



MIDDLE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE  
DECEMBER 1, 2020

The Project Initiation meeting of the Middle Smithfield Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was held on Tuesday, December 1, 2020 at 7:00 pm Via Zoom.

Steering Committee members present: Bob Early, Mark Oney, Nick Theofilos, Javon Hilaire and Pat Francis. Also, in attendance, Planning Commission Recording Secretary Holly Freese, Economic Development Manager Patrice Dume, Tom Comitta, Erin Gross and Jennifer Reitz from Thomas Comitta Associates, Inc. (TCA)

### **Introductions**

Tom Comitta introduced himself along with his team members Erin Gross and Jennifer Reitz. Mr. Comitta and his associates are Town Planners and Landscape Architects from the West Chester, PA area. Thomas Comitta Associates, Inc. prepared the Middle Smithfield Townships Comprehensive Plan in 2007. Ms. Reitz worked on the 2007 Comprehensive Plan as well. Ms. Gross is a Landscape Architect and planner and has been with Thomas Comitta Associates for 7 years.

Members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee from Middle Smithfield Township introduced themselves. Mark Oney is a Township Supervisor and also sits on the Planning Commission. Bob Early and Nick Theofilos are also Planning Commission Members. Pat Francis is on the Historical Commission. Javon Hilaire is on the Parks and Recreation Committee. Holly Freese is currently the Recording Secretary for the Planning Commission, but her last day with Middle Smithfield Township is December 11, 2020. Patrice Dume is the Economic Development Manager and will be taking over Ms. Freese's position following December 11, 2020.

### **Overview**

This meeting consisted of a visioning exercise and roundtable discussions about what preferred areas of the Comprehensive Plans should be updated. These updates will be over the course of six Zoom meetings. In addition, there will be separate meetings with the Planning Commission before the Public Hearing with the Board of Supervisors.

The Committee will periodically be referring back to the old plan and figure out what updates need to be made over the next few months. The Municipalities Planning Code requires Comprehensive Plans to be reviewed every 10 years. One of the underpinning elements of the 2007 plan was the 209 Corridor, the woodland areas and second home communities. The goal will be to put these areas under a microscope and come up with best practices .

Since the last update the recession of 2008 and now the COVID-19 Pandemic have changed the landscape of many communities. Events like this will affect the way land use is thought about over the next 10 years.

The TCA Proposal that was prepared features three distinct areas: Streetscape (209 Corridor), Vast Woodland Areas (undeveloped), and Second Home Communities. From here the plan should be able to make recommendations that will lead to future Zoning amendments and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) amendments in order to enhance and preserve character in these areas.

Ms. Reitz stated that the heart of the plan is future land use (housing, parks, transportation, natural resources, etc.) and that each committee member should go back to the original implementation strategies to see what has and hasn't been accomplished, and to compare to the emerging updated Zoning and SALDO requirements.

Work is projected to be completed by June 2021.

### **Visioning Exercise**

A map was emailed out about a Visioning Exercise for the Committee members to give some insight on what they have in mind for the future of the Township. Hearts and Circles should be placed on the map in areas that are already well loved (heart) and areas the committee members would like to see improved (circle.) Because the meeting is done via Zoom, Committee members will send their maps to Ms. Freese by December 4, 2020 and she will forward it to Mr. Comitta and his associates to be discussed at the next meeting.

Each Committee member was asked where they would put their hearts and circles.

#### Hearts:

Mark Oney, Patrice Dume and Javon Hilaire picked the new Library/Echo Lake Park, stating it improves quality of life, a sense of community and the location makes it accessible to many people.

Bob Early picked the National Recreation Area. Mr. Oney stated the township is often referred to as "The Gateway to the National Recreation Area." Ms. Dume confirmed this is a selling point used to attract businesses to the area. Mr. Early also mentioned the Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp as a pride of the township for how well it was preserved and what it offers Scouts from all over.

Nick Theofilos picked the area of the Reservoir in the Southwest corner of the township, near the Wooddale area because there's not too much development and it's a nice, natural area.

