



PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Phoenixville Borough, Charlestown Township, East Pikeland Township, Schuylkill Township, West Vincent Township

TO: Erica Batdorf, Manager
West Vincent Township

FROM: Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee
Edward A. Theurkauf, RLA, ASLA, APA, Theurkauf Design & Planning, LLC

DATE: March 29, 2017

RE: Consistency Review – Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan
Bryn Coed Farms
Preliminary/Final Subdivision Plan dated 2-16-17

The Phoenixville Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) is a coalition of Phoenixville Borough, Charlestown Township, East Pikeland Township, Schuylkill Township, and West Vincent Township to coordinate efforts that advance regional common interests. The PRPC operates within the parameters of a Regional Comprehensive Plan and Implementation Agreement to direct growth into the Region's older communities and designated growth areas, to maximize the efficient use of existing public infrastructure, and to preserve the Region's rural areas. To achieve its purpose, the PRPC works to:

- Protect the unique historical, cultural, aesthetic, agricultural and natural resources that contribute to the quality of life of the Region.
- Promote economic vitality through effective organization and coordination of development, attributes, and resources.
- Implement growth management techniques to provide for orderly and well-planned new development in the Region.
- Preserve open space, natural resources, and agriculture in the Region.
- Develop multi-modal transportation choices for better mobility in and through the Region.
- Encourage walkable communities with a mix of uses and a range of housing options, where appropriate within the Region.
- Maintain and improve recreation opportunities, including the trail system, of the Region.
- Address the specific needs and unique conditions of each municipality in the Region.

Overview – The application represents the first phase of a conservation development plan that will divide the 1,500 acre Bryn Coed Farms into (39) large deed restricted conservation lots, a 444 acre Natural Lands Trust Preserve, and a 72 acre West Vincent Township Park. The Subdivision Plan is for 875 +/- acres within West Vincent Township, which will have lot lines reconfigured to create (10) new lots, of which one (1) will be the Township Park, (1) will comprise approximately 65% of the Preserve, (3) will be subject to future subdivision for the Preserve and conservation residential lots, and the remaining (5) will be conservation residential lots. The (5)

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conservation lots not subject to future subdivision have described areas of differing protection standards that identify where building and permitted site disturbance may and may not occur, as will the remaining conservation lots upon their ultimate creation. The conceptual master plan for the Preserve, Park, and conservation lots includes a 10.5 mile trail system connecting the park and preserve areas with some of the lots and to trailheads on the perimeter roads.

Consistency with Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan (PRCP) – The plan for the proposed Bryn Coed Farms subdivision is evaluated for consistency with the PRCP, specifically as follows:

Land Use Plan

- The PRCP goals include limiting development to preserve agricultural and natural resources, as well as promoting conservation and agricultural easements to create greenbelts and a network of permanent open space. The Bryn Coed Farms plan would advance both of these goals.
- The PRCP identifies suburban sprawl as the biggest threat to the region. The proposed conservation subdivision would drastically limit development and related adverse impacts on the 1,500 acre tract.
- The Future Land Use Plan describes the tract as Rural with extensive areas in Natural Resource Conservation Areas.

If developed in 2-acre lots an estimated (450) lots could be built on the 1,100 acres in West Vincent Township. In accordance with the PRCP Land Use Plan density of ≤ 0.33 dwellings per acre, the site could support as many as (360) houses, including lots of 5 or more acres. In accordance with the master conservation development plan, only (26) lots will ultimately be built in West Vincent, plus (13) proposed lots in West Pikeland, ranging in size from 10 to 70+ acres, with only a few smaller lots. In addition, over 500 acres will be permanently protected as Township Park and Preserve land.

The proposed subdivision plan is part of a larger effort that will far exceed the conservation goals and objectives of the PRCP.

- Beyond designated growth areas, the PRCP policy is to conserve the rural character and natural resources of the Region. The proposed subdivision plan would enhance protection of a huge portion of one of the Region's signature landscapes.
- The Future Land Use Plan indicates an extensive presence of Natural Resources Conservation Overlay Areas. Much of this would be occupied by the Park and Preserve, and conservation easements on the residential lots would be imposed to protect sensitive resources in those areas.
- It is noted that approximately 30 acres of the master planned conservation tract are within the PRCP designated Growth Area along Saint Matthews Road. It is noted that there is no existing or pending development within or adjacent to this property, and it is

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possible the growth boundary will be redrawn to exclude the area during the ongoing PRCP update. In addition, these 30 acres are not part of the immediate subdivision. It is recommended that this inconsistency be viewed as insignificant.

Environmental and Natural Resources Plan

- The PRPC stresses the importance of protecting High Quality (HQ) and Exceptional Value (EV) watersheds. The property lies within the EV French Creek and HQ Pickering Creek watersheds, which would benefit greatly from the drastic development intensity reduction and resource protection easements that are part of the master conservation plan.
- The Comprehensive Plan advocates preservation of agricultural soils. The tract includes extensive areas of Prime (Classes 1 and 2) Agricultural soils that would be permanently protected from development.
- PRCP Recommendation 3.2 advocates use of conservation design for the protection of natural resources. The plan is a conservation design, including conservation easements, plus large park and preserve areas
- Minimum disturbance techniques for development are to be implemented in accordance with Recommendation 3.4. The very low development intensity with conservation areas provide an exceptional example of this.
- In accordance with Recommendation 3.10, a maximum amount of open space and greenways are to be preserved. The subdivision plan would advance this purpose.

Housing Plan

- The Housing Plan promotes a balanced pattern of development to preserve natural and scenic landscapes. The proposed conservation development with large preserve areas would conserve a signature rural landscape in the Region.
- Sprawling development patterns are to be discouraged. The very low density development with large conservation lots and hundreds of acres of permanently preserved lands embody the antithesis of suburban sprawl.

Economic Development Plan

- The PRPC advocates the promotion of cultural tourism in the Region. The permanent protection of one of the Region's iconic rural and natural landscapes, including parkland and Preserve with miles of trails, could be an important part of this effort.

Community Facilities Plan/Recreation and Community Services

- The PRCP supports effective Regional stormwater management through low impact development. The very low density of development would advance this purpose.

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Recreation and Community Services Plan

- A goal of the PRCP is the provision of convenient access to park and recreation facilities. The master plan includes a 72 acre Park, 444 acre Preserve, and over 10 miles of trails with roadside trailheads in support of this.
- The PRCP advocates a balance of active and passive open spaces, a goal which is promoted through the proposed Park, Preserve, and trail.
- The creation of an interconnected regional network of open spaces is enhanced through the conservation plan and trails.
- Recommendation 6.18 supports the expansion of the local trail system with connections to open space and park resources, and the proposed open spaces and trails are consistent with this.

Transportation and Circulation Plan

- Recommendation 7.5 advocates an inventory of scenic roads to maintain important regional viewsheds. The conservation of large swaths of lands visible from rural roadways is essential to maintaining their scenic quality.
- Recreational trails advance the purpose of Recommendation 7.17 to develop a pedestrian trail system.

Cultural Resources Plan

- A goal of the Cultural Resources Plan is the promotion of cultural tourism. The permanent protection of rural and natural landscapes could be a significant asset.
- Recommendation 8.4 advocates the preservation of the cultural setting of historic resources. By keeping Bryn Coed Farms as it is to the extent possible, the visual and land use context of numerous Regionally and Nationally significant historic sites and buildings is maintained.

PRPC Consistency Review
Bryn Coed Farms Subdivision Plan

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Conclusion - The proposed conservation subdivision plan for Bryn Coed Farms is fully consistent with and significantly advances several of the fundamental goals and policies of the Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan

cc:

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