

MINUTES FOR JANUARY 24, 2019
VALLEY TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting of the Valley Township Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, January 24, 2019, at Rainbow Elementary School, 1113 West Lincoln Highway, Coatesville, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Patrice Proctor at 7:08 p.m. Those in attendance were Supervisors Kathy O’Doherty, Joe Sciandra, and Patrice Proctor. Supervisors Christopher Lehenky and William Handy, Sr. were absent. Also in attendance were Carol R. Lewis, Township Manager; Michael J. Ellis, P.E., of Pennoni Associates, Inc. (Township Engineer); and Jim Dalton, Esquire, of Unruh, Turner, Burke & Frees, Esquire (Township Solicitor).

Ms. Proctor noted that the meeting was to hear public comment and discussion regarding alternatives to close Buckthorn Drive between Tuxford Lane and Oaklyn Lane to eliminate thru traffic to and from Airport Road. Ms. Proctor thanked the Coatesville Area School District for the use of Rainbow Elementary School and acknowledged the large turnout. Ms. Proctor turned the meeting over to Solicitor Dalton.

Mr. Dalton noted that the Board will hear public comment and take those comments under advisement. He stated that no decision would be made this evening. Mr. Dalton stated that those who wish to make comments should come up to the microphone, identify themselves with name and address, have three minutes to talk, and requested that there be no repetition but to simply state if you agree or disagree with comments made. He also asked that everyone be civil and polite.

CITIZEN’S COMMENTS:

Many residents immediately called out for the purpose of the meeting. They noted hearing there were concerns regarding health and safety and they asked to have these concerns identified. Mr. Ellis advised that his firm was directed by the Board, upon receiving comments regarding safety concerns and traffic and speeding issues on Oaklyn and Robinson, to identify alternatives to address the issues and concerns.

Brandon Rowan, 26 Tuxford Lane – Mr. Rowan stated that he has been associated with law enforcement and emergency services for 17.5 years. He asked if the Board had pulled data from the County DES and the Valley Township police department regarding the number of accidents at Oaklyn and Robinson as well as the number of traffic complaints. He also felt that emergency response times would be affected with the proposed gate. Ms. Lewis advised that the data from the Valley Township Police Department noted that there have been two accidents in the last two years. She stated that she did not have any data from the County.

Dr. Cathy L. Taschner, Superintendent of Schools – Coatesville Area School District – Dr. Taschner read an impact statement which was distributed to the Board of Supervisors. The letter

noted that the proposed closure has a significant impact on the School District. All combined, there are a total of 82 school-aged students in the Round Hill Development, Oaklyn Lane, and Robinson Avenue. For those on Oaklyn and Robinson, there are a combination of residential and corner pickups. For students who reside in Round Hill Development, the entrance is currently used as the pick-up location which is referred to by the intersection of Buckthorn and LaRose. The proposed closure would result in the re-routing of 15 school buses. With the proposed closure, the buses would have to enter off of Airport Road to Robinson Avenue, creating an increase of bus traffic on Robinson Avenue and Oaklyn Lane. Currently that traffic is mitigated by the use of Buckthorn. In the new arrangement, the buses would all need to make the loop around Robinson Avenue and back onto Oaklyn Lane and proceed back onto Robinson Avenue before turning onto Airport Road. Though the district does not prefer this change, there is only one option for pick up that the District feels would be safe for students. That location is 215 Buckthorn Drive, right at the mailbox. This is located near LaRose Drive in the cul-de-sac. Dr. Taschner noted that they cannot take buses into the Round Hill Development as the development roads are not dedicated to the Township; the only exclusion to this procedure is the entrance of smaller vehicles that provide specialized transportation. Dr. Taschner requested that the Township reconsider the closure of this road at this time.

Mary Grace Conlan, 408 LaRose Drive – Ms. Conlan noted that she is the Round Hill HOA president. She advised that no one from the Township reached out to the Round Hill HOA Board. She noted that she was speaking on behalf of 201 units of the development. She noted that their roads are not dedicated and that the Township now wants to close the two public roads. She stated that she is not in favor of the proposed closure.

Ron Pryor, 137 LaRose Drive – Mr. Pryor stated that he felt this is a solution in search of a problem. He stated that the Board is forcing the residents to only use Route 30 to access their development and turning Robinson and Oaklyn into private roads with taxpayer dollars.

Carla Blakely, 330 LaRose Drive - Ms. Blakely also noted that she is on the HOA Board. She stated that there are typically 10 to 15 cars waiting for buses and believes that moving the bus stop where the new location would be proposed would be an issue. She feels this issue is the result of 20 to 30 people in Robinson and Oaklyn that do not want to deal with growth and does not think it is fair as everyone pays the same taxes. She asked if it was looked into to make Robinson (going west) and Oaklyn (going east) one way or speed bumps.