Pat Francis picked the area of the Indian Museum and the Presbyterian Church because of the historical significance.

Holly Freese picked the Township Community Gardens off of Coolbaugh Rd because of all the benefits the garden provides the community and how it brought something to an underserved area of the township.

*Circles:*

All committee members chose locations along the 209 Corridor.

Mr. Oney picked the Park and Ride near Price Chopper and the area in between the Park and Ride and Werry's. The buildings and businesses are in disrepair and doesn't match the look the township wants to achieve. The state owns the Park and Ride and is a valuable piece of land that is well utilized, especially with the new apartments going across the street on Mt. Nebo, but he would like to see the appearance improved upon. Ms. Francis agreed that the businesses in the area of Werry's could use some improvement.

Mr. Early and Mr. Theofilos picked the 209 Corridor north of Sellersville Rd. The Sellersville intersection is nice, but once you head north there are some properties that are rundown and some projects that were never completed.

Ms. Dume picked the 209 Corridor in the area of Scotty's plaza, just past the Sellersville intersection.

Mr. Theofilos also picked the 209 Corridor in the area of the Sunoco gas station and the old Four Seasons Diner (Near the Price Chopper Plaza.)

Ms. Hilaire stated the entire 209 Corridor is hit or miss. Some areas are nice and well developed, but some of the areas in disrepair bring down the entire corridor. Ms. Hilaire also stated that as a commuter the Park and Ride is essential to the community, but the location right on 209 might not be the best place as it is a bit of an eyesore. Mr. Comitta asked Ms. Hilaire her average commute time to New York City, she answered 90 minutes on average depending on weather and traffic.

Mr. Comitta asked in 10 to 20 years from now, would the 209 Corridor have sidewalks and street lights. Mr. Oney stated that newer construction is asked to put sidewalks in. The Township has also continuously applied for a Multi Modal Grant to help with sidewalks and bike paths. Mr. Comitta asked for a copy of past grant applications, Ms. Dume will send him information.

*Vision for next 10 years:*

Mr. Comitta asked each committee member what their vision for the township is in the next 10 years other than what was already addressed.

Mr. Oney would also like to see some business development on Route 402 for that area of the township that has little to no resources. He stated a large employer such as healthcare or education would be preferable because this would add to the tax base and bring higher paying jobs to the township. The goal would also to be to alleviate some congestion on the 209 Corridor. He would also like to see another corridor that travels from East to West.

Mr. Theofilos and Ms. Hiliaire stated that some sort of pocket-retail to serve the Wooddale area would be nice for people who live in that end of the township. Most people from that area tend to leave the township to shop because the majority of the businesses are out of their way.

Mr. Early stated that he would like to see some revitalization of the resorts in the area that use to be a huge draw. It would be nice to find some way to utilize the National Recreation Area to draw people back to the resorts. Mr. Comitta asked if short term rentals are big in the area. Yes, especially in the winter for skiing.

Ms. Dume would like to see some sort of "Main Street" area that would provide a sense of community and where people can shop, eat and gather. She would also like to see the Foxmoor Shopping Center, where the old movie theatre was, be revitalized.

Ms. Hiliaire also stated she would like to see better signage for local stores in the area, as well as something letting people know that they're in Middle Smithfield Township.

Ms. Francis would like to see some beautification of the 209 Corridor, as well as a walkable area to shop. She would also like to see a 55 and up community for older residents who would like to stay in the area.

### **General Discussion**

Everyone should send their maps to Ms. Freese by Friday, December 4, 2020 and she will forward to Mr. Comitta.

Between now and the next meeting, Committee members should start to think about the physical plan of the Township and how these different character areas can be bounded. A packet will be put together for the next meeting.

The Monroe County Planning Commission has offered to assist with the public survey when the time comes.

Mr. Oney did advise Mr. Comitta that the Township offers Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) through the 209 Corridor for C1, C2 and Industrial.

### **Next Meeting**

February 4, 2020 at 7 pm via Zoom.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Freese  
Planning Commission Recording Secretary