

# Florence Twp Listening Session

## Thursday, April 11, 2024

### Feedback from Inquiries

#### **1. PFOS/PFAS Concerns:**

Staff described the prevalence of PFOS/PFAS in most of what we use as consumers on a daily basis. Additional explanation was provided about the testing procedures and how regimented those procedures are. The description of how testing occurs underscored the fact the chemicals are in everyday products and are essentially unavoidable. This does not mean the Township isn't working to achieve compliance with the State and Federal mandates for concentration. The Township will be receiving professional RFP's in May and anticipates awarding a professional services contract to design a new treatment system that will be constructed. In the meantime, until this plant is online, the NJDEP requires us to send quarterly reminder notices to all water system users.

#### **2. Question about iron discoloring water filters:**

Staff discussed the extremely low levels of iron that is present in the Township water supply, but the amount of Iron is well within the allowable limits established by the NJDEP. What was explained to the requestor is the fact that by passing many thousands of gallons of water through a filter will always discolor a filter membrane, especially one which is made to remove microscopic particles. Another resident asked if it was hot and/or cold and mentioned the possibility of an accumulation of rust in their water heater. Another resident mentioned the possibility of residue from galvanized pipe that may be in their home.

#### **3. Does the Township consider sustainable or high efficiency systems:**

The Township always explores high efficiency systems and ways to be sustainable. LED lights are the preferred light options. In fact, the Township is currently exploring replacing metal halide light fixtures with high efficiency LED fixtures on the athletic fields and an updated energy audit is going to be conducted later this year for all buildings and facilities.

#### **4. Portable Toilet Request – Lower Roebling Park:**

Similar to other parks in the community, the Township has not placed portable toilets at Roebling Park. The challenge with placing such facilities along the lower park is the inability for the portable toilet company to access the units for servicing. If portable toilets were to be considered in the future, they will need to be placed in the upper-Roebling Park to allow for truck access to service and clean the units. The Township has considered the possibility of grant funds to permit the construction of a permanent facility to support scheduled park events when heavy use is reasonably expected and when scheduling of staff time is warranted. The Township is aware that some parks are remote and the public may desire to see restroom facilities installed. The position of the Township is two-fold - park users must plan their visits accordingly, and the cost to outfit all parks with portable toilets is far too great.

#### **5. Request more bike paths:**

The Township would like to incorporate more bike paths in the community and has instructed the engineer to be mindful of future paving projects whereby on-road bike lanes could be developed. This is something to be considered as part of larger overall projects and not as a standalone project.

#### **6. Does the Township have equipment/manpower to handle maintenance of Front Street if it were conveyed by the County:**

The Township will need to develop a cost benefit analysis if this proposal was made by the County. The Township has not dedicated the time or attention to this possibility and will wait until such time as the County decides to discuss this possible roadway ownership exchange.

**7. Does the Township know what hazardous substances are stored in buildings:**

There is a Right To Know Law that provides the Township with this information. In addition, the Code Office and/or the Fire Department perform periodic inspections and have knowledge of any special hazards that may exist inside the commercial buildings in Florence Township.

**8. Are the warehouses all full or are some empty:**

There are currently no empty warehouses in Florence Township.

**9. There should be a longer turning lane on Florence-Columbus Road at Route 130:**

The Township has no control over this configuration since Florence-Columbus Road is owned by the County and the turning access for Route 130 is administered by the State Department of Transportation. The Township agrees a longer left turn lane would help stack more vehicles rather than having them lengthen the single lane normally used for straight through movements.

**10. Is it possible to get longer turn times for roads entering Route 130 at traffic lights:**

The Township has no jurisdiction over the traffic signals for the State highway. However, the Township has the same ongoing concern which is raised to State Department of Transportation officials whenever the opportunity presents itself.

