

SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

August 20, 2019 – 6:00 p.m.

Solebury Township Hall

Community Consensus on 202 Concepts Forum Minutes

Attendance: Mark Baum Baicker, Chair, John S. Francis, Vice-Chair, Kevin Morrissey, Noel Barret, Robert McEwan, Dennis H. Carney, Township Supervisor, Michele Blood, Assistant Manager, Catherine Cataldi, Secretary. Mark Roth, Township Traffic Engineer and Mark L. Freed, Township Solicitor were also in attendance

The Chair opened the meeting with an overview. Mr. Baum Baicker read page 172-174 of the comprehensive plan (copy of which is attached). Mr. Baum Baicker addressed the handout made available by the Board: Summary of Community Input dated 8/1/2019 (copy of which is attached) The Board asked for constructive comments from the community.

Public Comment

- Dorothy Downie, resident, expressed interest in scientific research and study on the environment prior to the consideration of any new developments. Ms. Downie asked that her written comments and information provided by the Neighbors for Bucks County Preservation be recorded in the minutes (copy of which is attached).
- Jade Greene, resident, explained the need to protect the watershed.
- Jack Kopp, resident, expressed disapproval of the development along 202.
- Paul Cosdon, resident, expressed disapproval of the concept plan and the process to of accumulation the plan. Mr. Cosdon questioned whether the committee was formed in a public meeting. Mr. Cosdon questioned if the committee researched if the community's resources could handle such a development. The Board received a copy of Mr. Cosdon's questions and advised they will answer them later.
- Kendra Lelie, resident, questioned the purpose of the concept plan. Ms. Leli offered topics to be considered: Diversify Housing; Area for Growth; and balance of preserving properties. Mr. Baum Baicker explained that the concept plan started with a traffic study. A concept plan was suggested as a reference to understand what can be done along S.R. 202 and a guide to help protect the 202 corridor.
- Mark Roth, Township Traffic Engineer, presented an overview of the traffic study.
- Ed McGahan, resident, expressed gratitude towards the Board for opening the topic up for discussion and addressing the issues along S.R. 202
- Bryce Sanders, resident, expressed disapproval of the concept plan as it violates Solebury's character of preservation and conservation. Mr. Saunders suggested to first build the road, next build the affordable housing, and lastly build the rest.
- Kathy Meglasson, resident, expressed concerns about the impact a new development could have on the traffic along S.R. 202. Ms. Meglasson expressed concerns about stream contamination that could come from the development of the roadway over Aquetong Creek.
- Shannon Pendleton, resident, proposed the Township increase zoning codes on water and energy budgets.
- Phil Johnson, resident, expressed interest in preserving open space along S.R. 202.
- Loran Doan, resident, expressed dissatisfaction with PennDOT.

- Bill Banks, resident, suggested the Board look at a conceptual plan and the Comprehensive Plan at the same and make amendments that address issues for the environment.
- Moira McClintock, resident, expressed interest in determining what Solebury wants and incorporating that into the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan.
- Jill-Arcangela Mancuso Kopp, resident, expressed disapproval of the concept plan. Encouraged more education and community input. Offered public pool or sculpture garden as ideas for development.
- Scott, last name unknown, resident expressed interest in the 202 corridor being updated.
- Jim Searing, resident, asked that his article posted in the Herald be included in the minutes (copy of which is attached. Mr. Searing expressed interest in: preserving the land; retaining rural character; and protection of natural resources. (copy of which is attached)
- Helen Tai, resident, expressed disapproval of the plan as it did not meet the standards of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Stephen Phillips, resident, expressed concerns for maintaining the water budget.
- Patrick Bell, resident, questioned why the Board developed a conceptual plan. Mr. Bell suggested the development of a community wish list that would be available to developers or included in the Zoning process. Mr. Bell expressed interest in rentals being allowed within Solebury Township.
- Skylar Hurwitz, resident, expressed interest in affordable housing by allowing rentals within Solebury Township. Mr. Hurwitz expressed interest preserving the character of Solebury by taking advantage of the resources already available.
- Jeffrey Crooks, non-resident, expressed disapproval of the housing proposed in the concept plan. Mr. Crooks expressed interest in affordable housing by way of rentals.
- John Dwyer, resident, expressed disapproval of the decrease in character of Solebury. Expressed interest in the development of low-cost housing directed towards artists as well as senior housing.
- Suzanne White, resident, asked if the Township could purchase the property.
- Eleanor Miller, resident, expressed interest in the land being preserved.
- Curt Wary, resident, referenced a city plan and outcome from a local township. Urged the Board to be smart, hang tough and say no.
- Mr. Morrissey emphasized that the plan was not a proposal and the Board did not vote on it.
- Dennis Mankin, resident, expressed gratitude to the Board for listening to the community and not going forward with the concept plan. Dennis asked that in the future a different process be considered than the one used to get to the concept plan.
- Mr. Baum Baicker expressed gratitude to the community.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Cataldi
Secretary