Michelle Lewis, 410 LaRose Drive – Ms. Lewis noted that Chester County has been growing and changing. She stated that she feels that this proposal is being considered because the single dwelling homes are being inconvenienced. She asked to look back as access roads were looked at when the development was going in and during the approval process. She asked not to take away this access.

Ron Pryor, 137 LaRose Drive – Mr. Pryor commented on the speed bump and asked who speeds going around a corner. Mr. Sciandra noted that this is not a speed bump. It is a channel for water flow.

Rebecca DiRocco-Bones, 146 LaRose Drive – Ms. Bones stated that she feels that this issue is the result of two homes at the end of Robinson and the reason for everyone being here tonight. She said one of these residents from Robinson has chased after her with a shovel. Ms. Bones stated that she does not believe speeding is an issue anymore. She stated that she has an 11-year-old daughter and asked the Board to put themselves in a parent’s point of view for their children’s safety getting on and off a bus. She further stated that she believes the Board has already made their decision. Ms. Lewis emphasized that no decision has been made and that is the reason for the meeting to public comments.

Paul DiZillo, 144 LaRose Drive – Mr. DiZillo stated that he attended a meeting approximately eight years ago and he thought it was mentioned that there would be no closure of Buckthorn until a traffic light was in place at Buckthorn and Route 30. He mentioned that he did not know how two accidents in two years was justification for the road closure. He said there have been more accidents at Buckthorn and Business 30, including a motorcycle accident with a fatality.

Brandon Rowan, 26 Tuxford Lane – Mr. Rowan inquired who would be able to operate and open the gate. Ms. Lewis stated that the design of the gate has not been done and that it is only a proposal at this time. Mr. Rowan stated that he is struggling with a proposal for a gate but no information of how it will work. He inquired if there have been conversations of the effects of the gate, who can use the arm, and potential backlash.

Mr. Sciandra reviewed the history of the development of Round Hill. He noted that when the plan went through the Planning Commission, the ordinances that are in place today would not have allowed the development to be built as it was. He further stated that Oaklyn and Robinson were not built for the traffic volume that it sees today. He also noted that GPS takes trucks onto Robinson to avoid the Route 30/Airport Road intersection which causes problems. During the planning process, the Planning Commission looked at ways to abate traffic issues. Robinson Avenue was looked at for no left turn. The widening of Robinson and Oaklyn was investigated but it was not feasible as it would have required the taking of land. Mr. Sciandra noted that a year ago, issues came to the Board of Supervisors again regarding truck traffic, speed of vehicles, and safety issues. The Board again looked at past records and options. They felt the most common sense and not permanent option was to temporary close Buckthorn as proposed to see if this would help solve the issues. He said that the Board was here this evening to gather feedback from the community to help render a decision.

Mary Grace Conlan, 408 LaRose Drive – Ms. Conlan stated that she has witnessed tractor trailers coming thru. She asked if signage is in place or if it needs to be installed for “local deliveries only”.

Sean Fennelly, 45 Tuxford Lane – Mr. Fennelly stated that eminent domain is an option that the Board had to take land to widen the roads. He stated that what people have done to their yards on Robinson with large rocks and bollards is to keep people off yards, not a safety issue. He stated that he agrees with concerns of a potential issue with EMS response.

Ron Pryor, 137 LaRose Drive – Mr. Pryor asked if there are “no truck” signs. It was noted that there are signs posted on Robinson Avenue.

Casey Leidy, 306 LaRose Drive – Ms. Leidy stated that she purchased her home about a year and a half ago. She said that she would not have bought her home there if this gate was installed. She mentioned that she believes this could affect property values. She said she does not see the truck traffic and has concerns regarding EMS response. She said a traffic light is needed at Buckthorn and Route 30. She also noted that she thinks speed bumps are a great idea. She stated that, to her, it seems like someone has more political power to get action by the Board. She said there are 201 units in Round Hill and only 29 in Robinson and Oaklyn.

Jonathan Egger, 322 LaRose Drive – Mr. Egger stated that he wanted to echo Casey's remarks. He also believes her comments regarding property value has merit. He said he also felt that the "modified frontage" of yards on Robinson are a safety concern. He noted that he almost hit one of the large stones trying to maneuver around an oncoming car. He said he believes something needs to happen, but not this.