**11. There has been no economic development since this resident moved here in 2000:**

This is an opinion-based statement and in fact the timeframe referenced was a time when the Township installed W&S infrastructure on Route 130 to stimulate commercial development. Since 2000, the Haines Complex was developed, Burlington Stores constructed a multi-story corporate office, a commercial campus was constructed on Route 130 NB at the John Gault Way intersection, the Wawa and Burger King campus was constructed, Rite Aid and the Dollar Store were constructed, the NJ Turnpike developed the Route 130 Exit 6 interchange, Harkins Plaza with Dunkin Donuts and several storefronts were developed, a tavern/restaurant was constructed south of the former 84-Lumber building, which was also recently converted into a trucking repair facility to replace the former lumberyard. Elsewhere in the community, and not connected to the Route 130 redevelopment projects, the Township also experienced redevelopment of the former A&P warehouse property on Cedar Lane, which is now home to B&H Electronics regional distribution, as well as Pinnacle Freight. The vacant Turnpike business center property was redeveloped into an Amazon distribution facility, and the defunct Griffin Pipe Products sites are now host to two warehouse/commercial buildings. Much has occurred in the last 24 years referenced by the resident.

**12. The Township should convene an active economic development committee:**

Beginning in 2024 the task of the economic development committee has been to re-establish an identity and goals for the committee to take on. Currently the group is working on a project identifying owners of record for commercial properties throughout the community that are either vacant, out of business and/or are located in a redevelopment zone where there may be incentives or grant opportunities to support improvements. Additionally, the committee will be researching methods of support for local business through the State of New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Rutgers Small Business Office and Burlington County Office of Economic Development. All Economic Development Committee meetings are held January thru May, September, October, December on the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm in the front conference room of the Municipal Building. All meetings are open to the public and participation by residents is welcomed and encouraged.

**13. Concern about the way the Township addresses affordable housing - the Township should sell vacant parcels:**

Florence Township addresses its Supreme-Court Mandated affordable housing requirements according to what has been approved by the court and special court-appointed masters. The Township will not sell municipally-owned parcels in order to benefit an investor. Rather, if the Township were to offer municipal property for sale it would occur in conformance with the NJ Local Land and Buildings Laws, and would also have to advance the goals of meeting the mandates and milestones imposed by the courts.

**14. Suggestion that the topics from this meeting become viewable to the public:**

Agreed. They will be posted to a section of the website that is yet to be developed.

**15. Concern the marketing banner at Project Freedom does not look like the product being built:**

While the Township understands there is a minor difference between the photo on the banner located at the site, at the time of the April 11<sup>th</sup> Listening Session, the buildings were well underway and their layout and appearance was obvious. Marketing materials used by Project Freedom differed because they are generic to all of the organization's projects and not specific to the project in Florence Township.

**16. What happens next with regard to the Route 130/Delaware/Florence-Columbus Road intersection:**

Burlington County presented at a recent meeting of the governing body and they indicated there will come a time when public notifications and public hearings will be scheduled. The Township is reliant upon the County and State working together to develop a schedule for the next steps.

**17. Can the Township get the County to repave Delaware Avenue to take away the small bumps left from the concrete panels under the existing asphalt roadway:**

Florence Township advised the County about the bumping that occurs as a result of the old concrete slabs under the asphalt pavement on Delaware Avenue. Burlington County does not repave roads unless driving conditions or pavement reliability are an issue. The presence of the slabs and the minor deviation in the pavement surface causing the bumping isn't enough for the County to consider repaving Delaware Avenue at this time.

**18. Green Team Inquiry:**

The Florence Township Environmental Commission meeting is held on the first Thursday of each month at 7pm in the front conference room of the Municipal Building. All meetings are open to the public and participation by residents is welcomed and encouraged. This group along with the support of the Township Clean Communities Coordinator, Marty Eckert, will be points of contact for Green Team and community clean up related activities in our community.

**19. Website needs to be changed so that documents all open the same way:**

Agreed. The Township staff is aware of some of the inconsistent ways the website reacts, issues with searching, and how there needs to be uniformity in the display for a better user experience. The staff has been challenged with recommending changes to improve the website and that process is ongoing. We hope to resolve most of the website issues this year.

**20. Florence Community Center – Activities for Adults:**

A resident expressed interest in facilitating activities for adults/senior members of the community to be hosted at the Township Community Center. Marty Eckert will be discussing this with the Recreation Committee. There are several areas to discuss and consider in order to safely and efficiently stage this use. It is a positive idea and will be considered with more information provided to those that have inquired.

**21. Request Stop Signs replace the existing Yield Signs at the Main Street intersections for the Avenues in Roebbling:**

Though vehicles are required to stop at a yield sign just the same as at a stop sign, the police department reviewed this request and determined the difference in the way drivers must operate was not detrimental to the public safety. Therefore, shortly after the Listening Session meeting, within a few weeks, the Public Works Department was instructed to replace yield signs along Main Street with stop signs. All have been replaced.