Plan, a site visit, a pre-plan conference, and a multiple-step design, including stormwater management, process to assist in developing a responsible/responsive plan.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee recognizes that some development could occur on some of the remaining tracts of land that may continue the conventional subdivision pattern experienced in the past. Thus there is a need to place even greater attention to conservation of open space resources and community character on a site-by-site basis. Particularly on larger undeveloped parcels, flexible development approaches must be considered. An average density of one dwelling unit per 1.5 to 3 acres is required throughout the Site-Responsive Rural Development category, with greater permitted density and a variety of dwelling units available only through use of Single-Family Detached Open Space Options and links to implementation of specific community infrastructure needs.

Most development across this land use category will be dependent upon individual wastewater disposal systems, although development of community/public wastewater disposal system should not be ruled out, especially if realization of the open space and groundwater recharge objectives of this Plan might be achieved through the use of wastewater land application systems. Existing provisions should be reviewed to ensure that they adequately relate overall permitted density of development to natural constraints.

Age-restricted development and retirement communities, including opportunities for assisted living, could be considered in portions of the Site-Responsive Rural area located in proximity to portions of the Mixed Use Rural-Suburban Center, potentially offering a variety of housing types and other services to serve the growing sector of the population beyond normal retirement age. This population sector tends to place fewer demands on community facilities and services, with little or no generation of school-age population. Densities and development intensities for age-restricted communities should be the same as in other residential developments in this area.

MIXED USE RURAL-SUBURBAN CENTER

In the east-central portion of the township, adjacent to New Hope Borough and along Route 202, is an elongated area designated as Mixed Use Rural-Suburban Center. This area responds to existing development trends and is intended to provide for two land uses:

1. the location of higher-intensity nonresidential development, including larger scale commercial uses, as well as employment generating uses such as office development; and
2. the location of specialized residential development not in character with conventional residential neighborhoods. The latter might include, for example, nursing homes, assisted living opportunities, and high-density multifamily development.

In the Mixed Use Rural-Suburban Center area, further development of higher-intensity nonresidential uses, as well as any high-density residential use, should be conditioned upon several planning and design criteria:

- provision for roadway improvements, enhanced mobility through connector roads/driveways and access management to facilitate arterial highway functions and preclude conflicting traffic movements;
- provision for adequate parking in number and paving materials and non-vehicular access;
- provision for connection to-public wastewater and water or acceptable alternative system(s) only after consideration of other alternatives that could provide ground water recharge;
- conservation of notable (small-scale) open space and historical resources within development areas;
- structural design and landscape plantings that will maintain or enhance visual landscape qualities and/or buffer incompatible uses;
- hardscaping features such as bike racks and benches;
- sustainable design measures to encourage green buildings, conservation of water and energy, implement alternate energy strategies, and maximize ground water recharge.

Most of the land area in Mixed Use Rural-Suburban Center lies within three higher-intensity zoning districts: the LI Light Industrial District at the intersection of Routes 32 and 202; the Traditional Neighborhood Commercial District on the south side of Route 202 immediately west of New Hope Borough; and the RD Residential Development

District on the north side of Route 202 adjacent to New Hope. The development area within the RD-C Residential Development-Conservation District (Aquetong Preserve Lot #10) also falls within this land use designation.