Vina Estrada, 310 LaRose Drive – Ms. Estrada stated that she attended a November meeting of the Board of Supervisors and it was stated that no formal study had been done. Ms. Estrada stated that she checked with District 6 of PennDOT, and they confirmed that no study had been done. She said that in 2006, the District 6 made comments regarding connections to state roads, traffic flow, and comments about property value. She commented that speed limit signs needs to be posted. She asked to reap benefits of their tax dollars to have signs installed, police patrols and to issue tickets for speeding. She stated that there was a previous survey in the 2009-2010 timeframe and not all of the residents of Oaklyn and Robinson were in favor of closure. She asked if the Township would take liability if a child is injured by the busing or delayed EMS response time. She asked what is the cost of the gates to install and maintain. She said when she attended the meeting in November, there was no outreach to the school district or the bus company until the day of the meeting.

Ryan Flynn, 350 LaRose Drive – Mr. Flynn inquired if public funds will continue to plow and maintain Robinson and Oaklyn if the gate is installed. He also felt that busing will be an issue.

Gilben Navarrete, 38 Tuxford Lane – Ms. Gilben asked if any assessment had been done. She said she is a 10-year resident and said the speed limit signs are not very visible and she believes not in the right spot. She believes 25 mph is too fast for the narrow roads. She suggested decreasing the speed limit and placing the signs in more visible spots. She stated that she feels some want Robinson and Oaklyn as private roads. She can recall three accidents at 30 and Buckthorn. If there is a bad fire, how will they evacuate. She also suggested "no trucks except local delivery" signs be installed.

Hope Been, 157 LaRose Drive – Ms. Been stated that she formally lived on Robinson Avenue. Her children were to catch the bus at Airport and Robinson. Due to safety concerns, the school district changed the stop to their home. She now lives in Round Hill. She feels the proposed new stop, if the gates are installed, will be a safety concern. She stated that there are reports of children being injured at bus stops and she does not want her children to cross Route 30. She stated that most of the 29 homes in Robinson and Oaklyn do not have children. With regards to the comments of EMS response time, she said there was an incident in the West Chester area in a

gated community where EMS was delayed as they could not get the gates open. She asked if there were studies regarding the traffic cutting thru and how many of these vehicles were originating from other communities such as the new townhomes in Sadsbury Township. Ms. Been introduced her son, Nathan, who was attending for his Eagle Scout merit badge who addressed the Board. Mr. Been addressed the Board with questions he believes the Board should be asking as they consider the proposal and other options to possibly consider such as a traffic light at Business 30 and Buckthorn, bus stop signs, speed bumps, flashing stop signs, and “no thru traffic” signs.

Vince Zingaro, 21 Tuxford Lane – Mr. Zingaro also stated that there are 29 homes on Oaklyn and Robinson and he would be shocked if half of these homes have an issue with traffic. He feels it is just a few homes. He said that he believes making a left onto Business 30, and even a right, is a safety issue. To address speeding issues on Oaklyn and Robinson, he suggested a speed bump.

Theresa Smith, 50 Robinson Avenue – Ms. Smith said that they are 3-year residents and specifically purchased their home as it was in the R1 district with no HOA. One of the considerations for the purchase of their home was that they would be able to maneuver their RV. As one of the 29 homes in Robinson and Oaklyn, they are okay with the status quo.

Joe McGrath, 360 Larose Drive – Mr. McGrath agrees with everyone else in support of no gates and inquired how many speeding tickets are written in that area. He also felt that the new developments in Sadsbury Township contribute to the traffic of those cutting through the development to avoid the traffic light at 30 and Airport Road.

Brandon Rowan, 26 Tuxford Lane – Mr. Rowan said he felt about 7 people in the room wanted the road closed. He said the HOA President would like to work with the Board of Supervisors. He believed that the survey results indicated that over 50% of the feedback was that the respondents did not want anything done.

Ms. O’Doherty stated that the Board would love to have a traffic light at Route 30 and Buckthorn but PennDOT did not warrant a light there. She noted that the left arrow at the traffic light east bound on Business 30 to turn onto Airport Road is now working. In time, PennDOT will be working on the timing of the arrow. She also noted that another development, at the southeast corner of Route 30 and Airport Road, has finally received their approval. Although it will probably be some time before this development is completely built as proposed, this may cause more traffic issues for people trying to turn out of Robinson.

Gwendolyn Uglinica, 519 Tifton Lane – Ms. Uglinica stated that she works in the Exton area and takes Robinson Lane to get to Airport Road to the Route 30 bypass. To have to come out onto Route 30 and then to the traffic light at Airport Road would cause extra commute time.

Dan Cler, 215 Buckthorn Drive – Mr. Cler moved into the Round Hill community in 2004. He stated that this is dividing the two neighborhoods, as evidenced tonight. He believes that the issue with the gate will add to the division and isolate the communities. He asked if this could be a ballot question.

