

WESTTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION

SPECIAL MTG: 11/16/2016 @ STETSON

RE:CREBILLY

Comments by Mr. Pomerantz, Planning Commission Chair

A couple of thoughts...

It would likely not come as a surprise to TOLL when I say I wish we weren't here.

I wish we never needed to be here.

Just the thought of it has left me, both frustrated and saddened...but for different reasons than you might presume.

You see the seeds that were sown to get us to this point in time did not start today or a week ago or a month ago, or even when Toll and Crebilly's owners, the Robinsons made their deal whenever that was.

No, the seeds that were sown were planted two or three decades ago when the Township's leadership—for whatever their reasons did not plan for the possibility of a meeting such as we are having tonight regarding Crebilly.

And that same thinking continued fifteen years ago when nothing was done even as the Township's last Comprehensive Plan pointedly referred to potential inevitabilities of what could or should or might happen to Crebilly.

And that same thinking prevailed on into 2007 and 2008, even as there was an approved development of a large CCRC on the Crebilly land...a development actually approved by the PC and the BOS because it also meant a significant portion of the property would remain undeveloped...but after the unfortunate death of that project because of the 2008 crash, *nothing else* was done...the Township's political and administrative leadership simply waited for the next project to come along...

Which brought us to the apartment complex proposed a couple of years ago by Bozzuto, which in fact was approved by the PC because its members heard and heeded the consistent message enunciated by the applicant's lawyer...that in the absence of an approval, the Robinsons could rely back on a proposal they had submitted and was approved a long time ago...which they then put on hold in perpetuity in the event they needed to bring it out again...

To be sure, however, having listened to the residents' concerns, the PC's approval came with a fair price: including but not limited to trails and parkland and historically relevant preservation and other things...

What happened to that project, no one on the PC really knows for certain...for all we were told was that negotiations between the BOS and the developer went on for a long time...and then the developer withdrew its application.

Not good...

Not good because for all the long time rumors of "don't worry there are conversations going on between the conservancies and the land trusts with the Robinsons" until even today they seem more phantom than real...either unfulfilled or just rumored...

And besides, one would have assumed that such conversations would have and should have involved Westtown's political and administrative leadership...

And if it has...with whom...and when...what was the result?

And for it to be successful it would have had to be welcomed and approved by the Robinson family...nothing could have happened without their agreement, and that has never been a sure thing.

In short, as I said at the start, the seeds of today were sown a long time ago and have continued to grow...until we arrive at today with the Toll submission.

Did it have to come to this?

NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW!

But for certain it would have taken a different type of thought leadership all along: one that is proactive...not waiting for something to fall in its lap...

One that is creative and thoughtful; innovative, activist and collaborative...

One prepared to propose out of the box approaches, such as a land preservation fund...and a commission of concerned residents working on it all along...

But that was not the case here...

And why I said at the beginning I wish we weren't here and wish we didn't need to be here...

But we do...and we are...and the PC will do its utmost within the constraints previously described...

And it is in recognition of the Planning Commission's mandate and Toll's objectives and what I trust and hope will always be the long term affection and concern and sensibility the Robinson family might forever have for this Township where their beloved farm has been for decades the iconic centerpiece of Westtown...

I have a simple request for my colleagues on the PC, for you Andrew and Greg as Toll's representatives and the Robinson family: that we find a way to fulfill a common aspirational goal:

One best reflected in one of my favorite quotes from Senator Robert F. Kennedy...in talking about a different proposal but of comparable public concern:

That "we must find a way to combine the best of the private enterprise system with the best of community action...Realizing that neither by itself is sufficient...But in their combination lies our best hope for the future..."

Thank you.