



MEETING MINUTES – NEIGHBOR’S FOCUS GROUP

Date:	August 30, 2021
References:	Project Overview Sheet Draft Concept Plan Site Analysis Plan G&A Project No. 20-03041

Summary

The Neighbor’s Focus Group was held on Thursday August 26, 2021 from 6 – 7:30 pm. The goal of the Focus Group was to gather immediate neighbors of the PECO utility corridor in order to inform them of the project goals and background while getting their feedback on the concept and proposed conceptual plan. A month prior to the meeting, Forty-six (46) invitations were mailed to property owners and residents located next to the site. The Focus Group meeting was also posted on the Township website’s project landing page along with a registration link for the meeting. All attendees were given a project overview sheet and printouts of the draft concept plan and the site analysis plan. The following is a summary of the focus group meeting:

Attendance

12 Attendees

11 Pre-Registrations (on the Project Landing Page)

5 Member of the project team attended (B. Thomas, T. Blomstrom, E. Moore, E. Paskewicz, and J. Goldstein)

Minutes

- Welcome & Introductions by T.Blomstrom
- Session Goals, Project Location, Miracle-Nature Concept, and Project Goals by J.Goldstein.
- Site Analysis & PECO Guidelines by E. Paskewicz.
 - An attendee asked what the circled areas on the Site Analysis plan mean.
 - Team responded that they do not indicate proposed improvements. They are diagrammatic lines showing where existing site conditions will prove challenging and where they provide opportunities for trail development.
 - An attendee asked what the rationale is behind PECO requiring all improvements to be located towards the western edge of the site.
 - Team responded that PECO requested this because the structures and power lines near the western edge of the site are newer and less likely to require replacement or major upgrades in the near future that would disturb any potential trail improvements.
- Project History & Background by B. Thomas.
- Project Timeline & Looking Ahead by J. Goldstein.
- Summary of Common Neighbor Feedback that the Project Team has Received Thus Far by J. Goldstein:
 - Concerns about screening for adjacent residences.
 - Concerns about the trail alignment.

- Concerns about lighting for the trail and its effects on neighbors.
- Concerns about restrooms.
- Concerns about maintaining the natural character of the site.
- Public Feedback/Discussion:
 - **Hillcrest Ave. Resident:**
 - Has concerns about how the trail shifts closer to his property and other Hillcrest residences located along the Western edge of the site.
 - Would like to see some level of screening for his property.
 - Project team responded that as the project moves forward there will likely be opportunities to have detailed discussion with each affected property owner about what specific screening they would and would not like.
 - Project team responded that the report narrative will include a discussion of specific areas where neighbors prefer that the trail gets pushed further to the center of the site.
 - Is in support of the idea of the trail, but mentioned that support is contingent upon how close the trail will need to be placed to his and other residences. Would prefer to see the trail pushed as far to the center of the site and away from the western boundary/property lines as possible.
 - Mentioned that his house is near a low point and expressed concerns about how the land dips and its potential to cause stormwater issues.
 - Expressed interest and support in a future connection to the Cross County Trail.
 - **Local Resident:**
 - Reiterated that she would also like to see the trail pushed as far away from houses as possible
 - **Durant Street Resident:**
 - Would like to see the trail shifted beyond the 25' buffer around the PECO structures near her house and towards the center of the utility corridor.
 - Expressed that she would like to see a memorial bench included as part of the plans in honor of her husband, a former Township police officer.
 - Expressed concern for the heritage trees along the edge of her property and the fox den located near there.
 - Project team responded that there would be no removal of trees or disturbance to private property beyond the PECO utility corridor.
 - Expressed concern about drainage issues on the site and how they might affect her property.
 - Expressed support of the overall idea of a trail on the site.
 - **Hillcrest Ave. Resident:**
 - Expressed concern about people parking illegally on her and her neighbor's property on the area located between Hillcrest and the utility corridor.
 - Expressed concern about the trash people leave in this area, as it seems to be used as an illegal access point for the utility corridor.
 - Expressed concern about how a potential trail will cause more people to park on this private property, use this area as an access point, and leave trash on her and her neighbor's property.
 - Project team responded that as this land is private and not part of the study area there are no plans to use it for any parking for the trail. Tom mentioned that the police should be called if people continue to park in this area without permission.
 - **Hillcrest Ave. Resident:**

