



# UPPER DARBY TOWNSHIP

## DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES & INSPECTIONS

100 Garrett Road. Upper Darby, PA 19082 Phone: (610)734-7613

March 11, 2024

### UPPER DARBY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

#### Attendance

Planning Commission Members Present:

- Debbie Nifong
- James Mullen
- Jeffrey Roken
- Cassandra Hayes (Virtual)

Planning Commission Members Absent:

Township Staff Present:

- Joshua Chast, Asst. Director of L&I for Planning & Zoning
- Mike Galante, Township Engineer
- Courtney Mullan, Asst. Planner

#### Minutes

- A motion was made by Jeffrey Roken to approve the January's Planning Commission Minutes. James Mullen Seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

#### Officer Vacancy

- Cassandra made motion to nominate James as the Planning Commission Secretary, Jeff seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

#### SALDO

#### 1) Land Development- Cobbs Creek Golf Course Renovation and Stream Restoration Land Development Plan –

- a) Mark Dimnico the attorney representing Cobbs Creek Foundation introduced Don Dinger the director of development for Cobbs Creek Foundation, along with Enrique Hervada the CEO. He also introduced Brian Conlan the Engineer of the project and Robert Baldwin the stream restoration expert engineer. Don started off by giving a brief background on the project and what it will do for Upper Darby and the surrounding areas.
- b) Enrique spoke about the location and boundaries on which the golf course sits, along with its historic past and what its future will look like. He started off by stating that it is a very historic public golf course set up in 1916 designed by Hugh Wilson (of Merion Golf Club fame) allowing both men and woman of all ethnicities to play. Charlie Sifford home course to hall famer played on Cobbs Creek for 12 years. He was the first black man to play on a PGA



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Tournament, who is also in the World Golf Hall of Fame and has a Presidential Medal of Freedom presented by Barrack Obama. In the 1950's the government placed anti-aircraft battalion on the Cobbs Creek property, which changed the route of the golf course. However, in the 1960's Cobbs Creek hosted a PGA event called The Daily News Open inviting all the top golfers at the time to the property. Over time the quality of the course deteriorated through lack of maintenance, becoming overgrown and falling into disrepair. Over a decade ago the Cobbs Creek Foundation was formed it is a 501C3 non-profit organization that urged the City of Philadelphia to try restore the golf course. The city called it a stranded asset as a consequence of them not having the money or assets to reform it back to its natural environment. They stated that if foundation came up with the adequate funding, then they would hand the golf course over to the foundation.

- c) The Cobbs Creek Foundation's aim is to restore the 18-hole course and build a 9-hole short course designed by Tiger Woods. There will be a 30,000 Square Foot learning lab that serves as an educational hub. They will offer free programming for local kids, a driving range, restaurant, clubhouse and car park as part of the development. The TGR Foundation (Tiger Woods Foundation) came on board as Charlie Siffer home course hall of famer mentioned above was a family friend the Wood's family. In conclusion, Enrique states that the golf course will offer great opportunities not only for recreation but for educational purposes too. The state of the art learning lab will target STEM learning and will provide scholarship programs too.
- d) Enrique Hervada of the Cobbs Creek Foundation believes that the entire development will cost over \$150 million dollars, so far the foundation has raised 80 million. Cassandra questioned was this a part of the former mayor's rebuild project. Enrique answered that it was not. The City of Philadelphia donated 3 million dollars towards the creek restoration and environmental project. Nevertheless, Enrique stated that they are still working towards fundraising for all the different aspects of the project such as the golf course itself, the educational hub and environmental share of the project. Jeff Roken questioned was the development going to be completed in phases; Enrique replied that it would most definitely be done in phases.
- e) Don Dissinger started by introducing himself and the various components of the project, one being the restoration of the stream and the wet land surrounding it. He explained that they would be removing old deteriorated embankments to be placed on the golf course and develop 25 acres of wetland however, in order to do this the boundary of the golf course cuts into Upper Darby and Philadelphia. He recognized that this would be a positive impact on the wetland and surrounding areas, and the restoration documents forwarded to FEMA and the letters of acknowledgement from the township and City of Philadelphia has created a process that is in progress with FEMA.



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Their final review timeline is August, which in turn will start the permitting process with the township for the stream restoration.

- f) *Site Development Strategy***- Don mentioned that they are aware of the sewers that encroach on both Upper Darby Township and City of Philadelphia's land, and would like a plan with the input of Mike Galante (Township Engineer) on what would be the best strategy to protect them. The current plan has no disturbances towards this infrastructure. Don alleged that the restoration portion of the development will start in October, and the upland parts of the project would shortly move into the permitting process. Meaning, the reservoir will be finished in April, the short 9-hole course will begin in May, and the education center and driving range building are under construction right now and plan to open mid-2025. The golf course and stream restoration will work together as one phase. Starting the restoration of the stream at the beginning at the Cobbs Creek Confluence and working their way up stream as the golf course is built. A rough timeline was given between 2025 and 2026. The final phase of the stream restoration will be completed in 2027 around the Old Karakung area. The maintenance center complex is projected to be developed in late 2024/ early 2025.
- g) *Golf Course and Stream Restoration Plan***- Stream phase 1, Indian creek is projected to be finished in 2026-27, phase 2 is expected to be finished in 2025 along with phase 3 to be completed in 2026. Robert Baldwin project manager with RES (Resource Environmental Solutions) - the nation's largest ecological restoration company. Began to talk about the historical conditions of Cobbs Creek and Indian Creek, which are thought to have been a highly connected stream and floodplain wetland complex pre -17<sup>th</sup> century.
- h)** Some of the problems he identifies are the human developments and erosion in the watershed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This activity has contributed to legacy sediment buildup, essentially burying floodplain wetlands. He stated that the stream has down cut through the legacy sediment resulting in near vertical banks that are unstable. In flood events, the streambanks are eroded further, causing damage adjacent to the stream and sending excess sediment downstream. Rob Baldwin explained that these are most of the problems they are looking to address with their flood plain restoration project noted within permits they have submitted to the township. He give details on how they plan to carry this out via their E&S (Erosion and Sediment) Controls. Firstly, by installing perimeter controls such as silk socks around the sites perimeter, in addition diverting the stream flow around active work areas on the development. Once finished with a section of the restoration project they plan to stabilize the area with seed, and mulch controlled blanketing.



