

Multi-municipal plan for Southeastern Greene enters public comment period

By Tara Kinsell

WAYNESBURG - The Southeastern Greene Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan is about to enter the 45-day public comment phase, which will run from Nov. 3 until Dec. 19.

"There will be a full plan at each municipal building during normal working hours for the public to provide written comment on the plan recommendations," said Amy Senopole of Mackin Engineering, who is designing the master plan for the eight municipalities. "It can also be downloaded for free off of the county's Web site."

Those eight municipalities included; Carmichaels Borough, Cumberland Township, Dunkard Township, Greene Township, Greensboro Borough, Monongahela Township, Perry Township and Wayne Township.

Anyone wishing to receive a printed copy or a copy of the plan on CD from their municipality will be charged the cost of printing or the CD, Senopole said.

The final public meeting for the plan that will be adopted in January of 2009 was held on Oct. 27 at the Greene County Fairgrounds with over half in attendance from the western end of the county.

"I noticed that over half of the group in attendance is from West Greene. Your elected officials are talking about it [your community] right now," said Chris Hardie, planner for the Greene County Department of Economic Development. "Your area has different issues and needs so there will be different ideas and a different plan to address them. Once we open it up, the township supervisors will select the steering committee for the process."

Senopole reiterated by saying that the comprehensive plan for the western Greene area would be geared toward the needs of that community.

The Southeastern Greene plan outlined the priorities for those communities as being, housing, recreation, land use, community facilities, mobility, historic resources and natural resources.

A hand-out questionnaire allowed those in attendance to prioritize short-term and long-term goals for their own municipality. Not all recommendations were relevant to all of the eight townships/boroughs so residents were asked to check off those that were important in their own community in either the short or long-term.

Some questioned how the plan would work across the municipalities and Senopole told them that more and more applying and receiving state assistance hinges on that happening.

"One of the first questions they are asking is, do you have a comp plan? And the next question is, are you working with another borough, town or community? Those always rise to the top of the pile," Senopole said.

Sandy Liebhold of Perry Township brought up the growth of neighboring Morgantown, W.V.

Liebhold said that he thought that the Mount Morris area of Interstate 79, where the plan suggestions talk about warehouse, distribution and manufacturing-type opportunities, would be suited to high density, residential opportunities, as well as commercial outlets.

Senopole said that she agreed and thought it would work with a village concept on the western side and hotels/motels on the eastern side of the I-79 interchange.

"We need to try to capitalize on some of that outgrowth from the Morgantown area definitely," Senopole said.

It was noted that water and sewage were priority issues in realizing those possible goals in that area.

Mackin's plan addresses the need for enforcement practices in the areas of historic preservation and conservation.

"Just by saying it is a conservation district can't protect it," Senopole said.

Once the plan is adopted next year, Senopole said that the grant applications for priority projects can start. The key, according to Senopole is to stay involved and talk to officials.

At the end of the 45-day public comment period, each of the municipalities will hold public hearings prior to adopting the plan.

Those hearings will take place in January 2009, with the plan being ratified that same month, according to Mackin. Public hearings will be advertised in the newspaper.