



Fall 2007

CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

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GREEN LANE ROAD GETS GREENER

- article & photos by Aliena Gerhard, Open Space Director

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Alexandra Coleman, well-known not only for her stunning photography of the Devon Horse Show but also for her beautiful pastoral paintings, made a different type of picture. She made a commitment to preserve her picturesque farm for generations to come. On October 26th, Ms. Coleman signed a conservation easement to protect it forever.

An active member of the community for years, as farm manager of Brightside Farm and a part of the Open Space Commission, Ms. Coleman understands the importance of preserving Charlestown's open space. She has partnered with the Township, French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Chester County and the State to keep her farm open and undeveloped and to protect her woodlands, which contain the waters of the Pigeon Run and habitat for many animals, birds, and plants. Ms. Coleman will serve the public benefit in two important ways: first by creating an endangered native plant sanctuary, where she will house plants rescued



Two happy residents of Glomar Farm

from development sites, and second, by permitting the Horse Shoe Trail to traverse the front of her property so riders and hikers can enjoy nature off road.



At Left: L. Stockton Illoway, President FPCCT, Alexandra Coleman, Paul Hogan, Pam Brown, FPCCT Conservation Director, William Gerhard (son of Charlestown Township's Open Space Director)

Ms. Coleman's farm joins Rainbow's End Farm and the Piliero property in being permanently preserved, making the Green Lane Road total of protected open space over 116 acres! Thank you, Alix, for your courage and foresight, and for making Green Lane Road a more beautiful place for all of us!

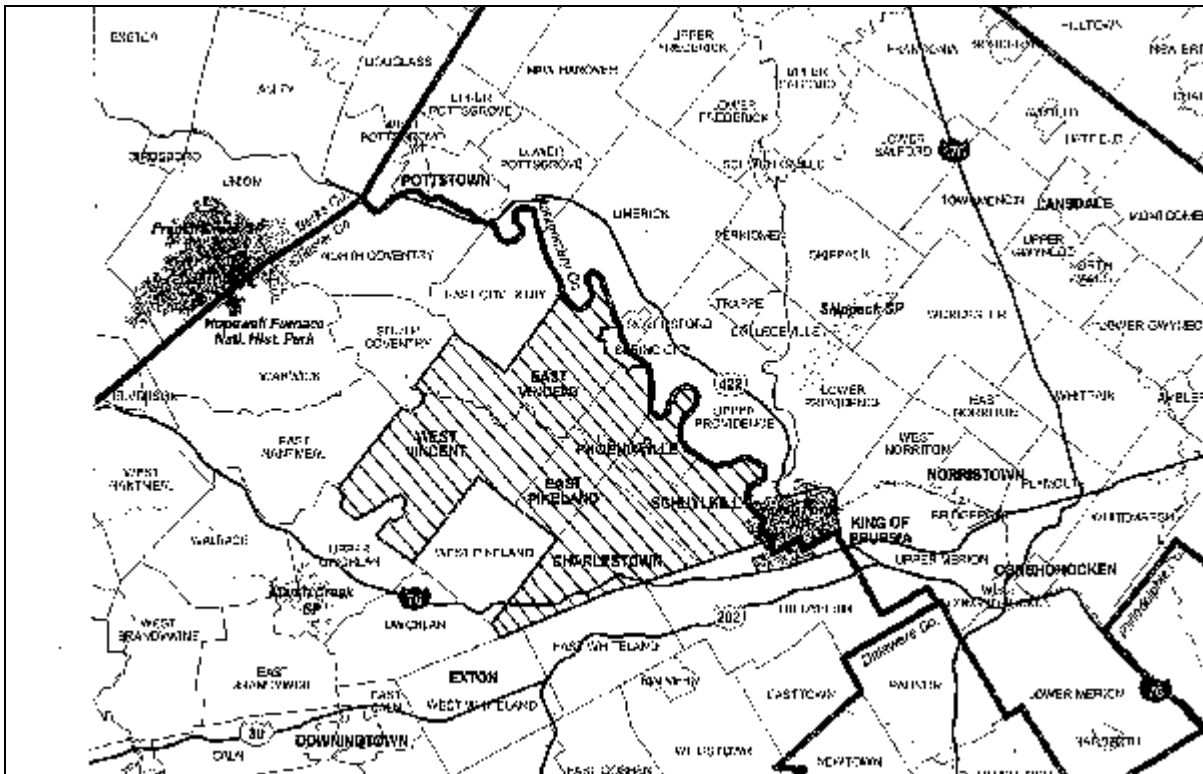
Who's next? Stay tuned!

