

DOYLESTOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Special Meeting

September 30, 2009

The Doylestown Township Board of Supervisors was held a Special Meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 30, 2009 at Lenape Middle School, Doylestown, PA. Members of the Board of Supervisors is attendance included Barbara N. Lyons, Chairman; E. Thomas Scarborough, Jr., Vice Chairman; Barbara Eisenhardt Cynthia Philo and Jeffrey Bennett;. Others in attendance included Jeffrey Garton, Township Solicitor; Stephen White, Chief of Police; Mario Canales, Township Engineer; Phil Wursta, Township Traffic Engineer and Stephanie Mason, Township Manager. Special guest: Lynn Bush, Bucks County Planning Commission Executive Director.

Ms. Lyons welcomed everyone to the meeting. She indicated that the Township had received a petition back in February requesting that consideration be given to closing Rogers Road with the impending developments of the Grasso tract and the Temple Judea tract.

Ms. Lyons indicated that the Township Traffic Engineer, Phil Wursta, was asked to review the implications of closing the road and the impact on traffic and also asked Chief White and Emergency Services to look at the impact.

Tonight the presentation from Mr. Wursta and Chief White regarding the implications of traffic issues associated with closing the road would be discussed.

PRESENTATION BY PHIL WURSTA, TOWNSHIP TRAFFIC ENGINEER

Attached please find a copy of Mr. Wursta's power point presentation, which reviewed the implications of closing Rogers Road and his evaluation of the impact on traffic and traffic related issues along with alternative suggestions.

IMPLICATIONS OF CLOSING ROGERS ROAD – Police Chief Stephen White

Chief White indicated that the impact quality of life around the township with vehicles has doubled and tripled. Every home now has 3 or 4 cars, where previously they had 2. The trips on the roads are significant. The Township is fragmented. The police require assistance in responding to things in the neighborhoods and sometimes seconds count.

Chief White indicated that he is not in favor of closing the road. He would recommend to the Board of Supervisors that Rogers Road not be closed.

He indicated that the police department could certainly do better job of speed enforcement and that Pennsylvania is the only state that does not allow it's municipal police to use radar.

Chief White then invited Denis Loux, Fire Chief, Doylestown Fire Company, to comment.

Chief Loux indicated that it would have a big impact on the fire service if the road were closed. He said that Rogers Road area is the furthest out of the response area, but other area fire companies such as Midway, Lingahocken, and Warwick respond and by closing Rogers Road you prevent them from being able to provide a prompt response to potential fires.

In addition, Chief Loux indicated that there are no fire hydrants in the area and therefore pumper trucks are relied upon. He indicated that if a 10x10 room were on fire that every minute a response does not occur the fire doubles in size, thereby creating a bigger danger to people in response in 4-6 minutes. Closing the road could delay that even further.

Central Bucks Ambulance had provided a written response which the Chief mentioned. Also, indicating their concern for the closure of the road as well.

Chief White indicated that Chief Daniels from Buckingham Township provided correspondence raising concerns as well. Recommending that the road not be closed.

Mr. Wursta then provided information as to an alternative that could be considered in lieu of closing the road. And that would be to place a connection between Rogers Road and the potential development of the Grasso Tract. Obviously, decisions regarding the development of that tract has not been resolved and the Board of Supervisors is in litigation with the owners of the Grasso Tract, but he indicated to eliminate having the potential for 4 lights on Rt. 263. The Grasso Tract depending on how its developed and how the LI piece on the property gets develop, could eliminate by having 3 lights along Rt. 263, one at Edison Furlong and one at Rt.313. Instead of having a light at Rogers have one at the entrance of the Grasso development. Also, you could allow for cross connection between the Grasso tract and the proposed Temple Judea site. Thereby reducing traffic coming out, still allow for the right out, right in off of Rt. 263 onto Rogers but you would eliminate the potential for 4 lights as there is a requirement for Temple Judea to apply for a light as part of their proposed development.

In addition, another alternative is to reduce the speed limit on the road. Mr. Wursta indicated that his staff has been out evaluating various locations on road and various site distances and safe stopping distances and his staff has determined that the speed limit could be lowered from 35 mph to 25 mph and that is a recommendation. In addition, continue monitoring traffic, once Grasso and the Temple were built, and also have a further study done on the ability to conduct traffic calming on the roadway.

Lynn Bush, Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission, provided information on the regional perspective of the area. She indicated that the County looks at transportation from three categories:

One is that they have a close relationship with PennDOT where they receive funding in Bucks County. It's not to be a lot of funding but money is spent from PennDOT's use on current roadways make them safer and more efficient. The only new roadway proposed is the Rt. 202 Parkway. But their idea is to fix things first.

Two, the Bucks County Planning Commission answers questions regarding transportation and she said that the calls usually come in two categories. First, that people can't go fast enough to get to their destination and second, that people are going too fast in the neighborhood so you have competing objectives she said.

Third, the Bucks County Planning Commission plans for land use transportation and planning and accounting for the roadway networks and public transportation. They see this consistently when looking at plans and working with PennDOT on smart transportation, alternatives to enhance local streets or road and public transportation options and utilizing the guidance from PennDOT for strategy of transportation network for the county.

Most local ordinances, she indicated, have required street connections to occur. That inter connection is always difficult. She has attended a number of meetings similar to this where it is usually policy of local townships to promote interconnection of roadways. She finds that even when a development is proposed the interconnection at the end the result is not as bad as the prediction.

Bucks County Planning Commission looks at ways alternatives can help walkers, people with strollers, cars, traffic calming, and it is understandable to make sure the character of the local roadways is preserved and traffic calming usually helps that.

She indicated that Buckingham Township policies, (she indicated that she was just reviewing a draft of their comprehensive plan) indicates for and works towards a connection of local roadways and helps add to safety and they strongly favor connecting roadways and needs to be planned as part of major potential development as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Edgar Neff, 150 Rogers Road, indicated that he is opposed to closing Rogers Road and he's good to hear from the Chief and the Fire Company, that we can't afford to do that. He said that he got a flyer Monday and said it was our last chance to voice opinions to closing the road and that people were concerned about safety. He's concerned if the EMS can't get through because of the road closure. He indicated that he's not worried about any reasonable number of cars being added to the road. He's more concerned the impact closing the road would have in the neighborhood, which he's lived in since 1963. He said he was not concerned about noise. He indicated that safety must come first and politic last, which was also on the flyer. He said he did not understand that.

He asked Mr. Wursta to clarify the average number of trips per day, which Mr. Wursta did. It was anticipated that 550 on a Sunday a normal day 220 cars. Mr. Wursta also

indicated that 10% of the Temple membership is identified as living in the nearby neighborhood in the Township.

Mr. Neff concluded that he did not want the road closed.

Mr. Joe O'Malley, 138 Rogers Road, indicated that Mr. Wursta threw PennDOT's name around in his presentation and wondered why they weren't present this evening.

Mr. O'Malley indicated that he spoke to Nepal Patel from PennDOT, who indicated that he would not issue traffic signal permits for Rt. 263 and there were no active applications for permits for Rt. 263 either.

Mr. Wursta indicated that he was speaking, in his presentation, of his dealings with PennDOT and of his personal opinion and his experience with PennDOT in his career. He also indicated that he serves as traffic engineer in other communities and when similar problems occur he has been able to obtain permits for the municipalities when necessary.

Chief White indicated that Rt. 202 near the hospital has five (5) lights.

Mr. O'Malley indicated that in order to avoid traffic he tends to cut through local streets.

Mr. Wursta indicated that the lights on Rt. 263 would need to be a part of a closed loop system and that if the Grasso tract were to be developed and allowed for the through connection that would provide better access and eliminate having the potential for four (4) lights. But again the lights on Rt. 263 would be connected.

Mr. O'Malley indicated that he's lived on Rogers Road for 37 years and he's made left turns out onto Rt. 263 and he has a problem because Temple Judea may go in and it is alright for them to make it require a light in order to accommodate the increase in traffic on Rogers Road. He believes the Township is showing partiality when they weren't concerned for his safety in the past.

Spring Valley was identified as having 400-700 cars per day in the Zoning Hearing Board. Things have changed. Also need to lock down funding. Who comes back as checks again on Spring Valley Road? He doesn't want Rogers Road closed either, but you can't let people use it get to the Temple.

Mr. Wursta indicated that the characteristics of Spring Valley and Rt. 313 may end up warranting a light. If you transfer Rogers Road traffic to Spring Valley as well as Turkey Lane because the grade and condition.

Mr. O'Malley indicated that he would like to see the alternatives for the cross connection through the Gasso tract as long as it could be worked out to prevent traffic from coming out and up Rogers Road.

John Reinhart, 80 Valley Drive, indicated that he has lived in the area since 1973. He is in favor keeping Rogers Road open for EMS purposes. He does not want to slow fire and ambulance. He participates in the fire service as a fire policeman and with mutual aid and the need for pumper trucks and water you don't want to get there and find the road closed. You need police, maybe speed bumps, but we need to keep the road open.

MaryLou Struznewski, 22 Book Drive, she thanked Mr. Wursta for responding to the questions that had been sent over previously by the residents. She inquired about a ball park figure for a traffic signal.

Mr. Wursta just said approximately \$130,000.

Ms. Struznewski indicated that in her opinion one traffic light was better than 2 lights on Rt. 263 and allowing vehicles to go through the Grasso tract to a traffic light verses utilizing Rogers Road was common sense and also be half the cost. She indicated that she was not pleased with closing Rogers Road. She would like the idea of an openable gate though, but she understood the concerns of the EMS. She also appreciated the couple of minutes in the fear of EMS response. She indicated that if the Temple agreed to use the access to be able to make safe right be better to buy one traffic light, also if the Temple could have assistance with the timing of the connection and crossing preventing people to go up the road.

David Gould, 79 Valley Road, indicated that when you come on Rogers Road school buses can't make a right turn because of the width of the road. Not a fan of the light at Rogers and Rt. 263. Interconnection at Rt. 263 and Grasso seems good. He asked for the difference between subcollector and collector roads. Mr. Wursta provided. He also didn't think that the Chief's comparison of Rt. 202 and to Rt. 263 was equivalent but he said it was good to hear from the EMS. He also indicated that people who use the road for walking, jogging, biking, that the speed bumps may help. Perhaps speed bumps and extra police officers would be helpful.

Karen Ross, 84 Turkey Lane, indicated that she's been a resident for 15 years. She indicated that coming to the meeting she wanted Rogers Road closed but listening to Mr. Wursta she has changed her opinion and thinks that the alternative connection through Grasso is appropriate. She listened to the EMS and believes it is not a good idea to close the road. She thinks that if things are put in place like traffic calming would be helpful. She also indicated that she thought that Mr. Wursta had actually spoken with PennDOT and that he needed to be clearer in his presentation regarding his opinion and experience. She indicated that she believes that people make decisions and it takes time to resolve them but she thinks the exit through Grasso is a good idea.

Mr. Wursta apologized and indicated that he has had a working relationship with Mr. Patel and PennDOT for many years. He presented the alternative with the connection through Grasso taking into consideration it was something for consideration. Obviously, the suggestion still needs to be vetted out. He believes that traffic calming, reducing the speed limit to 25 mph, could be helpful.

Chief White indicated that the 85th percentile speed of 38 mph although it is posted at 35 mph. Chief White further indicated that reducing the speed to 25 mph is important and that the Traffic Advisory Committee could certainly work on the traffic calming issues.

Lindsay Knight, 31 Turkey Lane, questioned Mr. Wursta about his dates and confirmed that information that she learned in High School is that statistics don't always give you the correct picture. She indicated that although 10% of the Temple members might live in the neighborhood 50% live in the Borough and the data can be used in any way, you want to interpret the raw numbers verses what actually happens. She's afraid traffic will increase on Rogers, Spring Valley and Turkey Lane. She believes the drive connection through Grasso should be made one way and that the traffic study from Grasso may show where the Temple members live but may not account for how they are going to drive to get to their destination. She wanted to make sure that the developer would be required to pay for the light. She also indicated that she sees Spring Valley and Rt. 313 becoming more dangerous. She'd like to see money available for traffic light there.

Ken Snyder, 50 Foxcroft Drive, indicated that he would like to see the data not just the recommendation. What is the actual data for lefts on Rogers Road. The data of what happens to traffic leaving and supporting it. He didn't see the data. He thought it was a nice dog and pony show. Why can't the data be presented. What would the warrants be for the Temple to meet for a traffic signal. Again data being provided to use Rt. 263 and the potential for four traffic lights and the comments that Ms. Bush made with regards to questions regarding Rt. 263 renovations. They've been ongoing for well over six months.

Ms. Bush indicated that PennDOT has improvements along Rt. 263 up to Rt. 413 as a paving project.

