



MEETING NOTES

Project: **Newtown Meadow Preserve
Master Site Plan**

Project
No.: **17010.10**

Location: **Newtown Township Building
209 Bishop Hollow Road**

Meeting
Date/
Time: **09.19.2017
7- 9 pm**

Topic: **Public Meeting #2**

Issued: **10/18/2017**

ATTENDEES:

See Sign In sheet

MEETING NOTES:

1. Peter Simone opened the meeting by giving project background and updates, Sarah Leeper presented concept plans, Mike McGraw spoke about habitat and the goal of blending habitat types within the preserve. Mike M said there is a regional conservation interest to encourage breeding for some species that would do well at the Preserve.
2. A resident asked to confirm the type of median proposed for Route 252. Peter S said that it would most likely be a raised median in the same location as the painted, striped asphalt that exists today. He said a car could drive over the median if they needed to do so, but it would prevent the everyday driver from turning left into or out of the entrance driveway. Final designs for the median would need to be reviewed by PennDOT.
3. It was asked how bus parking would be handled on site for school groups. Peter S said that conversations with Episcopal Academy have taken place to determine if school groups could access the site using the EA driveways that can safely accommodate school buses. Pete noted that EA is open to discussing the idea and that it appears that this will be a viable solution for school group / bus access.
4. Mark Notaro noted that the proposed raised median would only allow south bound traffic to make a right turn from the PA-252 bypass lanes; motorists on the main portion of PA-252 would not be able to turn right into the entrance road. Peter S said this is correct. **Simone Collins (SC) will need to address with PennDot how best to resolve this issue, one option is to provide signage north of the bypass to correctly direct park users to the entrance.**
5. about it was asked what happens to the size and condition of the wetland in each concept. The concept plans do not impact the existing wetlands. Mike M said there are opportunities for wetland enhancement on the site. Wetland enhancement can be expensive but there may be benefits for the Township's Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) Plans. Peter S stated that it is normally easier to obtain park development funding where as MS4

improvements are not typically funded by grant programs, therefore it may be wise to consider site amenities that benefit the preserve while fulfilling criteria of the Township's MS4 allowing the township to obtain grant funding and meet two goals with the proposed improvements.

6. It was noted that Okehocking Preserve has a mown lawn path, and asked if mown lawn paths are feasible at Newtown Meadow Preserve? Peter S noted that a mown lawn path is not handicap accessible and that publicly funded facilities need to conform to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). He noted that stone dust and asphalt are ADA accessible surfaces, due to the topography on the site a recommendation would be to use an asphalt surface; stone dust paths will erode in areas greater than five (5) percent slopes. He stated asphalt will allow for maintenance and emergency access and requires less maintenance once installed. He noted that a mown shoulder could be added along the asphalt path, to allow for a softer surface of runners and walkers. He suggested that red asphalt could be considered and it may fade more easily into the landscape than regular black asphalt. Mike M noted that Longwood Gardens does have lawn trails, however they have a much larger preserve and dedicated stewardship team that allows them to reroute trails to address compaction and erosion problems. An attendee noted that Longwood Gardens also has a porous locked gravel trail that is accessible and looks more like gravel. Peter S said that that option would most likely be cost prohibited but that porous asphalt could be a good alternative.
7. It was asked about ideas to manage bicycle and pedestrian circulation on site. Peter S said that the township will need to determine if the preserve will be open to bikes. He did not see the preserve as a desirable adult biking destination, however small children may find the trails a fun place to bike. With allowing bicycles, traffic safety issues do need to be considered; conflicts between fast moving cyclist and a slow walker can be minimized by determining a proper trail width. It was suggested that a bike rack should be considered at the trail head so that users can bike to the preserve and then walk through.
8. Pete noted that the Township will also need to develop a dog policy for the preserve; questions to consider are to allow or not allow dogs, and whether to permit on-leash or off-leash dogs.
9. It was asked if the wetlands have open water and/or are they pond like? Mike M said the wetlands are areas of heavily saturated soils. He noted that in early spring you might see vernal pools, and after a heavy rain periods there may be areas of ponding water, but they are not open water wetlands.
10. An attendee asked about the origin of the pond on Liseter HOA property. Mike said the pond was probably created for former farming use and would not have been a naturally created geological feature since we are south of glaciated geology. Pete suggested that we review the historic images to see if we can determine when it was built. A review of the historic aerials depicts the area of the pond as being heavily wooded into the 1950's.
11. It was asked if it is reasonable to anticipate that the Township would be able to undertake the management of the proposed additional Liseter HOA (Homeowners Association) open space lands. Peter S said that the decision to add lands is a concept we felt should be explored. Having the ability to manage a greater area of the woodland around the preserve will lead to a more easily managed and higher quality meadow habitat. Sarah L. noted that management for removal of invasive species typically focuses on edge habitat where invasive species tend to gain a foothold, these can include waterways, pathways, or utility corridors. Pete noted that ultimately any change in the Preserve property size, will be a decision made by Liseter residents, dependent on the Board of Supervisors support for the idea, and may not happen for a couple of years. Until that time, the master plan will recommend the establishment of a management program for the Preserve that recommends a dual management partnership between the Liseter HOA and the Township.