Update – Phoenixville Region Comprehensive Plan

- by Linda Csete

Background

In 2004, six municipalities recognized that the pattern of growth experienced in the Phoenixville region was straining its natural, historic and community resources. In response, the Townships of Charlestown, Schuylkill, East Pikeland, East Vincent, West Vincent, and the Borough of Phoenixville formed the Phoenixville Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) and began its journey toward the creation of a regional Comprehensive Plan under the guidance of the consulting firm of Kise, Straw & Kolodner Inc. Supervisor Hugh Willig and Planning Commissioner Rick Reis have both served on the PRPC representing Charlestown. A map outlining the boundaries of the Phoenixville Regional group is shown here:



Beginning Steps

Before a regional Plan could be developed, the group needed to study the amount and types of development permitted under the existing ordinances in the member municipalities, and then develop tools that could reduce that amount of development to a level that more realistically reflects the needs of the land and the capacity of the infrastructure. This was done by generating a trend build-out analysis to estimate what number of housing units and commercial square footage could be built in vacant parcels under current ordinances. Next, the group examined tools available to reduce this development capacity as permitted under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). This led to the development of the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Current Steps – Adopting the Regional Comprehensive Plan

The draft Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan was completed in June 2007. The goal of the Regional Plan is to preserve natural and agricultural resources while focusing development in the region's traditional downtown, villages and commercial centers, including Phoenixville's downtown and the Rt. 724 corridor.

Since then, the six municipalities have asked their own Planning Commissions, along with the Chester County Planning Commission, for a review and recommendation. The Charlestown Township Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Regional Plan at their August 14, 2007 meeting, and the Board of Supervisors held public discussions and adopted the Plan at their September 4, 2007 meeting. Charlestown was the first member of the group to adopt the Plan. Schuylkill Township, West Vincent and Phoenixville Borough have now adopted it as well. Adoption is pending in East Pikeland and East Vincent Townships.

Future Steps - Implementation

Following adoption of the Regional Plan by each member municipality, the next step is to implement the plan. The local municipal zoning and development ordinances are the PRPC's most important tools to limit and direct growth. To bring these ordinances in line with the goals of the region, revisions will be needed to each municipality's zoning and development ordinances during the Implementation Phase.

The members will each hold a vote to enter into the Phoenixville Region Intergovernmental Cooperative Implementation Agreement for Regional Planning. Charlestown expects to consider this matter in late 2007 or early 2008. After all members have entered into the Agreement, they will follow an action plan to carry out the recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan through amendments to their zoning and planning ordinances. Charlestown's ordinances are close to compliance now and won't require many changes.

How Membership in the PRPC will work

Once the Regional Plan is adopted by all the members, zoning ordinance changes from any municipality would undergo plan review by the regional group. A regional committee consisting of one member of each governing body and one member from each Planning Commission will be created to perform reviews. Which applications are to be reviewed is spelled out in the Regional Plan. In addition, each municipality would also have the option of referring any subdivision or land development plans it chooses to the group for review. The regional group would have an advisory status similar to that of the Chester County Planning Commission, and the review period would run concurrently with the CCPC's review.

There is no downside to adopting the Regional Plan. From the applicant's standpoint, there's no additional review time needed, and from the municipality's standpoint, the regional group's recommendations are advisory only. Being part of a regional comprehensive plan group provides each municipality a defense from any requirement to provide for a use that is provided for elsewhere in the region. For example, since Charlestown Township has quarries, the other member municipalities would not have to provide for this use.

Viewing the Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan

In addition to being available for review at the Township Office, the Regional Comprehensive Plan may be viewed online via Kise Straw & Kolodner's website by entering on your internet browser address line: <ftp://67.107.162.38>

You will see the folder "Public." Click on it to open the folder. There is a list of folders inside. Go to "Phoenixville." Simply drag and drop items from the browser window. There is no password or log-in name. *Please note: If you are using Version 7 of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 7, there is an extra step to do. After you enter the FTP address in the Address field and attempt to go there, you must click on the "Page" tool on the far right side of IE 7 and scroll down to "open FTP site in Windows Explorer."*

The MS4 Stormwater Program

- L. Csete

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established the MS4 Stormwater Program to improve our nation's waters by reducing the number of pollutants that stormwater picks up and carries into the storm sewer systems during a storm event. As part of the MS4 Stormwater Program, Charlestown Township holds a permit to discharge their stormwater into local waterways. This permit requires us to design a Stormwater Management Program that reduces the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent possible, that protects water quality, and that satisfies the water quality requirements of the Clean Water Act. In Pennsylvania, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) administers this program.

The MS4 Stormwater Program has six elements termed "minimal control measures" which when implemented should result in significant reduction in pollutants discharged into receiving waters. The six minimum control measures and the actions are outlined below.

1. Public Education and Outreach

Distributing educational materials and conducting outreach to inform citizens about the impacts that stormwater runoff has on water quality.

