

Clifford Township Planning Commission
Public Meeting
May 22, 2013

An official public meeting of the Clifford Township Planning Commission was held on May 22, 2013 at 7 PM in the Community Center. Mr. Tom Shepstone, Shepstone Management Inc. opened the meeting. Seventeen residents were in attendance, they are listed in the attached attendee list.

Mr. Shepstone provided a briefing on the progress to date in the development of the Clifford Township Comprehensive Plan. The plan is near completion and Mr. Shepstone and the Planning Commission were looking for public input.

A comprehensive plan is a study & report on the status of a township and provides an action guide for improvements moving forward. Legal authority for these plans can be found in Act 247, Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The code can be found at <http://mpc.landuselawinpa.com/MPCCode.pdf>.

A brief overview of the presentation included: the purpose of the plan; basic planning steps; background studies; statistics of population changes, growth, and age. There was information provided on Clifford Township's economic base, natural resources, wetlands, flood plans, history, existing land use, goals & objectives, transportation, community facilities, water protection, open space & recreation and economic development.

Most important was the final portion of the presentation that included plans for Clifford Township to move forward. To quote, there are three steps: 1) Develop plans for community facilities, transportation and land use; 2) Incorporate preliminary findings on Sewage Facilities Plan; and 3) Draft updated Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance for review.

Following the presentation Mr. Shepstone opened the floor for questions. The following contains a series of paraphrased questions and answers:

Question: Barry Searl. I'm interested in the big picture. What will Clifford look like in 30 years? I'm disappointed in the amount of feedback from residents. They need to be part of the solution. Have we gotten enough feedback? I know residents do not want heavy industry or landfills. We'd like to be a bedroom community like Binghamton where people can live here and work elsewhere.

Answer: Tom Shepstone. Make the community attractive. Invite entrepreneurial and economic opportunities. We can't rely totally on the survey. Supervisors need to go by what you hear on the streets. While you won't get large industries to move to Clifford Township you can solicit for tool and die shops, technology businesses, etc. Look for small employers to open a business

here in Clifford.

Question: Kathleen Bater-O'Connor. Look for new technology and energy companies from other states. Hire local people. Practice affirmative action. There are no jobs here. Look to the gas industry to hire local people.

Answer: Tom Shepstone. The gas industry wants to hire local people. There are several colleges that are offering courses on the industry technology. They include but are not limited to Lackawanna College in Milford and Penn State University in Lackawanna County. Elk Lake School also started a career and technical center where multiple school districts can take advantage of this training.

Question: Bill Umberger. Search out people who can work from home. I currently work out of my home for a technology firm. Promote work from home programs as virtual jobs.

Answer: Tom Shepstone. This ties into what Barry was saying earlier. It also works to attract younger people.

Question: Bill Umberger. What about land use and education for on-lot sewer systems, etc. Are they part of the plan?

Answer: Tom Shepstone. Land use, education for on-lot sewer systems, etc. are all part of the plan. Harley Davis is developing a report on the township's sewage plan. Penn State Extension is providing training for on-lot and water. Another issue regarding land-use needs to be resolved and placed in the plan. That issue is outdoor wood burning furnaces.

Question: Mark Wilmot. What about education? There is a void for adult education. Can we, on a trial basis pull from other counties?

Answer: Tom Shepstone. Colleges are looking for satellite facilities. For example Lackawanna College, Misericordia University or North Hampton can use this Community Center for that purpose.

Question: Mark Wilmot. Who is responsible for the maintenance of pertaining to the development of common property or green areas in a cluster development? Could anything ever come back to the tax base?

Answer: Tom Shepstone. Green areas were actually deeded separately as a conservation subdivision and the maintenance is the responsibility of the residents of the development.

Question: Barry Searl. We are at a disadvantage with the current Land Use Plan for supervisors. For example there are no provisions prohibiting a dump next to the grocery store. We need this reviewed.

Answer: Tom Shepstone. That will be covered in the plan.

The meeting was adjourned after the question and answer period. The current draft comprehensive plan can be found at <http://www.shepstone.net/Clifford/>. When the plan is completed there will be an official public meeting conducted by the supervisors to present the plan to the residents for approval. That date has not yet been determined.

The next meeting will be conducted by the Advisory Committee of Clifford Township on June 25, 2013 at 7 PM in the Community Center.