

# Swarthmore Planning Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date September 22, 2021

Commission Attendees	Chris DeBruyn – Chair, Acting Secretary Steve Minton Nancy Templeton <del>Don Jones</del> Douglas Perry	Rex Brien <del>Laura Poltronieri</del> David Virgil James Levine Elizabeth Jenkins Doug Harnsberger
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Also in Attendance

Betsy Larsen	Borough Council Liason
<del>Jane Billings</del>	Borough Manager
Ross Schmucki	Borough Council Member

Meeting Location Borough Hall Council Room and Online

- C. DeBruyn called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 PM
- Approval of July Meeting minutes – So moved, seconded and approved.

### NEW BUSINESS

- DELCORA
  - Introduction by Chris
    - Act 537 is a regulatory requirement for wastewater authorities to provide a full plan of the system, including long term improvements, financing requirements, and general system condition and operation.
    - DELCORA operates a system that treats most of the wastewater from Delaware county via 2 methods – first is the Western treatment plant,(WWTP) located at the southern end of the Delaware river waterfront, this handles a portion of the county wastewater. The balance of the wastewater is pumped to be treated and released at a Philadelphia owned treatment plant. This arrangement is contractual and the contract is due for renegotiation in a few years. There are several large costs coming up both defined, and undefined, that will be required if DELCORA maintains this agreement.
  - This new 537 plan presents 4 options to revising the current system
    - Option 1 – Expand the Western treatment facility, and revise systems to flow to the Western treatment facility.
    - Option 2 – Construct a deep storage tunnel to detain heavy storm overflow events, allowing a gradual release through the WWTP with reduced upgrades.
    - Option 3 – Building a new WWTP and piping systems.
    - Option 4 – No Action, renegotiate agreement with Philadelphia.
  - Delcora is recommending Option 2 as the lowest cost and most feasible alternative.
  - Ross provided some additional information
    - DELCORA has offered 2 different ACT 537 plans in recent years.
      - A plan similar to Option 1
      - A plan to sell DELCORA to Aqua PA.

- Swarthmore approved the earlier Option 1 style Act 537 Plan, and protested the DELCORA/Aqua transaction.
- No indications have been provided as to why the earlier Act 537 plan needed to be revised and why the Tunnel option was not considered at that point.
- DELCORA did not provide any warning or indications that this revised plan was in the works, and he thought it was unusual that they would be trying to implement this large new project, with related funding, while there were significant issues surround the proposed DELCORA/Aqua transaction.
- Discussion:
  - James asked if the borough, or some coalition of cities had engaged experts to provide the borough officials, and us, with some basis to evaluate this highly technical proposal. Ross stated that the costs for experts would probably be prohibitive, and that DELCORA had in the past provided this support to townships, but was apparently not doing so at the present time.
  - Chris noted that his review of the document included a review of the expected population increases, which seemed optimistic in a county that is heavily built up, and that has seen significant declines in population for decades. He noted that the calculations for the system might be oversized if those optimistic projections were not achieved.
  - Elizabeth noted that storms appeared to be increasing in size and intensity, and the projections could work out for the best.
  - A public commenter asked if federal funds would be available to help offset these costs. Chris noted that a portion of the DELCORA system was originally constructed with Clean Water Act Funding, but that very little funding was available from the federal government for wastewater projects at the moment.
  - Rex asked if we were on a timeline, that the document mentioned a 30 and 60 day schedule, Chris said that he would confirm the timeline with Jane.
- Chris suggested having a draft response available for our next meeting.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

- MMP: Nancy noted that she had spoken with all involved townships, and that Nether Providence was not interested in participating, but that all others were meeting on Monday to discuss a pathway forward.
- Accessory Dwellings: Chris briefly described the accessory dwelling ordinance, and the issue that brought it to our attention, and some potential revisions to the ordinance that might mitigate similar impacts in the future.

#### **UPCOMING ITEMS**

- Potential land development application in Town Center

#### **NEXT MEETING:**

The next scheduled meeting will be held Wednesday October 20, 2021. In the event an accelerated response is due on the DELCORA matter, a meeting will be scheduled for

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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End of Meeting Minutes