The TNC Traditional Neighborhood Commercial zoning district is designed to enhance the rural and historic context of the community by encouraging protection of natural resources while promoting a unified development theme with consideration of retaining appropriate streetscape along a portion of the Route 202 Corridor. Design guidelines help to achieve this unified theme. A mix of commercial and office uses in addition to cultural and institutional uses are permitted in the district.

HISTORIC VILLAGES

The landscape of Solebury is dotted with several historical villages and crossroads hamlets. Larger villages like Carversville and Lumberville exhibit clear traditional village development patterns and host a mixture of land uses. The village of Solebury is a mixed cluster of historical and contemporary uses and hosts several community facilities. Phillips Mill and Centre Bridge are significant historically, but represent rural clusters of historical buildings, or hamlets, rather than extended village development patterns. The areas shown as Historic Villages designation on the Plan for Land Use Map are an extension of village landscapes along River Road just north of New Hope Borough.

The township has, as part of its planning review process, begun to update its village zoning districts of Carversville, Aquetong, Solebury, Centre Bridge and Lumberville. The historic village area also includes the MS Municipal Services zoning district that conforms to the township municipal facility in the village of Solebury.

The Historic Villages land use designation recognizes the spatial and land use characteristics of the existing hamlets and villages. The conservation of village character is an important consideration in this Comprehensive Plan. Factors to address include: potential preservation of open space immediately around the villages, the continuation of village lot patterns, and the protection of existing historic structures. Conservation of historical structures, to be economically viable, may require conversion from historical uses. Conversion should be conditioned upon preservation of historic character, including consideration of the impacts of access, setbacks and parking.

Summary of Community Input

TRANSPORTATION AND ROUTE 202 CORRIDOR INPUT

The Board of Supervisors has received via emails and interviews many suggestions for dealing with the Route 202 corridor. Below are many of them. Our objective has been and is to consider all constructive comments and suggestions put forth by Solebury residents so that we can arrive at the best possible outcome as this process evolves.

We have organized the comments/suggestions into eight different areas. In each area, the comments are listed first, followed by suggested solutions to deal with the issues raised. We thank all residents who have already provided their input and invite more in the coming days and weeks. (Please note that the “solutions” shown are proposed by residents, not the Board of Supervisors.)

1. Heavy Traffic

Comments:

- Heavy traffic flow, especially bad on weekends.
- 202 forces cars onto ancillary roads like 263 and Windy Bush Rd.

Suggested solution:

- Post signs to ask drivers to “maintain speed up hill”
- Shoulder improvement particularly near entrances to developments and businesses so that turning vehicles do not slow traffic

2. Traffic Lights and Timing

Comments:

- Timing of lights insufficient and uncoordinated especially at Logan Square

Suggested solutions:

- Adding a traffic signal at the intersection of Rt. 202 and Fox Run, so the residence in Fox Run can enter and exit the development safely onto Rt. 202.
- New software and cameras at current traffic lights (including Rabbit Run and Street Road)
- Install “part time” (rush hour only? Weekend? Camera generated?) traffic lights at residential communities like Ingham Mews and Fox Run,
- New entry into Logan Square--light on the hill between Logan Sq. and Kitchen Lane

Solebury Township – Comments on possible improvements for Route 202. 7/30/19

3. Turning Lanes

Comments:

- Left hand turns are dangerous in several locations where there are no turning lanes
- Shoulders are non-existent or not wide enough to skirt around cars turning left
- Right turn lane “only” from Wood Fire Pizza to Logan Square does not work to take traffic off main 202 lane.
- When driving from Kitchen Lane to 179, the right turn into Jamie Hollander’s is dangerous

Suggested solutions:

- Create left turn lanes at many critical points including Lower Mountain, Upper Mountain, Fox Run, Ingham Mews, Logan Square, and any new entries from 202.
- Set up right turn only lane from Reeder Rd. to Logan Sq.
- Build shoulders on 202 to allow better passing possibilities where cars make left turns
- The right of way should be extended to 70 feet, instead of the current 60 feet right of way. This will give the Township and the State the ability to widen the roadway in the future if needed.