Kataleeya Steckclair, 228 Bardel Drive – Ms. Steckclair stated that she agrees with the comments made this evening. She believes there were lots of good ideas mentioned and asked why they weren't tried before going to the gate proposal – such as signage and speed bumps.

Ms. O'Doherty respond that she will review her notes following the meeting. She noted that the gate was to be temporary to see if it solved the issue.

Barry Shute, 60 Robinson Avenue – Mr. Shute stated that he had attended the Boards' meeting in October when this was discussed and it was noted at that meeting that the Board was waiting for a proposal from their engineer. As a resident on Robinson Avenue, he would also prefer going with the status quo. He noted that speeding is everywhere. He suggested making the speed limit 15 mph. He also noted that his father-in-law was on the Planning Commission when the Round Hill development was being proposed and contrary to what some people say, he was against gating. He also stated that since 2004, there has been a 50% turnover of residents on Robinson Avenue since the Round Hill development went in.

Carol Bell, 46 Tuxford Lane – Ms. Bell stated that she does not believe everyone is listening. She says she would move out if a gate is installed. She believes the Board should go with the majority. She asked what the other ideas were.

Mr. Ellis stated that six alternatives were presented to the Board of Supervisors in October 2018:

- Install signage – Signage could be installed to close the subject portion of the road to traffic; however, this would only be adhered to if there is constant police presence. A physical barrier to prohibit traffic would then be recommended.
- Install barricades – He noted that this would not allow for that portion of the road to be used for emergency access and would not be aesthetically pleasing.
- Install chain – The chain, however, could easily be removed.
- Demolish Buckthorn Drive – Demolish the cartway between Tuxford and Oaklyn, or a portion thereof, and replace with grass or pavers. It could then be used for emergency access. This would be the most expensive alternative.
- Implement One-Way Traffic – In lieu of closing the road entirely, an option would have been that the road could be narrowed to be only one lane with one-way direction between Tuxford Lane and Oaklyn Lane or vice-versa. This would allow for emergency access, but would presumably only eliminate half of the thru traffic. This option also has the potential for the restriction to be ignored and for two-way traffic to continue and would add to a risk of vehicular accidents as well.
- Install gate as proposed

With regards to the gate concept, Mr. Ellis stated that there has not been any design detail developed as it is still in the proposal stage. He further stated that in the 14 years since the development was proposed, other options have been discussed as well as the cons associated such as with widening the roads, which would result in expensive stormwater issues.

Mr. Ellis reviewed the procedure to lower speed limits which would require a traffic study and the calculations used. He said it is very difficult on residential roads to go below 25 mph.

Ms. Proctor stated that this public meeting was set to hear all comments. She noted that she is probably the supervisor with the most current tenure on the Board as she was appointed in 2002 when the development was being proposed and has gone through previous discussions and public meetings similar to the one tonight. She stated during the subdivision process, the Valley Township Planning Commission did recommend that after the development was built to close the road, but the Board of Supervisors voted to not close the road.

Dave Berkheimer, 105 Robinson Avenue – Mr. Berkheimer stated that there were no traffic issues prior to the approval of Round Hill. The Planning Commission had noted that the roads were not wide enough for access roads. He now sees buses traveling through Robinson that are empty. He has repaired their corner numerous times and trucks come through that end up in a stand still. Police records should show numerous complaints. Trucks need to back up or go thru yards. He understands the division between the communities and it saddens him. \

Charlotte Walton, 30 Robinson – Ms. Walton noted that she is a 30-year resident. She reiterated the statements made this evening and addressed the disrespect and concerns regards safety.

Hope Been, 157 LaRose Drive – Ms. Been inquired when a decision would be made.

The Board of Supervisors noted that the earliest this subject would appear on their agenda would be at their February 19, 2019, meeting.

Ms. Been further stated that in Dr. Taschner’s statement it was noted that to change routes requires rescheduling of times and notifications being sent out to the families and would also result in the variance of bus times for several weeks until the routes settled out. She asked that this timeframe be taken into consideration as well as the impact of the new bus stop location. She also asked that the Board take into consideration the safety concerns mentioned and the concern regarding emergency response times.

Ms. Conlan, representing the Round Hill HOA, thanked the Board of Supervisors for listening to the concerns.

The Board thanked the public for coming out and for their comments which will be reviewed. The Board also noted that when this subject comes up for a vote or discussion at a future public meeting that the Round Hill HOA Board President will be notified in order to make the residents aware, but again noted it would not be at their first meeting of February.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Janis A. Rambo
Township Secretary