

**MEETING MINUTES
OF THE DVRPC REGIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE
AUGUST 18, 1999**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the July 13, 1999 meeting were approved as mailed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Dennis Winters, RCC Chair, welcomed those attending their first meeting, and thanked SEPTA for providing the meeting space this month. He introduced Jack Leary, SEPTA General Manager, who welcomed everyone and voiced his belief that SEPTA and the RCC have an ongoing partnership to promote transit policy. He then outlined the "Serious About Change" campaign.

Winters introduced a number of articles focusing on such issues as Venice Island development, freeways and their cost, and land use.

PANEL DISCUSSION: *BATTLING SUBURBAN SPRAWL AND RENEWING THE URBAN CORE:*

Winters introduced the panelists, including: The Honorable David Steil (R-Bucks), PA House of Representatives; The Honorable Allyson Schwartz (D-Phila.), PA Senate; Patricia Wilson Aden, President of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia; and Janet Lussenhop, Program Director of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania.

Representative Steil described his view of suburban sprawl as the random development of plots of ground. It is a market-driven concept that causes social disconnection and is the result of single use zoning. Representative Steil then stated that he has proposed three House bills to provide municipalities with more tools to regulate the pace of development; to provide more options to builders and developers for village development; and to respect the rights of property owners. House Bill 13 deals with the concept of consistency (with neighboring communities, zoning ordinances, comprehensive plans, and counties); with concurrency (requiring infrastructure to be in place for development); and with the funding element. House Bill 14 requires municipalities to work together to draft inter-municipal plans; the bill also provides help in dealing with curative amendments, and sets up the structure for urban growth boundaries. House Bill 15 deals with common-based zoning. This legislation takes transfer of development rights and creates a private market trading area; it also makes it easier for municipalities to preserve open space.

These bills are currently in the final amendment stage in the House Government Committee. Representative Steil stated that he is working with Senator James Gerlach to merge his Senate Bill 300 with the House Bills outlined above; Senate Bill 300 is now in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senator Allyson Schwartz emphasized the importance of this land use issue, pointing out that sprawl negatively affects livable communities. We are now living in communities that are not necessarily what we want. Another problem is disinvestment in the urban core, resulting in a loss of population and employment. She stated that it is very important to provide communities with more tools without limiting personal freedom. Senator Schwartz also discussed brownfield legislation that allows the Commonwealth to encourage the re-use of old industrial and commercial space, and she cited the Rail to Trails projects that provide another step forward. She outlined necessary mandates for a statewide plan and urged municipalities to work cooperatively in their planning efforts. The Senator also examined environmental issues, urging the public to demand more results.

Patricia Wilson Aden from the Preservation Alliance stated the agency's goal is to redevelop historic resources and regional spaces. Relating to sprawl, the Alliance hopes to facilitate a dialogue between the City and suburbs. She noted that sprawl is a major issue for preservationists, and is tied to the issue of private property rights. She feels that too little attention has been given to the urban side of the sprawl issue. Disinvestment in major cities leads to deterioration of historic buildings and thus the deterioration of property, leading people to move. Ms. Aden commented that there is a synchronized linkage between the urban core and suburban sprawl, and that the City's tax dollars are being used to subsidize sprawl. She hopes to educate Philadelphia legislators to this fact, and to stress that City living is a viable option to suburban sprawl. Ms. Aden feels that the middle class needs to return to the City if revitalization is to truly take place. She emphasized the belief that historic areas are more stable and integrated, and therefore more attractive to those trying to relocate. Also outlined was downtown location legislation, which has been proposed by Representative Thomas Tangretti, to subsidize urban re-investment. Ms. Aden stated that status reports can be found at www.libertynet.org/historic

Janet Lussenhop stated that the objectives of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania include revitalizing existing communities; strengthening local, regional and Commonwealth land use planning; encouraging future development near existing infrastructure; reducing traffic congestion; and protecting historic, natural agricultural and recreation areas. Ms. Lussenhop emphasized the need for reform, stating that planning should be more implementable. She noted the need to maintain agricultural land, even though current state law calls for diverse zoning. She stated that only 10% of communities provide affordable new housing. The median income is currently \$46,000 while the average cost of a new home is \$209,000. Another disturbing statistic includes the fact that Pennsylvania now has more malls per capita than any other state, except Ohio. In addition, most of the

Commonwealth's 56 cities and 964 boroughs are in decline.

Ms. Lussenhop pointed out that half of the state's population lives in those cities and towns. The major benefit of the proposed legislation, according to Ms. Lussenhop, is that it addresses most of the issues presented above. She also outlined House Bill 1200 which would protect environmental resources through a bond issue of @\$1 billion. Ms. Lussenhop discussed the Land Use Forums held throughout the state and emphasized the need to be involved.

The RCC discussed the appropriate timing for contacting legislators regarding proposed legislation; the need for the urban-suburban link with regional legislators; a holistic approach to the sprawl issue; the proper re-use of buildings in historic districts; and the identification of planning areas that support preservation and re-population. Bill Rafsky pointed out that opponents to the proposed legislation should also be invited to discuss the issue and to air their concerns. He suggested inviting a homebuilders' association representative to the next RCC meeting. Representative Steil stated that it is important not to demonize builders and developers since they build in accordance with the law.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Illy Sobel stated that he will be presenting his recommendations for bus service along US Route 202 to the 202 Executive Committee next week. He has developed a project to promote new bus service on US 202, beginning at western Delaware County and running through eastern Chester County and into Delaware. This could forestall additional highway capacity. Dennis Winters pointed out that the RCC has not yet studied this issue or endorsed it, and emphasized to Sobel that he should state that he is representing himself.

Marcia Ryan pointed out that she has objections to the content of the letter sent to the RCC by Larry King, stating that no needs assessment should be done for PA Route 41. Ms. Ryan stated that more up-to-date and correct population data is needed. This issue will be referred to the Transportation Subcommittee which will meet on September 9, 1999.