2. Public Participation/Involvement

Providing opportunities for citizens to participate in programs that improve water quality. Charlestown sponsors an annual Earth Day Clean up, supports the Green Valleys Association Annual Envirofest, has hosted the DCNR's Tree Vitalize Program and participates in the County's quarterly Household Hazardous Waste Program.

3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination

Developing and implementing a plan to detect and eliminate non-stormwater discharges into the stormwater system.

4. Construction Site Runoff Control

Developing, implementing and enforcing an erosion and sediment control program for construction site activities that disturb one acre or more.

5. Post-Construction Runoff Control

Developing, implementing and enforcing a program to address discharges of post-construction stormwater runoff from new development.

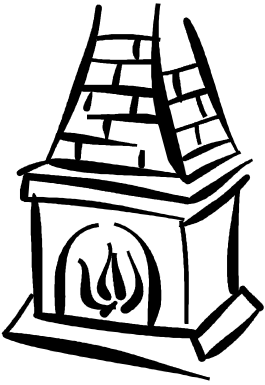
6. Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

Developing and implementing a program that reduces or prevents pollutant runoff from municipal operations.

Charlestown Township is committed to improving water quality in our watershed through better management of stormwater runoff. Every resident and business owner can participate in the MS4 Stormwater Program by reducing or preventing pollutant runoff from their own property and by reporting any non-stormwater discharges into their local waterways to the Township MS4 Coordinator at 610-240-0326. ***You can be the solution to stormwater pollution!***

Safety Reminders from the Fire Marshal

- Fred Alston, Fire Marshal



Outdoor Fireplaces

Outdoor fireplaces are being purchased and used by more homeowners every year. There are several basic types of outdoor fireplaces, including fire pits and chimneas. Most are made from cast iron, cast aluminum, copper, sheet

metal or clay and sit on short legs or a stand. These fireplaces are designed to burn either wood or in some cases, gel alcohol, charcoal, or natural/bottled gas but not garbage, leaves or other types of trash. Any time you use an outdoor fireplace, inspect the unit for proper installation and maintained screens. Make sure that you follow all of the safety recommendations of the manufacturer of your fireplace. Always keep a means of extinguishing the fire ready to use and protect the surface below the fireplace from any sparks or embers that may fall. As with any type of fireplace, whether it is indoors or outside, place the ashes from the fireplace in a metal container and store them outdoors, away from combustible material for at least two weeks before disposing of them.

Smoke Alarms

Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home, including the basement. For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home so that if one sounds, they all sound. Test your smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once a year – when the time changes from daylight to standard time would be a good reminder. Replace all of your alarms (including hard-wired) if they are 10 years old or older.

Home Fire Escape Planning

Make a home fire escape plan. Find all of the doors and windows that lead outside and make sure they open easily. Know at least two ways out of every room if possible and have a plan for anyone who may need assistance in your home. Choose an outside meeting place away from the home where everyone should meet if the alarms sound – by a shrub or certain lawn decoration, for example. For homes with a second or third level, consider escape ladders listed by a recognized testing laboratory. Make sure that everyone in the house, including guests, know how to call 9-1-1 for emergencies and make sure your house number can be seen from the street or easily visible at your driveway.

Have a happy & safe holiday season! - Fred Alston, Fire Marshal

Our Yearly Reminder on Snow Removal

Please keep the following in mind during snow events:

- To avoid frustration, don't shovel or plow the end of your driveway until the road is cleared.
- Remind your hired plowmen that it's against the law to push your snow onto the public roads.
- Clear the snow around any fire hydrant on your property to save valuable time in an emergency.
- Do not park on the street until the roads have been completely cleared.
- Drive carefully at a minimum speed.
- Kindly check on your neighbors who live alone.

Be patient with us and bear in mind that our primary concern after a snow storm is to ensure that each and every road is opened for emergency vehicles. After this is accomplished, we have more time to address additional widening and complete clearing of the cul de sacs.

Our Public Works Superintendent, Fred Alston, can be reached at any time on his cell phone for road related problems and questions: (610) 656-9315.

The Community Gardens at Brightside Farm

- article & photos by Jacob Merriwether



The Township owned Brightside Farm, which borders the northeast side of Yellow Springs Road from Hollow Road to well past Valley Hill Road, remains a picturesque site with working fields, pastures, woods, century old farm buildings and a stone farmhouse. A committee managing the farm in 2003 felt public enjoyment and use of the farm would be well served by creating walking trails that offer intimate and secluded views of the property without interfering with farming activities, as well as a community garden area in which residents could rent a plot and plant and grow vegetables and flowers for their own consumption.

Many Charlestown residents live in wooded areas with little sunlight for gardening. They and even those who are not sun-deprived must contend with the local deer population, which can easily obliterate a garden.

