howland asked if there is a qualitative difference between the “Village Cores” and the “Neighborhood Commercial Districts”.

Teri Simon, a resident of Wynnewood, stated that she is having a hard time understanding the concepts. Ms. Simon stated that Lower Merion Township developed in an organic way following the road patterns as one of first suburbs in the country. Ms. Simon stated that the

residential and commercial spots have grown up. Ms. Simon stated that she feels fortunate to have things that people need nearby the residential areas along Montgomery Avenue. Ms. Simon stated that when she thinks of this that she thinks of the Brookings Institution Report and how to avoid urban sprawl in a new community. Ms. Simon stated that most communities want to avoid what Lower Merion has in this area. Ms. Simon stated that she is concerned with the typology because the residents are going to get lost in a sea of semantics. Ms. Simon stated that the Township has places like Ardmore, which she has always seen as the capital of Lower Merion because there is the Township Administration Building and Bryn Mawr, which is different. Ms. Simon stated that she is confused by this typology, because she doesn't know what the point is.

Mr. Howland stated that the next topic on the agenda, Zoning Districts, may explain this.

Mr. Selinger stated that one thing that everyone has heard it that suburban sprawl is bad, but he views it as a good thing, because that is how development happens. Mr. Selinger stated that there has been a lot of talk about making things pedestrian friendly. Mr. Selinger rhetorically asked how many people actually walk. Mr. Selinger stated that the community has to face the reality that residents don't like walking; they like driving.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he would like to address this comment. Mr. O'Leary stated that people do get into their cars to get to the grocery store, but they would like to be able to walk their children to school and the Township needs to plan for these different modes of transportation.

Ms. Simon stated that where residents live affects how they see the community. Ms. Simon stated that where she lives it is a three minute walk to the train station and a seven minute walk to Whole Foods. Ms. Simon stated that she likes where she lives, because she can walk to stuff and get into the train and be in the city in 15 minutes. Ms. Simon stated that she is concerned that a Dunkin' Donuts on Wynnewood Road will make the intersection impossible to navigate. Ms. Simon stated that the Zoning Code allows this use to be put in an inappropriate location, because the definitions are outdated.

Karen Aydt, a resident of Gladwyne, stated that the residents continue to come to these meetings with the same issues. Ms. Aydt stated that they see the commercial areas and they are most concerned with traffic and density. Ms. Aydt stated that there is a frustration in the community due to the lack of transparency of the process. Ms. Aydt asked how the process could be made more transparent. Ms. Aydt stated that the City Avenue thing is the perfect example of what residents are going through now.

Mr. Howland asked if transparency was an issue.

Ms. Aydt responded that the process is the issue. Ms. Aydt stated that this is being done with no vision. Ms. Aydt stated that the people in this room have been telling the Township for months that they do not want more density or more traffic.

Mr. Howland asked if the desire is to have no additional density throughout the entire Township.

Ms. Aydt responded that is correct.

Mr. Polis stated that Mr. Leswing made a good point regarding the typology and the difference between these categories is the scale. Mr. Polis stated that he liked the comment about Ardmore being the capital. Mr. Polis stated that the Zoning Code allows the scales to be taken completely out of balance. Mr. Polis stated that the opposition to the Bala Avenue and City Avenue rezoning stems from the fact that the scale is being changed and the neighborhood that the residents have invested in is being changed. Mr. Polis stated that a commissioner told him that he should have learned and understood the Zoning Code before he moved in and he did that, but now the Zoning Code is being changed.

Mr. Howland asked if Mr. Polis is speaking in regards to City Avenue or to all commercial areas.

Mr. Polis stated that the Township needs to focus on the scale. Mr. Polis stated that if you ride up Belmont Avenue opposite Sutton Terrace there is a beautiful buffer of trees that is inherent to Lower Merion Township.

