

# WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Stokes Assembly Hall  
1039 Wilmington Pike, Westtown Township  
Wednesday, September 4, 2019 – 7:30PM

## **Present**

Commissioners – all Planning Commission (PC) members were present. Also present was Planning Director, Will Ethridge.

## **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM, Elaine Adler led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Adoption of Agenda (EA/RH) 7-0**

No changes were made.

## **Approval of Minutes (EA/RH) 7-0**

No changes were made.

## **Announcements**

- Gaudenzia application was approved by the ZHB
- WCASD, Rustin HS application was approved by the ZHB

## **Public Comment – Non Agenda Items**

None

## **New Business**

1. **Educational presentation on the status of the Sunoco Pipeline** – Mr. Pomerantz introduced Nancy Harkins, 1521 Woodland Rd, and Christina Morley, 1530 Allison Dr (East Goshen Twp.), with some opening remarks noting that Christina is also a member of the East Goshen Twp pipeline task force, an advisory board, and suggested that Westtown Twp consider the creation of its own citizen's advisory Pipeline Task Force which would focus heavily on the safety and security of Westtown residents, schools, religious institutions, and businesses.

Concerns raised by the PC included but were not limited to: the development of a pipeline-related emergency response plan, its components, stakeholders' involvement and responsibilities; opportunities for raising public awareness and emergency response training for the public; existence of evacuation plans for private and public schools; creation of a citizen's pipeline task force, public participation and involvement, and government support.

Mrs. Morley informed the PC that the East Goshen Twp Pipeline task force reviewed many existing hazards approach plans and concluded that those would not work for pipeline-related emergencies, because the materials they carry could not be detected due to the lack of smell or sound. She stressed the fact that formulating a credible emergency plan was a virtually impossible task. She recapped the accident that occurred in San Bruno, CA, where a natural gas pipeline carrying methane exploded in a

residential area, causing confusion and misdirection among the residents and 911 responders on what to do and whether or not to evacuate. Despite the challenges of formulating a credible pipeline-related emergency response plan, Mrs. Morley suggested several things that could be accomplished, including: building sidewalks and pathways to provide safe escape routes to evacuate on foot, as well as providing mass CPR and first aid training for residents and volunteers to increase the number of knowledgeable people in case of emergency.

Mrs. Harkins emphasized the importance of townships collaborating on all aspects of this subject across political boundaries, which had been lacking. She provided examples of some cooperation efforts among the Chester County Association of Township Officials (CCATO), but noted that it was not enough and came in late after pipeline was already in operation.

Mr. Pomerantz emphasized the importance of the public having access to the emergency response plan regardless of a type of catastrophic event.

Mr. Rodia questioned a lack of directive from the state or the county regarding the subject and a mandate requiring pipeline companies to have some kind of emergency response and safety plan. Mrs. Harkins explained that pipeline companies' emergency plans focus on protecting their infrastructure and product and not the community. She alleged that they were relying on local governments to develop local specific emergency response plans, even though most did not have the experience or resources, and were not receiving the information they needed to formulate those on their own.

Mrs. Morley was concerned that the public might not understand the nature of the Sunoco pipeline and the extent of its impact in case of an accident. Mrs. Harkins agreed that people were definitely complacent despite the fact there had been fires and serious leaks involving the Mariner I pipeline and one in Edgmont Township, where pipeline companies were monitoring water wells and remediating contamination caused by those leaks.

Mr. Flynn questioned whether Sts. Simon and Jude school had an evacuation plan for its students. Mrs. Harkins was not aware of any such plan. Mrs. Morley noted that she contacted Jim Scanlon, WCASD superintendent, regarding the existing all hazards approach plan, which in her opinion had serious flaws, including procedures for evacuation and a lack of source data. Mr. Flynn agreed that if the township did not have an emergency management plan that addressed evacuations for schools, it was a major flaw.

Mr. Flynn suggested looking into establishing a pipeline task force committee. Mrs. Morley provided some background on the establishment process, ongoing efforts, public support and participation they received so far. She added that it is comprised of six people, township manager and a supervisor serving as a liaison between the BOS and the task force. She suggested creating task force groups in adjacent townships that would work together on the same issues.

Mrs. Harkins noted that the Chester County Commissioners were in the process of forming a Pipeline Safety Advisory Board comprised of five appointed citizens, fire chiefs, police chief, emergency service coordinators and other government representatives.

Mr. Rodia was surprised by a lack of initiative amongst the townships to push at the county or state level whereby funds were appropriated to hire the right people who knew how to implement those strategies and then deliver those to the townships. He also expressed his concern that there were no evacuation plans for the township and the

schools. He raised a question about water well testing within 400 feet and beyond. Mrs. Harkins elaborated that the well testing requirement was within 150 feet of the pipeline, and due to litigation, the requirement was expanded up to 450 feet.

Mr. Flynn suggested that the township should take appropriate steps in notifying everybody within the required well-testing zone to have their water tested and submit the results to the township, similar to the On-Lot Sewage Management Program.

Mrs. Harkins recapped that Sunoco requested a variance for 24/7 operation to pull the pipe in East Goshen, Westtown and Thornbury Townships. Mr. Ethridge noted that Sunoco withdrew their request for a variance for 24/7 operations.

Mr. Embick raised a question about the implementation of a monitoring strategy for municipalities and whether any were put in place. Mrs. Harkins believed there should be a regional solution because it had to do with topography and because political boundaries would not matter in case of a leak.

Mrs. Morley wanted to see the pipeline removed from the right of way and placed in a more appropriate pathway, while Mrs. Harkins wanted to slow down the construction and operation until all safety issues had been addressed.

### **Old Business**

None

### **Public Comment**

None

### **Reports**

Mr. Hatton summarized his observations of the BOS meeting for 09/03/2019.

### **Adjournment (Unanimous) 7-0**

Meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Next PC Meeting – September 18, 2019, 7:30 pm – Township Building

PC Representative at next Board of Supervisors Meeting: September 16, 2019 – Dick Pomerantz/Kevin Flynn

Respectfully submitted,  
William Ethridge, Planning Commission Secretary