- Expressed that he would like to see the uniqueness of individual neighbor's desires and needs regarding the project accounted for as the process moves forward.
 - Asked what PECO will allow as far as screening for their properties, particularly for screening to be located in the utility corridor. Also asked and confirmed what the term "screening" refers to as far as this site and project goes. Also ask who will pay for any screening that is provided for specific properties.
 - Project team responded that PECO will not allow structures on their property but that some type of lower shrub may be possible if it fits PECO's height requirements. Reiterated that screening refers to plantings, and potentially fencing, if it can be located off PECO property. The project team also stated that screening for neighbors will be budgeted for in the project construction costs, but any requested screening that is eventually located on private property will need to be maintained by the property owner.
 - Reiterated that his group of neighbors along Hillcrest support the concept of the trail and would like it be located as far away from their properties as possible.
- **Hillcrest Ave. Resident:**
 - Asked if improvements will be located right up against his property line.
 - The project team said no and expressed that there will be a setback of some kind along all private property lines.
- **Hillcrest Ave. Resident:**
 - Asked what the timeline is for the project and when the trail will be installed.
 - Project team responded that any construction is still a ways out. The feasibility study is ongoing, which will likely be wrapped up by the second quarter of 2022. Following the study there will need to be separate rounds of grant applications to acquire funding for engineering and design as well as construction. PECO's review of the eventual plans and the permitting process will also add some time. A very optimistic timeline of 5 years to have a completed trail was stated. The more likely estimate is that it will take longer than that to have a constructed trail.
- **Durant Street Resident:**
 - Joanne read an email from this property owner stating that he would like to see trees or shrubs near his property as a buffer.
- **Cedar Grove Road Property Owner:**
 - Would like to see the trail pushed as far west as possible as their business is currently hidden along the eastern edge of the site.
 - Expressed concern at how public access to this site will open up their property to the public more than it currently is.
 - Expressed that they deal with people illegally accessing their property through the utility corridor, parking on their site to access the property, sledding, snowboarding, setting up tree stands, engaging in illegal activity, and vandalizing their property and the ROW.
 - Project team responded that any vandalism or trespassing on their private property should be brought to the attention of Township police.
 - Expressed that development near the sewer plant has displaced wildlife such as deer and foxes onto their property and the utility corridor and

- expressed concern that the trail will cause further displacement.
 - Expressed concern about increased stormwater issues on the site if trail is constructed.
 - Mentioned that they already have a PECO easement across their property.
 - Expressed that they have outdoor equipment that is already attractive the bikers and skateboards who gain access to the site through the utility corridor.
 - Expressed that PECO is already dealing with concerns about how ATV trails have been cut through the brush on the utility corridor near their property.
 - Expressed concern about how public access to the site will also open a view onto their property which will lead to calls about how their building's boiler vent releases steam. Expressed concern that they would need to continuously explain this to the public.
 - Expressed that if a trail goes in, they will need to install a fence along the entirety of their property that may not be conducive to the aesthetics of a nature trail.
 - Team reiterated that they understand and would support this decision. That there will be opportunities for discussion and collaboration to add fencing that will meet everyone's needs.
 - Expressed concern that the trail will cut off the path of deer.
 - Asked what the trail will be constructed of and if permeable paving will be an option.
 - Team responded that the trail material is still be determined but that permeable paving will be considered as well as asphalt paving, crushed granite, and other accessible gravel options.
 - Asked how many users the trail would generate and expressed an interesting in hearing more info on these estimates, when available.
 - Project team responded that this was still being worked out and that an estimate would be provided when available.
 - Expressed concern about the potential for invasive species to be planted on site.
 - Team responded that no invasive species will be planted. Any proposed plantings will be native species.
 - Asked if this trail will be added as a stop on a regular route for local police officers making their rounds.
 - Team responded yes. It will be handled like a township park from a maintenance and security standpoint.
 - Reiterated that he does not want the project to develop into a good sledding hill.
 - Tom expressed gratitude that company employees have attended park cleanups in the past and expressed a desire to continue this partnership moving forward.
- **Hillcrest Ave. Resident**
 - Expressed general agreement with the points that had been raised by other Hillcrest neighbors about supporting the concept but wanting the trail located further away from private property.
- **Project Team:**
 - Stated that ,based on what we have heard from residents and the community, parking was going to be issue and that some form of trailhead or parking will be needed along Butler Ave. across from the Wawa.
 - Stated that meeting minutes will be posted to the project landing page in the next few weeks from the focus group.
 - Reiterated that updates, next steps, and registration for the next public

meeting will be found on the project landing page on the Township website.

- Thanked participants for their involvement and feedback.