



VISTA 2025 Goal 5:

Support critical infrastructure in targeted corridors of opportunity

Goal 5 Team Meeting

April 3, 2018

Meeting Notes

Team Members Attending: Charles Fleischmann, Matt Hammond, Mike Hankin, Rob Henry, Gary Krapf, Michelle Kichline, Steve Krug, Tim Phelps, Bob Norris, Bob Schoenberger, Paul Spiegel, James Turner, Chris Williams

Also Attending: Dan Arbucias, Pat Bokovitz, James Logan, Brian O’Leary, Mary Frances McGarrity, Chris Patriarca, David Sciocchetti, Gary Smith

Michelle Kichline

Welcomed team members and asked for any comments on the meeting notes from the previous meeting. None were received. Introduced Robert Schoenberger to discuss the county’s solid waste infrastructure, a key issue for Chester County.

Robert Schoenberger

Explained that the core solid waste problems are municipal. Added that the 1984 purchase by Chester County of a landfill in Lancaster County solved many problems for the county and its municipalities.

Noted that the scope of the issue is comprised of three elements: the sources of waste, the volume of waste and the impact on GDP, or the cost to the municipalities.

Explained that the sources of solid waste consist primarily of: 1) municipal solid waste (MSW), 2) construction and demolition waste 3) residual waste (sewage and water treatment sludges and remediation and clean up materials, 4) industrial (relatively small amounts but difficult to process, and 5) commercial waste (retail packaging, food waste, etc.

Indicated that MSW is a third of our waste, industrial is another third, and Commercial, Residual, and Construction waste is the last third.

Noted that from 2008 to 2017, the population of Chester County has increased by 50,000 people, but our waste has gone down from 365,000 tons in 2008 to 287,000 tons in 2017. Explained that some of the reason for this is that we are becoming more environmentally friendly in terms of packaging of products and recycling, which has had the largest impact on the reduction of waste. Added that In 2010, we started single source recycling, which is the most effective approach but which has some issues including how glass is handled. Showed a pie chart which indicated the largest portion of MSW as paper at 13%, food at over 14%, plastic at over 8% and leaves and brush over 8%.

Explained that Chester County solid waste is handled by two separate entities – with the northern portion of the County (roughly 75% of the population) handled by the Chester County Solid Waste Authority (CCSWA) and the southern portion by SECCRA (roughly 25% of the population). Noted that CCSWA uses the Lanchester Landfill which is located west of Honey Brook but which is only really accessible by Route 322.

Described several issues in flux. Noted the need to replace the landfill which has a limited lifespan. Added that once you have a landfill, it becomes the most efficient way to manage waste but that the regulatory and land management costs of closing a landfill extend out to as much as 100 to 200 years and could cost as much as \$30 million. Noted that today, there are really on two cost effective ways to manage waste: landfills and waste to energy facilities.

Stated that Chester County is currently the only county in PA without an incinerator and that siting one to replace the landfill has many challenges including the right location, transportation network, and ash disposal. Noted that we generate roughly 1,000 tons of waste a day and that a waste to energy plant to handle that volume would cost \$300 to \$400 million to construct.

Added that this January, China basically banned everything except recycling materials that are clean (<0.5% contamination), thus eliminating our ability to ship a lot of our recycling to China. Focused on an example of the sorting challenges of “mixed paper” where an envelope with a plastic window now can’t be sent to China and would need to go to a landfill.

Also explained that we have an ultrafiltration/osmosis plant that can get you to almost drinking water from some pretty nasty stuff but the leachate from this water treatment has a high disposal cost.

Noted that food waste is difficult to separate at the household level which makes it difficult to use dry anaerobic digesters (popular in Europe, but not here). Added that there are still some problems with this technology.

Added that electronics are one of the biggest problems since the state legislature banned sending any electronics with a plug from going to a landfill. Noted that they are still accepted and redirected but that this is expensive.

Michelle Kichline

Noted that the county receives numerous phone calls on this issue of disposal of electronics.

Robert Schoenberger

Stated that the County also accounts for 10,000 tons of leaves and vegetation that we turn into compost. Added that most of the compost is sold to landscapers in the fall at \$15 per ton.

Charles Fleischmann

Asked about the NPK number of the compost and was advised that it was low.

Robert Schoenberger

Noted that in Chester County, we have recycled just over 434,000 tons, roughly 50% of the MSW tonnage, but qualified that by noting that the Coatesville steel plants all contribute to recycling.

Steve Krug

Asked about the remaining life of the county landfill.

Robert Schoenberger

Responded that it still has about 15 years of life until it is at capacity, adding that that is why we are exploring new technologies.

Michelle Kichline

Noted that the County has had many presentations regarding new technologies but has not yet identified one that meets our needs.