4. Noise Level

Comments:

- Noise from trucks using brake retarders near Fox Run is too loud.
- Highway sound for residents North of 202 is bad and getting worse.

Suggested solutions:

- Create sound barriers for residential communities like Ingham Mews along 202
- Add to ordinance prohibiting Truck Brake Retarders in Fox Run Area.
- Lower speed limits from Aquetong Rd.

5. Biking and walking Connections

Comments:

- Biking and walking trails are intermittent (connections Delaware Canal Park to Aquetong Spring Park)

Solebury Township – Comments on possible improvements for Route 202. 7/30/19

- There is no safe crossing west/south of Yorkshire Meadows, which is inaccessible to residents on the north Side of 202 west of the diner.
- Pedestrian crossing near Fox Run, Ingham Mews and Aquetong Spring Park does not exist which cuts off people on the North side of 202 from crossing to park and future bike paths.
- Sugan Road and 202 crossing does not work well for bikes or pedestrians.
- Residents of Ingham Mews and Fox Run request a sidewalk.
- Bikeway trails should be wide enough to handle EMS vehicles.

Suggested solutions:

- Acquire easements or rights of way to establish biking and walking trails along 202.
- Install bike and walking paths as development happens. Connect to Park & Canal Paths.
- Focus on a complete and safe trail from the School to Logan Square.
- Biking / Walking Trail linked to path currently ending at Sugan Rd/Eagle Firehouse going under PECO right away to Logan Square and eventually to Aquetong Spring Park's trail.
- Create a safe and attractive way for bicycles and pedestrians to cross 202.
- Bike Trail: run it to Street road under PECO power lines. And/or run it back to Aquetong Spring Park via a cut thru at Deer Park if permitted by land owners.
- Pedestrian trail access from north of 202 connecting to canal, new park and proposed connector trails.
- Base all work on health, safety, and welfare of the community

6. Intersection Alignment

Comments:

- Disjointed intersection of Logan Square and Shire Road slows traffic considerably
- Create a safe way for cars to enter and cross 202 from the communities north of 202, heading east/north on 202.
- Merging of traffic at the location of Reeder Road
- Kitchen Lane, 179 and 202 intersection is confusing.

Suggested solutions:

- Roundabouts at Kitchen's Lane and Route 179, Shire and Logan Sq. Lower Mountain Rd
- Realign Shire Rd/Logan Square as a true intersection
- Simplify the intersections at Giant plaza, Bridge Street and Lower Mountain Rd

7. Drainage Issues

Comments:

- At intersection of Fox Run and 202 'saddle', ice and snow slows traffic, stopping cars on hill
- Stormwater runoff from the road(s)

Suggested solutions:

- Drainage reconfiguration
- Cut back all brush and trees the full width of the right away to help in the sight distance and open up the road surface to more sun light in the winter months to help with snow and ice buildup and removal.

8. Roadway Condition

Comments

- Conditions of Route 202 road are poor with uneven surfaces
- Lack of streetlights
- Trees are entangled in the phones cable, which are starting to droop

Suggested solutions:

- See the entire project in one Holistic matter
- Maintain the current 4 lane width (no "parkway")
- Maintain the highway to protect against unsafe hazards.
- Solutions should be sustainable for 20 plus years.
- Durable concrete roadway at main intersections (Peddler's Village)
- Repave
- Street lights and raised reflective markers

8/20/19

In the interest of time, I'll read my remarks:

