

Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens

A Pennsylvania nonprofit

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June 13, 2012

To: Patricia McSparran, Director
PA Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands
PO Box 8460
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8460

Subject: The Township of Cheltenham Public Works Meeting
Presenter: Mr. Mark Malach, PE, PA DEP Bureau of Waterways and Wetlands
June 13, 2012
Curtis Hall, Wyncote, PA

Members of Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens have been in the forefront of asking the tough questions at Cheltenham Township meetings regarding flooding. Our research has uncovered many documents relating to past flood control projects detailing conflicting opinions, some based on science and others seem to be politically motivated, between Montgomery County, our Township, PennDOT and DEP. (RTK law and freedom of information used to gain the knowledge)

The residents of Cheltenham have suffered the consequences of projects such as the 42 inch pipe which carries stormwater from Abington Township and dumps it into and on top of Cheltenham residences in the Glenside area. (The pipe is located from Easton Road and Railroad underpass to Glenside & Keswick Avenues. It was constructed to lay beside a 36 inch pipe which is still carrying stormwater.) Newspaper articles also document this project's issues. Some of the documents we have obtained have been placed on the floodside.com facebook page. This sight was created by township residents who have suffered untold flooding and sewage back ups over many years. After reading through many pages of documentation regarding this specific project; the DEP Waterway and Wetland professionals' opinions have been validated with the flooding in Glenside becoming more destructive.

Another destructive project, recently completed over the Tookany Creek, is SEPTA's first attempt to change the floodplain which includes their South parking lot at the Jenkintown-Wyncote Station. The station and parking lots sit along side the Tookany Creek. The new, much large, culvert under the tracks along Cheltenham Hills Drive has proven most destructive to Elkins Park residents with the increase in volume and velocity of stormwater and which has also impacted the sewer system. We have many documents, gained by the Right to Know law, which show discussions about such possible destruction, and yet the project was completed with much damage to residences.

We have submitted questions to the Floodside.com Group for the DEP presentation by Mr. Malach which will take place on June 13, 2012. Below you will find an extensive list of questions which must be answered if our township residents are to have peace of mind each time there is a "flood watch" posted or we get heavy rain.

We hope you will consider our questions and their answers in the planning of flood control mitigation projects in our Township.

Sincerely,
Olga S. McHugh, VP, CCC Board
Wyncote Resident, Cheltenham Township

CC: Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens Board, Township Commissioners

Questions for Mr. Mark Malach, PE, PA DEP Dept. of Waterways and Wetlands
Cheltenham Township Public Works Meeting
June 13, 2012

1. Since one third of Abington Township and all of Jenkintown Borough flows into The Township of Cheltenham, will detention and/or bio retention basins in Abington Twp. and Jenkintown Borough be part of the DEP plan?
1. If it was winter and spring of 2001 again, would you or could you have done anything else to prevent the connection of the new additional 42 inch pipe from the Easton Road and Railroad underpass to the Glenside Ave. and Keswick Ave. culvert? Can it be rerouted now?
1. Are you in favor of the Watershed Report from Philadelphia Water Department and Tookany-Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership that suggests the reversal of the Baeder Run "improvement" back to a more natural state that will reduce flooding downstream? Is this part of the latest DEP plan? Can that green space be modified to stormwater storage?
1. Would you be in favor of reducing maximum flow rates of the new SEPTA culvert under the tracks along Cheltenham Hills Drive and allowing the Tookany Creek immediately upstream of the culvert to revert back to a detention basin that will not cause track damage?
1. Can the old Wanamaker Pond, formerly located along the Tookany just South of Washington Lane, be restored as a detention basin to prevent track damage and downstream flooding?
1. Do you agree that Cheltenham Township needs a watershed-wide solution?
1. Does the DEP have the power to prevent a second 60 inch RCP culvert running under Keswick Ave. that Abington Township wants for draining the Keswick Village area faster (part of Abington Township?)
1. Does the DEP have the power to stop \$900,000 of flood control projects **in Abington**

Township's portion of the Tookany Creek watershed in favor of detention and or bio-retention basins in that part of Abington Twp.?

1. Does the DEP have the power to stop the \$800,000 flood control project **in the Borough of Jenkintown** that will accelerate stormwater from Cedar to Walnut and to the Tookany?
1. Why was Arcadia University allowed to convert forest into paved parking lots and a soccer field without consideration of accelerated stormwater runoff?
1. How much additional flooding along the Tookany Creek do you think is caused by the PA Route 309 enlargement and the increase in paved parking at Cheltenham Square Mall?
1. Do you think that underground detention of the first 1.4 inches of rain at our large footprint new schools is enough to prevent a false sense of security and sudden repeated flooding in years to come?
1. Do you agree that the residents of Cheltenham have the right to expect that Tookany Creek can be restored to a natural state and return to being an asset to the communities that it flows through as endorsed by the Tookany/Tacony-Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan of May 2005 and the Act 167 Master Plan of 2008 for the Tookany/Tacony/Frankford Watershed?
1. Why do you think that Rep. Larry Curry's letter to PennDOT dated March 14, 1994, requesting that an EIS be conducted prior to the Baeder Run creek flood control project was ignored?
1. We know that there was disagreement, but was there a power struggle between County and DEP engineers and politicians regarding previous flood control projects in our area and do you expect those types of problems going forward?
1. Many of us have witnessed stormwater flowing out of storm drains and sanitary sewer manholes in low areas due to pressurization during major rain events. One example of storm drains flowing up and flooding the street is the area near the intersection of Glenside and Keswick Avenues. Therefore the 42 inch pipe installed in 2001 to move up to 50 cfs of water from Easton Road to the Brookdale Ave. basin is helping to overwhelm the 60 cfs pumping station and flood Brookdale Ave. How can this be corrected?
1. What are the plans to create stormwater retention areas in Abington Township so that the water is released slowly into Cheltenham Township and Tookany Creek, thereby reducing flooding and damage to property in Cheltenham?
1. What size of storm water retention was required for the new LA Fitness building and parking lot that was recently built in Abington Township?
1. Why hasn't there been a discussion about the huge parking lots for SPS? These are logical places to start stemming the stormwater runoff with the use of pervious surfaced lots.

1. Do you see PA Act 167 of 1978 as being helpful for Cheltenham Township to get Abington and Jenkintown to reduce stormwater runoff into Cheltenham?

1. The property located at the corner of Glenside Avenue and Rices Mill Road is for sale. Currently, it is a paved parking lot which is adjacent to township park land (bird sanctuary) in which the Tookany Creek flows through it. Has any consideration been given to the purchasing of this property to be turned into a naturalized area connecting to the park land to form an overflow area or naturalized retention basin?

1. With the construction of new public schools in our township and their increased areas of paved surfaces and expanded roof designs, what role can DEP play in the enforcement of adequate stormwater retention design? We have already seen the impact of flooding due to the new Glenside Elementary School's retention, based on old rainfall and 100 year flood data, on the residences in Glenside.