

**Canton 2010
Community and Business Action Groups (CAG/BAG)
Joint Meeting
Monday, July 31, 2006**

Minutes

Attendees:

Sam Bear, Township Supervisor
Maryann Corso-Walker, resident
Del Walker, Township Planning Commission
Cindy West, resident
Michael Wasler, resident
Marjorie Lee Teagarden, resident
James A. Bayne, JR., business owner and resident
Rose M. Bayne, business owner and resident
Rich Cleveland, Redevelopment Authority of Washington County
Rob Phillips, Redevelopment Authority of Washington County
Eric Fulmer, Mullin and Lonergan
Maureen Hogan, Planning Consultant
Karen Brean, Brean Associates

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Community and Business Action Groups has been scheduled for Thursday, September 7, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at the Canton Township Office, 655 Grove Avenue.

Introductions

Each community and business representative introduced him or herself. Other attendees who were introduced included Sam Bear, Township Supervisor, Rich Cleveland and Rob Phillips, of the Redevelopment Authority of Washington County, Eric Fulmer, of Mullin and Lonergan, and Karen Brean and Maureen Hogan, public participation consultants.

Agenda

Maureen Hogan reviewed the agenda. Topics included the purpose for Canton 2010, the purpose of the action groups, establishment of a meeting calendar and an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The overall goal of the meeting was to convey the purpose of the planning process and the public's role in it and to begin to document the desires and concerns of the residents and business representatives.

Canton 2010

Maureen Hogan summarized the purpose of Canton 2010. As the meeting invitation noted, the Canton 2010 plan will be a master plan for redevelopment for the area of the township near exit 16 or Jessop Place. Led by the consulting firm of Mullin and Lonergan Associates, the following will be undertaken:

- Physical information such as land use and mapping;
- An environmental assessment;
- Market analysis to determine the feasibility of various development options; and
- Development of a realistic and feasible phasing plan and financial plan.

Other members of the consultant team include ZHA, Pashek Associates and Senate Engineering.

Maureen explained that, along the way, community input and reaction will be actively sought. Attendees were directed to the one page handout under “How.” As noted, through the outlined community planning process, Canton stakeholders should be able to keep up to date on the study on a regular and predictable basis. Also, community members may participate as little or as much as they choose.

Maureen noted that, over the next six months, interested individuals will have a multitude of ways to be engaged in Canton 2010. These include meetings, design workshops, action groups, newsletters and website. Specifically, public participation efforts will include:

- Two general public meetings in September and December (The first meeting will address land inventory, cultural resources, environmental assessment and market work. The second meeting will address the design workshop, site planning and implementation.);
- Two design workshops on site planning in September and November;
- Monthly meetings with residents and business people through advisory/action group meetings, :
- Three newsletters(in July, September and November); and
- Access to the web on www.yourcanton.com

Purpose of the Action Groups

Maureen Hogan reviewed the purpose of the Action Groups. The public participation plan identifies a variety of ways to encourage public input. The convening of the Community Action Group (CAG) and Business Action Group (BAG) represents a more intensive attempt to hear from area residents and businesses on a regular basis. In addition, these meetings provide the consultants a forum to give the community study updates and solicit feedback and direction.

It was noted by the attendees that a more convenient start time would be 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. Also, upcoming meetings should not conflict with either the Supervisors’ meeting or the Planning Commission meeting.

Open Discussion

Karen Brean lead the attendees through an open discussion on the study, including general information on the area in question as well as comments on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The following reflects the introductory comments made by public officials and the study consultants:

- The area chosen was chosen for improvement as a result of the official designation of blight.
- This study is not being undertaken in support of any particular businesses that are interested in locating in Canton.
- The objectives of the study include: improvement of the quality of life; expansion of the tax base; and creation of jobs.
- Condemnation will not be used for owner occupied structures.
- There are no assumed uses.
- Options will be tested by the market analysis consultant in terms of feasibility and financing. ZHA will determine the competitive advantage of the land in question. They will try to identify uses that are not over represented in the area or region.

The following reflects the comments of the CAG/BAG attendees:

- How can this area compete with nearby attractions?
- The area in question totals approximately 350 acres.
- A larger display map needs to be used at future meetings.
- As a result of this study, will zoning be changed to accommodate development?
- Currently, due to the size of existing lots, variances are often needed.

- Industrial uses have not lasted long in the Township.
- Attendees value the area because it is where their homes and businesses are located.
- Concerns about impacts on the neighborhood were voiced. There is a specific feel to the neighborhood in terms of lot layout and density. Future development should respect this.
- How big should the hub be around the interchange? Is creating a downtown or retail center part of the overall vision?
- Washington, PA has a great location. Uses are able to capitalize on traffic.
- Areas of the Township do need to be cleaned up.
- For years, the Township did not have active zoning enforcement. Consequently, development occurred unregulated. Some folks in the community may have made location decisions based on this.
- Concern with possible gentrification was voiced.
- Do any of the current supervisors live in the area?
- Many community members are curious and concerned with the study. “This is where we grew up. This is where are businesses are. We want it to be protected.”
- There is some vacant land, including the school house and the 84 Lumber property, which are eyesores. Revitalization should occur here without impacting the community.
- Vacant property needs to be put back on the tax rolls.
- More public outreach is needed. Folks need to understand that condemnation of owner occupied structures will not occur.
- Suggested re-uses for vacant land include: light industrial and a hotel or motel.
- The existing rail system could be a benefit to a new use.
- Suggestions on improvements to the neighborhood included zoning enforcement, maintenance and road improvements, work on the interchange and access roads and signalization/signage and lighting.
- Attendees were attracted to the area due to low taxes and affordable housing.
- The new development has to be self supporting. Community residents and businesses will not tolerate a tax increase.
- Will the new development put a strain on existing infrastructure, particularly water and sewer?
- The Township should figure out a way to support existing services such as the volunteer fire department.
- What are the modern alternatives to heavy industry? A possible example was cited as the beginning of the high tech industry.
- What about programs and financing for existing businesses and residences?

Next Steps

The minutes will be distributed either by email or by regular mail to all attendees. The next meeting date and time will be included in the body of the minutes.

Supervisor Bear ended the meeting with some comments. First, he encouraged the attendees to be spokespeople for the study. Second, he stated that identification of funding for improvements and development are dependent on the completion of this study. Last, he noted that the worse code violators are being actively pursued.