As a community we lost a treasure in Malcolm Crooks this year. A dedicated preservationist, I once asked Malcom what he wanted his legacy to be – with all he did, he said the Honey Hollow Environmental Education Center housed at the Audubon was what he wanted to be remembered for. Environmental education means research and study. At the very least, our community deserves scientific research and study on the environment before any new development is considered. We need to do our homework before inviting in developers for any plan articulated on the community's behalf by the Supervisors. One important quality of Malcolm's was that he was passionate but he never panicked. The tone of urgency when the 202 Corridor plan was presented as a solution to traffic congestion was disturbing. We shouldn't panic in the face of future development – we need to be environmental educators girded with scientific studies and facts in order to engage with developers from a position of strength not one of fear or defeatism. We are fortunate to have a cadre of resident professional environmentalists to carry on Malcolm's work – let's not rush into the arms of developers without tapping our own intellectual resources some of whom are here tonight. To truly honor Malcolm and his vision for the community he loved and served, we all need to uphold the standards of the Honey Hollow Environmental Education Center. Finally, I find it somewhat ironic that Malcolm Crooks is being honored on a night when we're discussing a development proposal that would undermine everything he stood for.

Duffy Downie

Developing The 202 Corridor in Solebury: How Will It Effect You?

It is essential that we, the community, are aware of the following:

- The concept plans for the development of the 202 corridor would necessitate a public water and sewer line
- Allowing public water and sewer lines would have a significant impact on taxes for residents, as well as on the environment and the community
- The township has a Comprehensive Plan (2015) to protect our water, environment, and community
- Any plans for development within the community must be in keeping with that Comprehensive Plan, which is not the case for the current 202 Concept Plan

The attached fact sheet will explain these critical components:

- Why groundwater (the Aquetong Aquifer) is so important in Solebury
- Why protecting that resource is critical to the community
- Why public water and sewer would be a detriment to our community
- Why a tax increase will be inevitable with the addition of a utility



Why Water Is So Important in Solebury

Why is our groundwater so important in Solebury? Because, unlike most other places, every Solebury resident gets their water from the ground beneath their feet. When that water goes, when the taps run dry, so do our beautiful streams and creeks and so does everything else...

Water is essential for helping Solebury retain its rural character because without public water and sewer, every property owner must limit activity and development to those which can be supported by the water and waste disposal systems available to them. In most cases, this means on-site wells and sewage disposal, like septic fields and sand mounds.

This is true even for the housing developments and businesses along the 202 corridor, who receive their "public water" from Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority (BCWSA) or another water company. This groundwater is drawn from the Aquetong Aquifer right here in Solebury Township (and stored in the big blue water tank off of Sugan Road).

In order to ensure that all of us continue to have water, we need the groundwater to recharge i.e., the water we use everyday in our homes and businesses must be allowed to soak back into the ground. Rain and on-site wastewater treatment systems replenish our aquifers, providing a sustainable source of water. You may be surprised to learn that this is not true of water provided and treated by BCWSA, which instead pumps wastewater across the Delaware River into Lambertville, where waste is processed and the water then discharged into the Delaware, forever lost to Solebury residents. Any increase in development along the 202 corridor would have a corresponding increase in public water being lost to Solebury, threatening our future water supply.

Did you know...?

- Aqua Pennsylvania (which owns and operates the community water system serving Peddler's View residents) and BCWSA (which operates the largest community water system for residents and businesses along the 202 corridor including North Pointe, Fox Run, Ingham Mews, Yorkshire Meadows, Wilshire Hunt and Fieldstone communities, as well as Logan Square) pump out more than 235,000 gallons a day (2015).
- All this water is pumped out of the aquifer, but as waste, it is pumped to Lambertville and then lost when it is discharged into the Delaware River. It never makes its way back to its source.
- The Aquetong Aquifer is not only the source for all this drinking water, but also for the Aquateng Spring, and all the creeks which flow in this area to form the Aquetong Creek, the longest High Value stream in the Township.

Why is keeping the aquifers safe so important? Because...

- If the aquifer is pumped dry, the houses it now serves will have no water
- The beautiful Aquetong Spring would diminish, a resource the taxpayers of Pennsylvania have spent millions of dollars to make into a recreation area serving everyone in the area.
- If the groundwater resources are not enough to meet demand, then it is possible that a public water and sewer line would be necessary. Residents would have to foot the bill for this large capital investment, forcing those on private wells to hook up to a system at a cost of tens-of thousand of dollars each, and resulting in water bills much higher than those residents with community water are currently paying.