In the spring of 2003, an area adjacent to the Brightside Farm driveway was set aside for the gardens. This is an area the Pyle family used for their own garden on this "century farm". A 145' x 60' area was plowed by local farmer Newell Burdick, and the area was fenced with 6' high cyclone fence and several gates. Twelve plots, each 19' x 20' were laid out and portions were set aside for a wide center aisle as well as a 3' border between plots and inside the fence. A grass area between the gardens and the drive (the "garden green") provides convenient parking. The most convenient aspect of the garden placement was an unused well adjacent to the garden area. The Township paid to activate the well and it provides fresh water to the gardens via a hose system.

The twelve plots were offered for \$25 for the summer of 2003 and were snapped up almost immediately. The gardeners then and now were a mix of knowledgeable gardeners, first timers, those with time to create "landscaped" gardens and those who simply wanted fresh vegetables for the summer. A couple of first year gardeners grew flowers as well as vegetables. As word spread about the gardens, the waiting list for 2004 grew quickly. In the spring of 2004, the garden area was doubled to its current size and now encloses 24 plots, three hose stations, and three entrance gates along the green.



Many gardeners now grow flowers as well as vegetables. Every plot can be watered from the nearest hose station. A smaller area outside of the garden fence is available to gardeners who are already renting a plot. This area is not fenced, but is disked each spring and can be used for crops that are not too attractive to deer and rabbits, typically melons and pumpkins. Garden plots can be roto-tilled in the spring by a local farmer for an additional fee.

While the cyclone fence has kept the deer out of the gardens, it was basically an open door to the rabbit population that live in the hedgerow below the gardens. A 24" high chicken-wire fence has been installed around the outside of the cyclone fence, and for the most part this has keep rabbits out of the gardens. In 2006, raccoons discovered some juicy sweet corn was growing in some plots and simply climbed the fence and had a feast. They have not been a significant problem this year.

The Community Gardens at Brightside Farm – *continued*



Vegetables and a Welcome Visitor at the Brightside Community Gardens

A great deal of information about the gardens including photo albums, layouts, rules and regulations is available on the citizens' web site at <http://www.charlestown.org>. Simply click the square "Garden" icon near the top of the Home page. All supplies and materials for the gardens have been provided by Charlestown Township. The gardens were built and are maintained by volunteers who do the mowing, weed-wacking and fence patching. "Weed bins" are provided where gardeners should deposit the weeds from their plot, and each year gardeners have had free cow manure and free hay mulch for their use. Gardeners are expected to keep their plot from "going to weeds". In some cases, two families share a plot and share the workload of maintaining it.

Gardeners who have rented a plot have first rights to that same plot in the following year. There is a large group of returning gardeners each year, but there is always turnover as people move from the area, find they don't have sufficient time to maintain their plot, or due to other circumstances must give up their plot. Residents are welcome to go to Brightside Farm and walk through the gardens and see what they are like. If you are interested in having a plot for the 2008 season, you should not hesitate to get on the waiting list for next year. Send an email to Jacob Merriwether at webadmin@charlestown.org requesting a plot. Please include both your mailing address and a phone number, though normal communication with gardeners is through e-mail.

Do You Know Which of Our Roads are State-Owned?

The state roads are maintained by PennDOT. Here is a list of the state roads in Charlestown Township. If you have a maintenance complaint, you can call PennDOT's Chester County Maintenance number at (610) 436-2091.

Charlestown Road

Church Road

Coldstream Road

Conestoga Road (Rt. 401)

Foster Road

Hollow Road

Merlin Road

Morehall Road (Rt. 29)

Newcomen Road

Phoenixville Pike

Pickering Dam Road

Pikeland Road

Seven Oaks Road

State Road (Rt. 29)

Valley Hill Road (East of Rt. 401)

Whitehorse Road

Yellow Springs Road (north of Hollow Rd)

CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP NOW AND THEN 2008 CALENDAR

A unique, historical calendar of our Township that is more than just a calendar. Learn about your community from each month's illustrated local history lesson prepared by your Historical Society. A map on the back page identifies the location of all but one of the monthly photos. One month's location is left for you to figure out. The calendar also provides background information on the Charlestown Historical Society as well as a directory for Township Offices and Officials. Sold at cost, this calendar will be mailed to you for \$12.00 using this order form.

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, St, Zip: _____

Include your check for \$12.00 to the "Charlestown Historical Society" and mail to Charlestown Historical Society, PO Box 344, Devault, PA 19432-0344



THE GENERAL STORE, 2008 Charlestown, PA
 Founded in the 17th century by the founder of the township, the store also served as a tavern and a post office at various times in its history.
 This old picture was taken in the 1870s when the store was still in use. In the 1980s it was acquired by Peter Ransberger whose daughter, Kathy, is a resident, and now the business was sold to who came from Italy and had a parking lot built by choice. It is now primarily used as a storage area.

March 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Charlestown Township
P.O. Box 507
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED