

2nd Public Open House

May 11, 2010

Owen J. Roberts High School

Presentation

Michelle Brummer of Gannett Fleming, Inc. and Ann Toole of Toole Recreation Planning presented their findings from nearly a year's worth of community and municipal outreach, field visitation, and meetings with the central coordinating committee. Their presentation emphasized what the region (the total of 9 municipalities) is in its size and population and its unique features. Their assessment discussed

- Parks, facilities, trails, and open space
- Activity, Interest, and challenges of programs and services
- Relevance of external, overlapping conservation and development initiatives in building partnerships for investment
- Organization and financial support for parks and recreation
- Public awareness of recreation opportunities

They noted that a citizen survey is underway to confirm or refine these findings.

From these points, they framed a 10 point Blueprint – an outline of key areas of regional investment (time, coordination, and real dollar). See draft Blueprint handout.

They closed by stating that recommendations are under development and will be discussed with the central coordinating committee, the municipalities, and the public this fall.

They asked that comments and questions be directed toward the 10 Point Blueprint, as this feedback would be most helpful as they continue to develop the plan.

Summary of Discussion

- There is so much of value in our region to consider for this plan? How will you focus and make it successful?
 - There are already many successful techniques being used to support parks, recreation and open space conservation in the region. We intend to focus on a few realistic initiatives, including sharing these techniques throughout the region and beginning with those can achieve “quick wins” and build further public support.
- Blueprint points 2 and 7 are related. If they could be implemented quickly, they would be a sign of early success.

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- Hopewell Big Woods (HBW) was mentioned in the presentation but not in the Blueprint. Where does it fit?
 - Point 1 - Build on Success, since HBW is working hard to establish a brand and appropriate conservation and limited development activities, and among certain recommendations, such as the level of service map.
- What's the difference between parkland and open space?
 - See the project website, www.northernfederation.com, for our working definitions:

Open Space

Areas that exist primarily in their natural condition. Open space includes working lands such as farmland and forested lands, wetlands, areas where natural communities of vegetation and wildlife exist, forested ridgelines, wooded riparian areas, and rivers and streams in public or private ownership.

Parkland (new definition)

Land owned or managed for the public's recreational use that has been developed with facilities for active or passive recreation, or both.

- The plan should look at land owned by the school districts for potential recreational development.
 - We have met with the school districts and will meet again to discuss recommendations related to use and facility development.
- We need public places to go for peace and quiet. They don't need facilities. They can have occasional programs but should return to a natural condition once the program is over.
- This region is an exceptional value watershed. Sports fields require intensive chemical treatment. Be careful in determining the number and placement of sports fields in order to protect ground and surface water quality.
- Our heritage parks could include an agricultural park, possibly with community gardens or a community supported agriculture operation. It could add to our emerging agri-tourism industry. Please provide examples of other agricultural parks.
- A lot of the plan seems to focus on youth. Will there be initiatives that serve everyone else?

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- Yes, there is a lot on sports fields and programs and this primarily addresses youth. The improvement of parks as community destinations is one example of an all-ages initiative. There will be more.
- De-emphasize sports and incorporate the need for a year round, indoor facility into Point 5 –Add more sports facilities.
- Expand “recreation” under Point 7 to include arts, history, and culture.
- Chester County’s tourism program emphasizes the Brandywine as way to distinguish itself from other Chester counties across the US. This region needs its own identity that can make it attractive and marketable.
 - What should the brand for this region be? This plan can start to generate ideas for a regional brand.
 - Hopewell and the iron furnaces
 - Revolutionary War
 - Early American technology that made cannon balls, Franklin stoves, etc.
- Can we say “no increase in municipal taxes” under Point 9 about financing? Or direct municipalities to re-visit their existing allocations to parks, recreation and open space.
 - Funding is always a concern. We will be looking at a revenue strategy that includes both public and private resources. Municipal government cannot provide all parks and recreation elements on its own. A question on the survey will tell us how citizens feel about public spending on parks, recreation and open space.