Why should I worry about this if I am not in the 202 corridor?

Because bringing a public water and sewer line into Solebury would eliminate one of the key tools by which Solebury can manage development. If a public water and sewer lines were available, it would allow water sources from outside the township and waste treatment for millions of gallons. The increased capacity would make any site buildable with far fewer limits, and new housing and commercial developments could swamp the township. Not only would the rural character of Solebury be lost, but everyone's taxes could increase as new development resulted in new demands for services like schools, traffic lights, and public service expansions.

The following was published in the Bucks County Herald, written by Solebury resident Jill-Arcangela Mancuso Kopp. The NBCP feels it touches on many important issues that should be on the forefront of our minds as we, the community, assemble to address the concept plans for the 202 corridor. If development is inevitable, we must ensure it agrees with our Comprehensive Plan, meets our community's needs, protects the Aquetong Creek and wildlife that resides in the creek valley, and ensures our historic heritage and the character of our community for generations to come.

June 27, 2019 Bucks County Herald Page A13 (13)

OPINION & Editorial



Stop the Solebury train before it gets rolling

The suggested attempt to "control inevitable development" of the 202 corridor aims to add an unnamed number of commercial properties and "hundreds" of apartments and townhomes to a massive spread of land – that by my rough calculations could disrupt almost 2,000 acres.

The targeted location is along the busiest and slowest section of 202 in New Hope. It will reach from the intersection of 179 (Bridge Street) and 202 (from behind Jaime Hollander) to the Hermitage Drive townhouse community (beyond the Clarion/Ramada/Holiday Inn). Three miles of roadway; and it will reach the creek, which sits a mile from the street in some places.

What will that mean? A development this gigantic will have multiple permanent and exponential impacts on the community.

First of all, with every home come two to three cars. Roads will eventually have to be widened and traffic lights added. Traffic will back up in other places, making additional lights necessary in other locations. Cars will sit by the dozens and wait for lights to change two, three, maybe four times before they get their turn to cross the intersection. Not to mention, the added air pollution in a town where we are used to smelling flowers on the clean air.

With hundreds of residences come thousands of residents, swelling the school and crowding the stores. This population boom will attract bigger businesses. Eventually, major corporations will start leaning on our open spaces to build things like Panera, Target and Home Depot. This will

squeeze out small business and forever change the culture and landscape of this community.

The water table will change dramatically, causing lack of absorption and runoff that will flood the basements and swimming pools at existing residences in the creek valley below. Reeder Road, Walton Drive, and Stoney Hill Road properties will be drowned every time it rains. This will decrease property values and cost homeowners thousands in repairs and modifications.

None of this, mind you, even speaks to the change in population. As people from more densely populated cities and towns move into the most crowded neighborhood in the township, where life is centralized and interaction with the larger, older community is limited, they bring voting power and voices that do not understand, identify with, or even interact with rest of the township.

It tips the balance of power from those who value our heritage, our beauty, our open spaces, our historic homes, our sweeping farms to those who value apartment life, commerce and development. This creates a long-term change that will impact every decision and every election into the future.

It will effectively set the stage to permanently alter our community, from tractors and fireflies to sidewalks and streetlights. In two generations, New Hope and Solebury will be unrecognizable.

The board is saying the development of the 202 of corridor is inevitable. They say they are "controlling" that development by developing it first. A preemptive strike, if you will.

I say if you want to control

development you protect the land. Preserve and conserve it. Put charters in place, set up open space conservancies, and set aside huge tracks of land in reserve. Make parks and wildlife refuges.

When they say "controlling development," what they mean is controlling who gets paid by selling it all off now, by sealing the deal, and making sure they grab it all in one shot. It is a sham, a hustle. And, it will become a nightmare for our community – a catalyst for permanent, unstoppable, and irreversible change.

Storefronts along the roadway? Fine, one or two acres deep, but a network commercial and residential properties numbering possibly a thousand in total cut into an area of land spanning 83,635,200 square feet of land?

No. No way. Contact the Bucks County Land Trust. Speak to board members. Make this an issue at election time. Show up for meetings at the township.

Else, we initiate an irreversible series of events that will turn New Hope into just another strip-mall-centric cluster-town that defines every community south and east of us, all the way to Philadelphia County.

We are not Doylestown or Warrington or Bensalem – nor do we want to be.

This train does not have a brake. Do not let it get rolling.

The next board meeting is Tuesday, July 16. Please check the Solebury municipal calendar for addition council meetings that will address this looming disaster.

*Jill-Arcangela
Mancuso Kopp
Solebury Township*

Jim Searing
PO Box 548, New Hope, Pennsylvania 18938

August 15, 2019

To the Solebury Township Board of Supervisors,

During the June meeting, a draft was presented for a Land Use and Transportation Plan for Solebury Square along 202. While well intended, this proposal needs major reconsideration as to its scale, scope, and its impact on the entire Township. The proposal envisions:

1. Building 667 units, which would likely house more than 1,200 people. Currently Solebury has 8,800 residents; this proposal would mean at least a 13% increase in the population.
2. Increasing retail space within the commercial district by 70%; office/professional space by 727%, adding 123 hotel rooms, and adding banquet hall facilities.
3. Allowing over 2,000 new parking spaces.
4. Increasing allowances for building heights; lowering setbacks to as little as zero (0) feet in some cases, and in others to 8 feet or 12 feet.

I have an intense interest in this as a Solebury resident and as former Co-Supervisor Liaison to the Comprehensive Plan when it was updated and enacted by the Board of Supervisors in 2014 while I served as Chair.

My concerns include:

1. Nothing on this scale and scope was ever considered or envisioned in the Solebury Comprehensive Plan, the blueprint for preserving natural resource protections and enhancing the quality of life. The Comp Plan anticipated a net increase of 350 people across the *entire* Township over a ten year period, far less than this proposal envisions. How are the residents served by the rapid increase in traffic, visitors, retail customers, hotel and banquet guests, and the burden on the school system, township infrastructure, public services, and the water supply? Did anyone consider these aspects of the Comp Plan when they were developing this proposal?
2. I recall the degree of concern expressed by members of the Comp Plan committee when the Bucks County Planning Commission consultants came in with projections of a 350 increase in population over a 10 year period. Many felt this was far too many people. Ultimately, the plan was accepted because we could reasonably expect isolated residential infill, older citizens selling their homes to younger families with children, and some senior and multifamily housing. The Draft Land Use plan put forward ignores the

Comp Plan and would lead to a much larger population than ever planned, or supported, by our community.

3. The new proposal calls for reducing essential and long-established natural resource protections by reducing setbacks and providing for thousands of parking spaces and thousands of square feet of impervious surface. Yet Solebury residents have spent millions on land preservation, and have indicated time and time again that their highest priorities are retention of rural character and protecting natural resources. Why was there no consideration of natural resource protection in this proposal?
4. The concept that Route 202 congestion can be managed or reduced by adding 2,000 parking places, building thousands of square feet for retail customers, office workers, banquet and hotel guests, and residential space for 1200+ people, is preposterous. Yes, an internal road system and changes on the Route 202 system might be an improvement, but the 1,200 residents, retail customers, office workers and hotel occupants are going to add *thousands* of road trips every day.
5. During the presentation, the consultants remarked "the goal is get drivers to use other roads in the Township." Residents regularly use Aquetong, Stoney Hill, Suga, Kitchens Lane, River, Upper York, Street, Upper Mountain and many other side roads in the Township to avoid Route 202. Somehow 'getting drivers to use other roads in the Township' is considered a preferred option despite destroying the quiet and quality of life in the Township for the sake of developing a robust commercial district. The more traffic there is on our rural roads, the less rural Solebury will be. How would the Solebury Square proposal impact the local roads which we all use to try to avoid Route 202 and enjoy their beauty?
6. The proposal envisions connecting the Logan Square/Solebury Square road system to Reeder Road. Does the rural character and quality of life of Reeder Road residents matter to the Township? Should their choice of living on a quiet country road be destroyed for the convenience of a new residential/retail complex?
7. Over the past two decades, the Township has wisely pursued restoration of Aquetong Creek. Yet if this development is built, Aquetong Creek will be under siege. Even though we have strong stormwater management requirements, they do not account for a changing climate that is bringing significantly more precipitation to our region. In 2018 alone, we had over 60 inches of precipitation (vs. 42" in an average year). Many storms can bring over 4 inches of rain in one day. This means that stormwater facilities frequently will be overwhelmed, leading to destruction of the Creek, and increased risks of major flooding downstream in Solebury and for our neighbors in New Hope. I know that New Hope is at risk because I helped clear stores located near the Creek during the disastrous floods a decade ago. Yes, Delaware River flooding is a problem for New Hope, but often overlooked is the Aquetong's rampaging flow during high water events.