Mr. Howland stated that perhaps it is time to move this discussion to the zoning piece. Mr. Howland stated that he believes that the typology will be helpful as we move the discussion to zoning.

Mr. Leswing stated that a part of what we want to understand is when we reach capacity. Mr. Leswing stated that he is sensing a complete sense of distrust from the residents. Mr. Leswing stated that the purpose of this meeting is to facilitate a community discussion in order to put residents' comments into a document to go to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Leswing stated that he heard that everything was disjointed and that residents didn't like that. Mr. Leswing stated that he is trying to tie these things back together.

Ms. Aydt stated that there is a sense of distrust amongst many of the residents.

Mr. Selinger asked where all of these people are.

Ms. Aydt responded that she is representing them tonight. Ms. Aydt stated that Gladwyne was fortunate enough to obtain an engineer and the one thing the community realized was that it wasn't the businesses that needed fixing up. It was the infrastructure.

Mr. Leswing stated that is exactly why he indicated that it is important to discuss both the large and small projects. Mr. Leswing stated that Mr. Selinger is the President of the Penn Valley Civic Association and residents approach him because they wanted sidewalks put in throughout the neighborhood in order to make it safe for students to walk to school. Mr. Leswing stated that the job of the government is to find solutions.

Ms. Aydt stated that instead of considering a massive rezoning that the Township could work slowly on a project that will improve the infrastructure. Ms. Aydt stated that many people think that the Gladwyne Civic Association is not concerned about the rezoning of City Avenue, but they are hugely concerned about this. Ms. Aydt stated that she has heard from others that a rezoning of a magnitude such as City Avenue requires a Township-wide study and that has not been done.

Ms. Graham stated that the sticky wicket is the traffic. Ms. Graham stated that there should be a traffic study and if it shows that the traffic is not going to be improved then the City Avenue rezoning should not be considered. Ms. Graham stated that the traffic should be considered up front.

Mr. Leswing stated that traffic impact studies are required as a part of the land development process.

Mr. Howland stated that there are times that it seems that the traffic impact study is pieced together at the end.

Ms. Salganicoff stated that there has been so much work put into this and she has read through the Issues Report and heard it introduced and described and it seems that all of the Township's problems are being stuffed into the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Salganicoff stated that each neighborhood needs its own plan. Ms. Salganicoff asked if the Comprehensive Plan is intended to be an overarching plan. Ms. Salganicoff stated that she is finding herself getting confused. Ms. Salganicoff asked if Mr. Leswing could explain how this all fits together. Ms. Salganicoff stated that there is the Issues Report, but what happens next.

Mr. Leswing stated that the Issues Report was meant to inventory all of the issues in the Township and put it together in one single document.

Ms. Vilardo stated that plans only have so much use. None of the plans predicted what would happen to the economy in the last three years. Ms. Vilardo stated that commercial areas have to respond to the current conditions and she is concerned that plans are not fluid enough or flexible enough. Ms. Vilardo stated that she also thinks that the zoning hasn't accomplished what the community wanted it to accomplish.

Mr. Howland asked if the MUST and ROHO would have developed if the recession for the last three years was taken away.

Ms. Vilardo stated that the smaller projects have had the greatest impact on the commercial areas. Ms. Vilardo stated that Ardmore is still waiting for a transit center.

Mr. Leswing stated that everyone basically wants things that look good, and feel good. Mr. Leswing stated that people think Lower Merion Township is better than other places for a reason and that is because it looks differently.



Ms. Simon stated that a part of the problem is that if you look around the room you have battle weary residents from Bala Avenue and Ardmore. Ms. Simon stated that the Township can plan and plan and plan, but that doesn't mean that the vision will be realized. Ms. Simon stated that the ULI came in with a plan years ago and if there was the political will to implement the study the community wouldn't be talking about Ardmore because it would be bustling by now. Ms. Simon stated that the residents want concrete things in the Zoning Code.

Mr. Leswing asked if Ms. Simon would rather have the Zoning Code changed without any plan in place.

Ms. Simon stated that the Comprehensive Plan should encapsulate what the community should look and feel like. Ms. Simon stated that residents are not professional planners, so they need the help of professional planners to tell them how to retain what they have. Ms. Simon stated that the residents are battle weary veterans, because they have been through the planning process, but it boils down to the political will. Ms. Simon stated that if concrete solutions were proposed then that would help the residents.

Mr. Polis stated that everything in this plan is about growth and there is no control factor.

Mr. Howland stated that he understands that point of view with regard to the City Avenue issue, but the Issues Report is more about what has happened in recent years and how the community can preserve what it has.

Mr. Vale stated that he is hearing that those who have spoken are basically against new projects that increase traffic and that everyone is against changes to scale. Mr. Vale stated that he hasn't heard anyone say that they are concerned about how building nothing in the commercial areas could impact taxes. Mr. Vale stated that he thinks that there are thousands of residents who are not in this room who are concerned about the deteriorating tax base. Mr. Vale stated that no one is addressing it. Mr. Vale stated that a key part of this may be what changes can be made to the Zoning Code to ensure that the tax base doesn't deteriorate.

Ms. Aydt stated that she thinks that is wrong. Ms. Aydt stated that taxes may be maintained by controlling spending. Ms. Aydt stated that she doesn't see a problem with new development on a very small basis, but if taxes are to remain in check she thinks that the spending should be controlled and the infrastructure should be enhanced so that desirable businesses want to come into the Township.

Mr. Vale stated that the Township doesn't affect the school district taxes and unless Lower Merion School District begins to reduce costs it won't have much of an impact on what the residents pay in taxes. Mr. Vale stated that approximately 70 percent of the taxes go to the school district.

Ms. Aydt responded that the money is being spent here.

Mr. Vale stated that the Township increased taxes, but the school district is spending 70 percent of the taxes.

Mr. Polis stated that it is closer to 74 percent.

Mr. Howland stated that the tax revenue is going down because there are deteriorating commercial areas throughout the Township and that the group could have a healthy debate on why that is happening, but he would really like to talk about the things that should be done throughout the Township to improve the condition of the commercial areas.

Ms. Simon stated that all roads take us back to City Avenue, because it is a very important commercial corridor. Ms. Simon stated that she wants to believe that she is being told the truth when Township staff informs her that the Township can't get a decent ratable because businesses are going to Conshohocken. Ms. Simon stated that the community has been presented with something that looks like Bethesda on steroids.

Louis Barson, a resident of Merion, stated that it all comes down to the small businesses. Mr. Barson stated that in order to retain the tax base the Township has to maintain the places like Bryn Mawr and Ardmore. Mr. Barson stated that he has been running his store in the Township for over 20 years and he can think of at least three or four plans that have been completed with different streetscape plans or economic plans.

Mr. Persson stated that a study was done by ERA for the Merion Cynwyd commercial area 5-6 years ago.

Mr. Barson stated that there was also a plan done before that and another before that. Mr. Barson stated that the plans don't accomplish much, but when he redid his store seven years ago it paid off and other property owners invested in their properties. Mr. Barson stated that there are lots of these community meetings where plans are discussed and then the momentum stops, because the Township doesn't have money to implement the plans.

Mr. Leswing stated that the existing zoning doesn't encourage redevelopment in scale with the existing buildings. Mr. Leswing stated that if development continues to come in under the existing zoning the community will not get the results they want. Mr. Leswing stated that this process is meant to come up with a way to achieve the type of development and investment that the community wants. Mr. Leswing stated that it is not about promoting expansion as much as it is regulating the form and the use of new buildings. Mr. Leswing stated that the simple codes that the Township has now doesn't provide incentives and design standards to get the types of development the residents desire.

Mr. Hirsch stated that one of the things that seems to be the premise of the discussion is that the current zoning isn't as effective as the community would like it to be. Mr. Hirsch stated that he liked the categorization of the commercial areas, because he was hoping that it could be a

mechanism by which the Township could set forth standards for areas that are similar. Mr. Hirsch stated that he was hoping to have a discussion of specific examples of what the community would like to see in places like Gladwyne or Bryn Mawr. Mr. Hirsch stated that it seems that the Township may look to refine the Zoning Code, so that is more nuanced for each commercial area. Mr. Hirsch stated that he keeps hearing that people want a master plan that provides advice to the Board of Commissioners with respect to the Zoning Code. Mr. Hirsch stated that if everyone wants to talk about City Avenue then it should be discussed, but he also wants to discuss the smaller commercial areas, such as Manoa Road. Mr. Hirsch stated that his problem with City Avenue is that he doesn't understand what the vision is for that area.

Ms. Simon responded that there is no vision for City Avenue.

Mr. Hirsch stated that if the Township has a Comprehensive Plan that specifically says what the community wants the commercial areas to look like then when something like City Avenue comes forward the citizens can come forward and say that it either does or does not match the stated community vision.

Ms. Simon stated that one of the things that makes Bryn Mawr a beautiful place to be is the Bryn Mawr Beautiful program. Ms. Simon stated that she remembers going to Chestnut Hill and seeing the watering truck out watering the floral arrangements along Germantown Avenue. Ms. Simon stated that this isn't something that can be addressed in zoning but it should be addressed.

Mr. Leswing stated that Ms. Vilaro called a couple weeks ago and indicated that she was having a hard time maintaining the plantings that the Township helped to plant along Lancaster Avenue.

Ms. Vilaro stated that the problem with the incentive zoning and design guidelines is that no one enforces it. Ms. Vilaro stated that unless the Township goes back with a stick those things, such as covering windows, don't get addressed. Ms. Vilaro stated that the other question she had is how the character of the commercial area gets factored into the zoning. Ms. Vilaro stated that the zoning shouldn't cause Gladwyne to have the same character as Ardmore.

Mr. Howland stated that the Comprehensive Plan should not promote a "one size fits all" rezoning.

Ms. Vilaro stated that incentive zoning is listed as something to encourage redevelopment, but just having it in the code doesn't make economic development happen.

Mr. Leswing stated that there has always been a concern about density and a concern that the developers will max out the site. Mr. Leswing stated that incentive zoning allows incremental growth or a bonus in exchange for something that is for the public good.

Ms. Moras stated she opposes using the City Avenue District rezoning ordinance as the cash cow for the Township. Ms. Moras stated that there was nothing in it to preserve the community character, the tree lined streets and beautiful homes with stone facades. Ms. Moras stated that

it's a rezoning proposal that hasn't incorporated anything that everyone has said. Ms. Moras stated that City Avenue was considered the "Golden Mile" and that she feels that there are ways to preserve architecturally important buildings such as the Lord & Taylors.

Mr. Duncan stated that the "Golden Mile" reflects a 1960's auto-oriented strip. Mr. Duncan stated that the era that it was created under is likely not something the community wants to see.

Ms. Aydt stated that she thinks that Ms. Moras was talking about the architecture.

Mr. Duncan asked what was so appealing about the existing architecture.

Mr. Howland asked if Ms. Moras was trying to indicate that as the "Golden Mile" that City Avenue was once an economic engine of great importance to the Township or that the phrase refers to the architectural style in that area.

Ms. Moras stated that she would like to see City Avenue retain its existing architectural character.

Ms. Aydt stated that what happened with City Avenue is that the vision was given to the residents; it was not discussed with the residents. Ms. Aydt stated that everyone who has spoken has indicated that they do not want 200 feet tall buildings and do not want density. Ms. Aydt stated that residents want the suburban type center that exists today. Ms. Aydt stated that she doesn't think that residents want to see an additional building area of 11.5M square feet.

Mr. Duncan stated that the 11.5M square feet is a number that has been commonly thrown around, but it is not realistic to expect that level of development in the area because it assumes that every single property will be built out to the maximum. Mr. Duncan stated that in reality there are very few, if any commercial properties that could actually be built out to this maximum.

Ms. Moras stated that there is development potential that is being given to developers that can't be pulled back once the zoning is passed.

Mr. Duncan responded that it could be pulled back and the zoning could be amended.

Mr. Polis stated that nothing has been addressed to the fact of the management of the funds by the Township itself. Mr. Polis stated that there is a tremendous amount of money going into the Township and 40 percent of the Township's budget goes to the payroll. Mr. Polis stated that the Township needs to get its foot off the throttle and that the Township is spending at a rate that the community cannot afford. Mr. Polis stated that the zoning and planning should not be focused on solving the existing spending problem of the Township.

Mr. Leswing stated that going forward it will be important to better understand the relationship between land uses, zoning and tax revenue. Mr. Leasing stated that the community needs to understand where the money is coming from and what the relationship is between finances and land use.

Mr. Barson asked if Mr. Leswing had gone to the next step with the categorization of the commercial areas.

Mr. Leswing responded that he has not. Mr. Leswing stated that we are going through this process to determine the priority of the elements and to address the issues.

Ms. Vilaro stated that it is clear that no one is in favor of density and that she thinks that it's important to ask the business owners what they want. Ms. Vilaro stated that when Commissioner Gelber started the Ad Hoc Ardmore Committee it was the first time that residents and business owners sat down together at one table. Ms. Vilaro stated that she is not seeing any economic development in the Township getting the support they need. Ms. Vilaro stated that when people say that "we all" don't want density she doesn't know who "we all" includes, because there are people in the community who would favor a certain amount of density.

Mr. Polis stated that he thinks that this plan is geared towards benefitting the REITs and not the community.

Mr. Howland asked if he is referring to the Issues Report or to the City Avenue rezoning.

Mr. Leswing stated that Mr. Polis is referring to City Avenue and this meeting is not about City Avenue.

Mr. O'Leary stated that the county has done community surveys to understand what the residents want. Mr. O'Leary stated that the Planning Commission generally sees the same handful of people at all of these meetings, and their comments may or may not be representative of what the community as a whole wants. Mr. O'Leary stated that a survey may be helpful in understanding what the community wants. Mr. O'Leary stated that he feel that these workshops are in quicksand and he wants to move this process forward.

Ms. Aydt stated that the Planning Commission may see the same cast of characters because they are represent the Civic Associations and report back to the larger group.

Mr. Vale stated that people pay a lot of real estate tax in Gladwyne. Mr. Vale asked if Ms. Aydt had informed the civic association that if everything in City Avenue is preserved and the Township doesn't allow any additional development that the residents may be paying tens of thousands of dollars in taxes in the future.

Mr. O'Leary stated that the civics certainly provide a part of the answer regarding what people think, but he doesn't think that it's the full answer because not every resident belongs to a civic association. Mr. O'Leary stated that having a broader response would be helpful.

Ted Goldsborough, a resident of Bala Cynwyd, stated that he thinks that the people here have educated themselves on the issues and that this argument really gets his goat. Mr. Goldsborough stated that the posit that doing nothing is not going to work is setting up a straw man argument.

Mr. Goldsborough stated that allowing for additional development without having any plan doesn't make any sense.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he would like to go back to the survey comment. Mr. O'Leary stated that not everyone will be as educated on the issues as this group, but more simple questions could be posed and it could be structured so that both sides of particular issues are discussed. Mr. O'Leary stated that it seems that everyone is just yelling at each other all the time.

Ms. Aydt stated that the Township can't assume that this rezoning will generate all this tax revenue and that there will be no tax revenue if nothing is done or if something different from what is proposed is done. Ms. Aydt stated that in Gladwyne there has been a huge influx of development resulting in additional tax revenue being generated.

Ms. Graham stated that all of the development in Gladwyne is residential, which requires additional community facilities.

Ms. Aydt stated that no one is saying that they don't want any additional growth.

Mr. Vale stated that it sounds like everyone in this room is against the current version of the plan for City Avenue.

Ms. Simon stated that there is no plan.

Mr. Vale stated that one of the main problems is that people are not for tall buildings along City Avenue. Mr. Vale asked if they would rather see additional density near transit. Mr. Vale asked if everyone thinks that it would be appropriate to have 10-story buildings next to the other train stations such as Rosemont.

Ms. Aydt responded that everyone is not saying not to develop City Avenue. Ms. Aydt stated that there needs to be a master planning process for City Avenue.

Commissioner Gelber stated that there is a big difference between business owners and building owners. Commissioner Gelber stated that most of the residents support business owners but get angry at the building owners when they try to take advantage of a situation.

Commissioner Gelber stated that it is insulting that the Lord & Taylor building owner says that he can't develop anything under 10-stories. Commissioner Gelber stated that she has also noticed a lot of emphasis being placed on pedestrian friendly development along City Avenue, but we're focusing most of our attention on improving the roadway intersections. Commissioner Gelber stated that if the Township keeps improving these intersections it will not encourage people to get out of their cars and walk. Commissioner Gelber stated that it's not fair to residents to have uses in a commercially zoned corridor that will create fumes or to have 10-story buildings shadowing entire yards or to have cut through traffic.

Commissioner Gelber stated that the Township has to figure out how to protect and buffer residential communities from new commercial development. Commissioner Gelber stated that if the only goal of the City Avenue district is to create tax revenue then we have to be honest with ourselves and realize that we could collect an earned income tax instead and not require any additional development to generate taxes. Commissioner Gelber stated that someone said that the Board of Commissioners is not doing anything to reduce Township expenses, but we are doing a lot to bring that down. Commissioner Gelber stated that if the option is to increase the cost of benefits for employees to a degree that no one wants to work here or to allow for increased density in commercial areas such as City Avenue or to collect additional taxes from the residents then these things have to be discussed. Commissioner Gelber stated that she believes that if a model were provided to help residents understand the potential impact of the City Avenue District rezoning it would really help.

Ms. Salganicoff stated that the description of City Avenue as a “Golden Mile” referred to the fact that it was an economic engine and that there was an attention to the design of the buildings. Ms. Salganicoff stated that it was a part of what was inspired and drew people into the area. Ms. Salganicoff stated that as we look to the future and think about the past it’s not always about the bricks and mortar. Ms. Salganicoff stated that the Lord & Taylor building is a vestige of what it once was. Ms. Salganicoff stated that when we talk about aesthetics we’re not talking about just the bricks and mortar but also the ability of the building to inspire people. Ms. Salganicoff stated that when we talk about what the different neighborhoods it is important to recognize that they are all different and special. Ms. Salganicoff stated that everyone has to keep in mind that what we’re trying to do is inspire beauty and to construct buildings that fit with what we have. Ms. Salganicoff stated that the spirit of it is something that we need to be mindful of. Ms. Salganicoff asked what the spirit is that is going behind the City Avenue District ordinance that will inspire beauty and contribute to the character of the community. Ms. Salganicoff stated that it’s difficult to sit here and have that conversation without having a discussion of what those elements are. Ms. Salganicoff stated that it’s hard to know how to comment in a constructive way on specific things at these workshops.

Mr. Howland stated that one of the starkest recommendations was Mr. O’Leary’s recommendation for the community survey.

Mr. Leswing stated that the next meeting will be focused on public land uses and community facilities.

Mr. Howland drew the meeting to a close at approximately 9:17 p.m.

Meeting notes recorded by Carissa Koll-Hazelton, Planning Technician