

December 10, 2008

Doug Heller
Springfield Township Commissioner
1510 Paper Mill Road
Wyndmoor, PA 19038

Dear Doug,

It is with extreme disappointment and sheer disbelief that I write this letter. I now live in a neighborhood where every single resident feels abandoned by their elected officials, feels that these officials favor business interests over the voting taxpayers, simply feels betrayed.

Throughout this process, a majority of the neighbors have been skeptical about the Commissioners' willingness to fight for what is right for this neighborhood and its residents. Having experience as a residential developer I have been on the other side of the table, listening to the concerns of neighbors, hearing them, and trying to do what is best for everyone. I also serve on the Open Space Planning Committee, the Board of Construction Code Appeals, and have dealt personally with several of the Commissioners. For these reasons I have tried to be the one resident that restores the faith in our elected officials, to convince the naysayers that the Commissioners are indeed on our side. I am afraid this will prove to be an insurmountable task going forward. I cannot understand how Commissioner Harbison can state that he does not believe a hardship was shown in the developer's case and then back out of continuing to seek the truth. If this sentiment is shared among other Commissioners, how will we ever know whether the Zoning Board's decision was correct? It behooves the Commissioners to obtain a judge's opinion so they can understand how the Zoning Board's decision is defended, because clearly no one yet knows. We understand that the Commissioners were late to this game, through no fault of their own, and the neighbors were very appreciative of the actions taken thus far to level the playing field. The game is far from over yet it seems the Commissioners have already thrown in the towel.

I ask that each Commissioner take a step back, look at the property, and regardless of the current condition, regardless of what is being proposed, ask themselves, "Is this the right location for a high density development?" I believe the answer is no. Just because something is there does not make it right or good or bad. It just makes it legal to remain. This property could be redeveloped into something that is harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood, something that the developer, the neighbors, and the Township can be proud of. This never happens when the developer is permitted to run rampant with profit maximizing plans and utter disregard for anything that affects the bottom line, like a community of real people who pay taxes and keep up their properties and have pride in their neighborhood.

When weighing the decision of whether or not to proceed, it seems the main concern for the Commissioners was the financial burden on the township. The next step of this process, to obtain an opinion from the judge, is not a costly one, yet it is integral in understanding how the Zoning Board's decision can be defended. For the Commissioners to not move forward and obtain this, every Commissioner who voted nay must be able to defend the Zoning Board's decision and they owe it to their constituents to do so. Otherwise, they are simply taking the judge's word for it. This is not acceptable to us and it shouldn't be to the Commissioners, we all deserve better than that. The neighbors intend to file the appeal and obtain the judge's opinion.

You and Commissioner Pierce touched on a few of our concerns at the December 10th meeting. We have serious concerns about this development. I hope that the Commissioners rethink the position held on December 10th and do whatever it takes at the planning level to make sure that they rejoin forces with the neighbors. We are the ones they should be fighting for, they represent us.

I have addressed this letter to you, Doug, because you represent our district, but I urge you to share this with the other Commissioners as well. Thank you for continuing to support your constituents.

Sincerely,

Steve Steinbrook
34 Whitmarsh Avenue