12. Dick Brant said that there is a long way to go in this planning and implementation process but the plan looks great so far. He said Liseter is willing to work together with the Township to decide the best management strategy.
13. There was a question about future development on the HOA land. Peter S said that HOA are deed restricted preserved lands; future development is not permitted to occur.
14. It was asked if using the Liseter Trail as the main public access point and if the increased public use of the Liseter Trail would be of concern with the Liseter residents. Peter S stated that the Lister Trail was developed with a public access easement and that the intent was for the public to be able to use the trail to reach the preserve so this should not be a concern.
15. It was asked what type of trail would be provided at the Echo Valley access point. Peter S stated that we would recommend an earthen hiking trail due to the extreme site constraints in this area. He noted that it does not need to be ADA accessible since the primary site access from Rt 252 will be accessible.
16. It was asked what the anticipated level of use for the site would be. Peter S stated that there are no solid guidelines for predicting this, however our experience is that the site will experience higher use when it first opens due to the novelty, but then use will slowly decrease and level out. He noted that the restriction of available parking (5-10 spaces) will be a natural restrictor to site use and that a site of this nature is most often used by nearby populations and would not be a daily regional destination.
17. It was asked if the restrooms would be open in the winter. Peter S said seasonal use is a township decision, currently the Township winterizes and closes restrooms for the off season. It was asked how a restroom facility would be funded. Pete noted that bathrooms are a normal park improvement, and that grant funding from an agency such as DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resource) are available. He noted that due to the uniqueness of the site design consideration be given to creating a unique restroom structure with durable materials as oppose to using a park kit restroom.
18. It was asked how the master plan study was funded. Peter S stated that the study was funded by a DCNR grant matched by Township funds.
19. It was asked if the entrance pathway on the northern boundary needed to be so long. Sarah L replied that the slopes are very steep in this area, and the switch back path design is required to provide a gradually sloped trail that meets ADA access.
20. It was asked if there was a fence proposed along the northern boundary of the property. Peter S replied yes, there is a fence proposed along with a mixed planting of evergreen and deciduous tree and understory planting to provide a buffer between the Preserve and the Episcopal Academy.
21. Mike Aufiero asked if there would be call boxes on site. Peter S replied that this could be considered, however they may not be needed because most of the public carry phones on their person these days. Pete noted that the Preserve is not in a high crime area, where you would typically see the use of call boxes. There was a question about the addition of wayfinding signage and developing a system for providing your location in the preserve if you are injured. Peter S agreed that static signs, landmarks, posts with numbers, or an emergency identification number system like along the Schuylkill River Trail could be implemented for this purpose.
22. There was a question about the core meadow. Peter S said the area would be comprised of only meadow plants. Mike M stated that the meadow would be dominated by a variety of grass species with the inclusion of wildflowers, comprising a field of assorted colors and textures. He said there could be colorful "hot spots" of blooming flowers around signage. Incorporation of and rain garden areas within the meadow plan can demonstrate their benefits and beauty and encourage property owners to consider building their own.

23. Peter S stated that the fire chief is not opposed to a controlled burn for meadow management, if such a management practice were proscribed it would be performed in by a licenses professional in conjunction with the fire department under prescribed weather conditions.
24. Pete noted that moving forward the township will need to determine if and how to manage local deer herds; noting that options for a controlled hunt to cull the deer herd should be considered. Mike M said deer management can also take place through careful selection, placement, and protection of proposed plantings. It was asked if physical barriers were an option. Peter S stated deer proof fences are usually unattractive and expensive. Mike M added that deer will constantly challenge fences to find a way through and they require maintenance to keep in working order. Peter S added that deer also create problems for Township and homeowner landscape maintenance, and road safety. Mike M said there could be deer protection fences for individual species (shrubs, trees, herbaceous).
25. It was asked if Canadian geese would be a problem on the site. Peter S said geese would most likely not be a problem on site, they prefer areas with open water and low grass so that they can see predators.
26. It was asked if the meadow would attract birds of prey. Mike M stated that it already is, noting that he has seen a snowy owl along with other birds of prey on site. He would expect that the site will continue to be attractive to birds of prey with improvements to the meadow.

This report represents the Professional's summation of the proceedings and is not a transcript. Unless written notice of any correction or clarification is received by the Professional within ten days of issue, the report shall be considered factually correct and shall become part of the official project record.

Sincerely,
SIMONE COLLINS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Melissa Barley
Staff Landscape Architect