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- i) Once E&S Controls are completed Rob Baldwin explained that they would begin to excavate the legacy sediment from the floodplain down to approximate stream elevation, then realign and reshape the stream channels to a more stable and meandering shape. Furthermore, his team will install grade control log and rock structures to prevent the stream down cutting, replace topsoil, and create floodplain habitat features that will be seeded with native wet land seed mix and install erosion control blanketing. Through time trees and shrubs will be planted.
- j) ***Environmental, Hydrological and Ecological Benefits-*** Approximately 14,000 linear feet of stream and 25 acres of wetland will be restored. Additionally, a net approximate of 133,680 cubic yards of legacy sediment will be removed from the flood plain. The overarching benefit is that an appropriate channel geometry is installed which in turn will reduce shear stress and will lead to a more stable stream system. Rob Baldwin of RES went onto discuss the hydrologic environmental benefits, such as reestablishing stream and floodplain connectivity, water quality and the floodplain wetlands providing storage for slow dissipation of flood flows in a less erosive manner. Some of the ecological benefits of the stream restoration is that it will establish 25 acres of additional wetland habitat, the diverse addition of native trees, shrubs and grasses. Species around these areas will be removed and maintained throughout the life of the project. Successional habitat will be provided as trees mature and ultimately become a closed canopy again. Rob Baldwin then alluded to the permit status that RES has applied for through PADEP, USACE, FEMA, and finally both Municipal Upper Darby Township and the City of Philadelphia.
- k) James Mullen questioned Don if there would be a walkway from 69<sup>th</sup> street to the golf course, to which he replied that the plan has new walkways from the bus station on Cardington by the reservoir down to the bridge before Victory Avenue. Jeff mentioned that PennDOT has that particular bridge in design for replacement, but could not give a timeline and that there would be a walkway that connects the two locations. Cassandra asked who determines who determines the invasive species within the stream. Rob Baldwin stated that the invasive species refers to vegetation such as Japanese knotweed and the State DEP is aware of the list of them.

## 2) **Letter of recommendation/ SALDO Comments**

- i) Joshua Chast from Upper Darby Township started confirming that the foundations previous comments regarding sidewalks will be sufficient in addressing the township's concerns. The second comment is that a formal landscaping plan is required as part of the SALDO process. The applicant must depict how much vegetation was removed from the Upper Darby segment of the plan. Brian Conlon of Langan Engineering agreed to this comment and is confident that they will be able to gather the information. However, it may take some time to gather the analysis in terms of tree counting.



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- ii) Don stated further that he would like another meeting between himself and Mike, and Josh to clarify all the comments and what their responses will be to be compliant. Mike Galante requested that Brian and Rob Baldwin request any waivers or partial waivers they might be requesting on the record.
  - iii) Brian Conlan stated that he has informed the Delaware Planning Department on what is taking place within the land development and stream restoration, even though there will be no developments built on the Upper Darby boundary of the project.
  - iv) Mike Galante made a final statement regarding the sewers, he acknowledged that they already have made many improvements for the township to have access to the sewer and show some various easements that are required for the storm water ordinance within their plan.

### b) Waivers

- i) Mike spoke about the first waiver which was the preliminary final submission requirement and submitting the land development. The second waiver was a partial waiver regarding if there is a perennial or intermittent stream on a subject tract that the applicant is required to create a riparian buffer extending 50 foot on either side of the bank of channel. Another waiver regarding steep slopes as the ordinance states that stripped vegetation should not exceed 30% of each steep slope area on a lot. The final waiver involves the storm water management ordinance 46524A is similar to the first SALDO comment regarding the riparian buffer 50 along the top of the bank buffer if they are extending to get a partial waiver for that.

### c) Public Comment

- i) Debbie Nifont asked for public comments. No public comment was given.

### d) Land Development Recommendation

Jeff Roken made a motion for approval of the plan with consideration of township comments, James Mullen seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

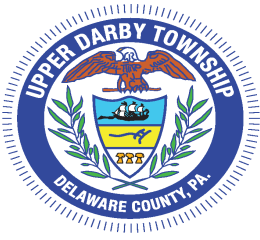
Jeff Roken made a motion to approve the waivers that Mike Galante recommended, James Mullen seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

### Old Business

No old business to discuss.

### New Business

No new business to discuss.



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### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Jeff. The motion was seconded by James Mullen. Unanimous approval.