8. In 2013, the Township surveyed the entire population of Solebury. The residents overwhelmingly wanted to preserve the area's rural character. I have zero recollection of anyone suggesting we need many more people, more hotels, massive increases in retail facilities, more banquet facilities and hotels, or that Solebury becomes a "destination of choice for retail experiences." There was an identified need for senior housing, and some small scale multi-family housing, but nothing on the scale envisioned in this proposal.
9. The village areas of Lumberville, Carversville, Solebury and Center Bridge are intimate, rural, and close knit communities made up of approximately 100-150 people. The proposed village at Solebury Square would provide housing for well over 1,200 people. This is 6-10 times the scale of current villages. The proposed village is suburban in scale even if it tries to emulate traditional architectural styles. Rather than maintaining the rural character, this proposal would destroy it.
10. At the Board meeting, Supervisor John Francis stated "I would add to emphasize that the whole goal here is to add value to this whole area and to the properties that exist here. I think in the past there have been a lot of restrictions placed on how development occurred, and we are looking to change that so we are going to invite a developer in and add value to the properties."

Such an approach is a 180 degree turn from a Township where there is a deep consensus to control growth, preserve land, impose restrictions on property development, protect natural resources and preserve the rural character.

Resident Dorothy Downie expressed it perfectly in her recent letter to the editor of the Bucks County Herald *"The larger question, though, is when and how the Supervisors became proponents for 'development,' thus abandoning their mandate to preserve and protect the Township."* I would add, not only the mandate, but your explicit promises to voters during election campaigns.

11. For a Township that has cumulatively spent over \$50 million in borrowings and interest to preserve land, made land purchases on strategic properties (e.g. 80 acres near Street Road), and has an active Land Preservation program, Supervisors should be directing the Land Preservation committee to explore acquisition of some of the properties currently for sale along Rt. 202 in the Neighborhood Commercial (TNC) zone.
12. Solebury is at the edge of the suburbs and the beginning of rural Pennsylvania. Our residents have chosen to stay as rural as possible, knowing that the pressure for growth, for sprawl, for suburbanization is intense. We have devoted so much attention to regulatory restrictions on growth and development, made a huge investment in land preservation and park land, embedded very strong natural resource protections in our laws, and have backed that up by persistent decision making at the municipal level. Staying rural requires constant diligence and awareness and conscious action. As Supervisors, you are an integral role in this process, and at the vanguard in maintaining

this mandate from the citizenry. If we forget history, if we forget why your predecessors enacted stringent safeguards in response to rapid population growth (the population increased by 43% from 1990 to 2004; from 6,000 to 8,600), the essential reason so many live here will be permanently gone.

There is a need for planning, design standards, traffic control and road improvements, some new housing alternatives for seniors, healthcare facilities, and more linkages to our parks. Yet this should not be accomplished by large scale development; circumventing natural resource protections; overloading our local roads, services and infrastructure; and destroying whatever rural character we have left.

Thank you.

Jim Searing
Solebury PA