**22. Request brighter or additional lighting on the Avenues in Roebing:**

This topic comes up periodically as a couple of the avenues have more dense tree canopies. PSE&G came out and changed the wattage of the bulbs in the street lights on those avenues. The Township will examine additional tree trimming to help allow more light to spread along the streets.

**23. Can crosswalks in Roebing all be painted the same way so they are uniform:**

As a roadway is improved and crosswalks are installed or repainted, the configuration of the crosswalk is designed to comply with current standards. The Township may examine upgrading more crosswalks as a stand-alone project in some higher-demand pedestrian areas, but for now, the Township can't take on more costs simply to achieve uniformity.

**24. Is the bike path along the river monitored:**

Similar to parks and trails elsewhere, there is no ongoing monitoring of the trail systems, especially those that are remote and not designed to be vehicle routes. This does not mean bike patrols, foot patrols, or even periodic vehicle patrols do not occur, but they are not pre-determined or scheduled.

**25. Trees removed between the curb and sidewalk have now caused the ground to subside:**

The Township routinely performs work on trees within the municipal right-of-way. That work sometimes includes removing a tree and stump. Once that work is completed, the resident is left with a suitable level and even surface that will support grass growth. It is incumbent upon the owner of the adjacent home to monitor and maintain the lawn between the curb and sidewalk just like they would if no tree ever existed.

**26. The sidewalk adjacent to the end of some alleys are not improved with ADA ramps:**

In cases where Federal or State grant funds are utilized the installation of ADA ramps is required. However, for local road programs, not all sidewalks will have ADA ramps installed when a roadway is repaired. In these cases, the Township must evaluate the condition of the adjacent sidewalk, likelihood the alley entrance can be paved to allow for a seamless ADA path, and availability of local funding. In areas lacking completed sidewalks and ADA ramps, the township continues to pursue grants to one-day allow for the installation of all the necessary improvements to make a seamless ADA route. As a point of information, this year the Township is applying for State funding to perform more ADA ramp and sidewalk work.

**27. The Township ground down the sidewalk to fix a trip hazard and now the concrete has loose stones:**

It is not uncommon for concrete grinding to sometimes loosen stones normally entrained in the concrete on a sidewalk. So long as the materials do not cause a tripping hazard, the township views this wearing of the material to be acceptable and a side effect of the more important process of removing trip hazards associated with elevated or offset sidewalk panels.

**28. What is to become of the vacant building on Hornberger Avenue between 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues:**

That building is privately owned. The code official has several violations pending in Municipal Court against the building owner. Nothing more can be shared until such time as the case is adjudicated.

**29. Resident complimented the efforts and commitment of the Public Works Department:**

The Township appreciates the compliment.

**30. Resident expressed appreciation for the W&S Department handling of a manhole replacement on Delaware Avenue:**

The Township appreciates the compliment.

**31. Resident complimented the police department for how professional they are and their willingness to work with children while fostering a good rapport:**

The Township appreciates the compliment.

**32. The community center is a nice part of the Township but parking is sometimes difficult for residents, is there a way residents can be made aware of Community Center events:**

Beginning in 2024 the use of the community center is evolving to be designated more for Township sponsored events and activities, reducing the general rentals for private events. This change will reduce the impact on parking needs as many events such as wedding receptions, milestone birthday parties and baby showers welcome typically larger turnouts. As it relates to notifications prior to events, the Township does post signage at least one day in advance of any event usage which will be held at the community center. This signage is posted in front of the building along Main Street, at the parking lot entrance and at the rear of the building nearest the exit onto 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. A suggestion to provide notifications for upcoming events is a great idea. The Township is working with the website manager to develop a layer to the existing Township calendar which will be dedicated to township events and activities and that would include happenings held at the Florence Township Community Center.

**33. Can users of the Community Center be required to park elsewhere:**

The periodic use of the community center may be somewhat of an impact and the Township understands that is the case. The Township will encourage users to utilize the on-street and off-street parking on Main Street near Nykita Field.

**34. Can additional parking be added on Main Street in the islands like was done between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue:**

The area between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenues never had the lawn islands like the balance of the village. There is no interest in removing the islands that are present from 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue as they are a historic component of the planned village of Roebling.