Pierre Menard, 1 Old Nursery Way, indicated that he is not ready to voice an opinion. He would like to know which would have less impact, both equal and the light. He'd rather see one light than two. He believes the Grasso location has better benefits and obviously its cheaper to have one than two lights on Rt. 263. Having right in, right out on Rogers would be the beneficial allowing residents that live behind Grasso to use the signal would be good. 10% assumption was questioned. He questioned whether it was a proven assumption. What changes the assumption and how will that be addressed.

Mr. Wursta indicated that data was provided and verified from the Temple's engineer and his office verified the information as well during the preliminary land development process.

Mr. Menard questioned at what point the assumptions are readdressed.

Sue Bingler, 29 Turkey Lane, indicated that there should be a comprehensive plan for traffic for the area referencing Mr. Gould's comments and that the right turn for Rogers from Rt. 263 is very difficult and hard to make. Especially if a pick up truck is at the

corner. The light would just make it difficult. She questioned when the recognition of the problem is now without the increase of traffic.

Mr. Wursta indicated that a signal could be installed under existing conditions also an evaluation could have it so that the stop bars are staggered. This would all be evaluated by PennDOT as well as the status of radius when the signal permit plans are submitted to PennDOT for evaluation and consideration.

Mrs. Bingler indicated that she has concerns with the light at Grasso verses the light at Rogers because of the tight turn and should be looked at before any projects are finished.

Jim Bingler, 29 Turkey Lane, indicated that he is disappointed in the State for not being at the meeting to comment on the light. Not having anything from the State on turn lanes to discuss closing of the road is difficult. He questioned Mrs. Bush and the money available based for a road through Grasso as being one way with the light verses a through road. Indicating that four lights might be better. Grasso come out to major thoroughfare should be considered.

Constance Victor, 116 Rogers Road, thanked Mr. Wursta for responding to the list of questions and reduction to 25 mph should be done ASAP. She questioned why the police can't enforce unless over 6 mph over the speed limit.

Chief White explained how that works.

Ms. Victor indicated that in 1972 she lived there and there was a 25 mph limit that got changed. She thinks we should go forth with the traffic calming suggestions. She also indicated that the Temple will have traffic Fridays, Saturdays, Sunday, everyday, with holidays, nursery school. She indicated that people will come and the Temple will grow and that there will be more traffic. She agrees with the Binglers to open Grasso and use it will increase traffic. She appreciates the consideration of the neighbors.

Ed Denton, 24 Fox Croft Drive, appreciated the time and effort spent on the matter. It is not easy and suggests that people will take the popular road. He takes East Road past Mrs. Lyons house to get to St. Paul's Lutheran Church. He indicated that 550 cars in and out plus the increase from parkway on Rt. 313 and around logically go by Spring Valley and East Road. Safety needs to be warranted. Have to find a smart way to do it. He applauded the 25 mph recommendation and would like it extended to Spring Valley Road for the people walking in the area. Also, the creative way the Borough has addressed Green Street with speed bumps and traffic calming. He indicated that he is on the fence regarding the lights but indicated that if one is put in it should be programmed for the high volume times and put on flashing other times.

Mr. Neil Samuels, 17 Pheasant, believes that alternatives to closing the road and the building of the Temple should be considered and that the emergency services are scaring people and the Township should not allow smaller residential streets to be impacted. Although the EMS makes a compelling argument the alternative to closing it might be to

use gates and emergency access only barricade, similar to how Brinker Drive was during construction.

Chief White commented that that could be opening up a hazard and creates a cul-de-sac that other people will also attempt to use and also creates problems with the EMS. The Grasso access needs further review.

Cecile Balizard, 50 Fox Croft Road, safety of the residents effects all of our neighborhood. People like to walk. Also the impact on Spring Valley needs consideration. Need to stop people from speeding. People will get injured and killed with the Temple coming and Grasso's grand plan. Two lights on Rt.263 is not a good idea. A lot of ideas for emergency access that has been used in other areas. With these uses in the area accidents will happen with extra cars running in the neighborhood. The year long changes on Rt. 263 there have been significant back ups. You couldn't get out from the various roads. He supports fire police at the Temple. He suggests that they keep that so that they can't turn left on to Rogers Road. Those going to the Temple can't go up the street. Got to protect the residents of the township. Money for the traffic light should be paid by the developer. Would also like to see a light at Spring Valley and Rt. 313.

Being no further business Ms. Lyons thanked everyone for attending. She indicated that the Board would not be making any decisions this evening and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Mason, Township Manager

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