Gary Smith

Asked about collaboration between CCSWA and SECCRA.

Robert Schoenberger

Responded that there is no direct collaboration and that they are a totally independent company with their own landfill, which has about the same life expectancy as ours. Added that they are slightly more expensive than we are, at around \$8 per ton. Also added that CCSWA does not accept any waste from other counties.

Charles Fleischman

Asked about plastic materials noting the challenge of recycling it.

Robert Schoenberger

Responded that the landfill is the last resort for things that can't go anywhere else

Bob Norris

Asked what is the right message – blue can or green can – landfill or recycling.

Michelle Kichline

Suggested the need for improved education about the realities of solid waste disposal and recycling

Introduced Brian O’Leary to discuss workforce housing issues in Chester County noting that being a great place to live can have consequences on the cost of housing.

Brian O’Leary

Noted that the County is working on Landscapes3, an update to the County comprehensive plan and that workforce housing is clearly a rising issue in terms of its importance in the County. Added that workforce housing is generally considered to be what is affordable based on incomes between 80% to 120% of area median household homes. Added that people are considered “cost burdened” if they have to pay more than 30% of their income for their housing.

Pat Bokovitz

Commented that there is a need to look at real people in Chester County who fall within those income levels. Added that the County addresses a portion of the problem with the resources that it gets from the federal government. Cited example of a 100 unit project developed by the Hankin Group. Noted that the funds available are not growing.

Dave Sciocchetti

Commented that builders respond to demand and if the demand is for higher-end homes, that’s what they’re going to build.

Jim Turner

Asked about the impact of the cost of construction on the availability of workforce housing.

Brian O’ Leary

Responded that it does have an impact along with the cost of land, soft costs and connection fees. Suggested that zoning may be one aspect of a response to this issue.

Jim Turner

Asked about transportation options for people to come and work here, but live in another County.

Tim Phelps

Responded that there are a lot of studies done on transit-oriented housing, but that we just haven’t had the appetite to do that in Chester County and legitimately push for it. Added that density is one of the key challenges for making public transportation work but noted that it is not always well received.

Pat Bokovitz

Commented that density does not necessarily equate to affordability.

Mike Hankin

Commented that another key challenge is the frequent negative municipal response to the idea of affordable housing.

Bob Norris

Stated that Habitat for Humanity is working on 40 plus housing units in West grove that would sell for \$100,000 per house but the challenge has been to identify the \$3 million need for infrastructure.

David Sciocchetti

Asked whether the traditional cycle of housing from rental to small home to larger home as incomes rise was still in effect.

Jim Turner

Asked whether Chester County wants to deal with the issue of affordable housing or whether it is willing to remain a high housing cost community.

Mary Frances McGarrity

Responded that that can't be our goal, because we won't have the workforce to supply our businesses.

David Sciocchetti

Suggested that that raises the question of what employers are willing to do to keep their employees.

Mary Frances McGarrity

Noted that there are some manufacturing companies and financial companies that do assist employees to get to work. Added that there are some adaptations that employers are doing and some are trying to get creative.

David Sciocchetti

Noted that some of the housing types that are more affordable in adjoining counties (e.g. rowhomes) are not prevalent in Chester County.

Tim Phelps

Commented that there are other aspects to this problem that are municipality specific. Noted the amount of potential workforce housing that is absorbed by college students in West Chester.

David Sciocchetti

Commented that existing evidence suggests that relying on market dynamics alone is not going to resolve this issue. Added that if we don't solve this problem then employers are going to find Chester County less attractive. Suggested that other economically successful areas (Silicon Valley) are ahead of us in recognizing and seeking to address this challenge (e.g. co-living) creating an opportunity to learn from them.

Mike Hankin

Commented that cost issues remain the key question - land costs, infrastructure costs, and process costs. Added that it can be as much as 3 years from the time we decide on a project before we begin building. Noted the need for things like zoning that supports affordable housing.

David Sciocchetti

Noted Todd Pohlig (developer) has repeatedly commented that developers respond much better when they know what the rules are going in.

Tim Phelps

Commented that not everyone in this era is looking for new home ownership. It's the newer generation that wants the new homes. Added that sweat equity, and upgrading of existing stock, is not as appealing but has potential to be a significant source of needed workforce housing.

David Sciocchetti

Suggested that we may not have sufficient existing stock to respond to project population increases.

Pat Bokovitz

Commented that the key is to control costs. Noted that subsidies seem to be the best currently available way to do this.

Gary Smith

Suggested that it is important to recognize that local municipalities are a significant part of the problem in that they are subject to the "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) pressures from their constituents and that this drives some of the regulatory burdens associated with new development.

Meeting adjourned.