



SPRING GARDEN TOWNSHIP

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**President Lehmayr Municipal Campus Update
Presented at the April 12, 2017
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WHITE PAPER

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In 1999, the Spring Garden Township Commissioners made a decision that additional recreation was needed in the community and that the Mount Rose Avenue property could satisfy that need, as well as consolidate the police, administration, and recreation departments under one roof.

Over the past 18 years, the vision that was proposed has moved forward with several plans and modifications. Studies were undertaken regarding the environmental quality of the property along with the delineation of wetlands and floodplains.

Residents and businesses located within the Township were made aware of the potential development of the Mount Rose Avenue property through the direct mailing of notices of public meetings and announcements through the Code Red network. Three public meetings were held with turn-outs that indicated mixed opinions in terms of "for" and "against" the proposed development. Naturally, the cost of the development and the resulting tax increases were met with negative public comment although the visionaries in the Township saw the need to continually improve the quality of life in the community through expanded recreation opportunities or opportunities that could not be realized within their own backyards.

In 2014, the Board of Commissioners (BOC) approved moving forward with new plans to develop the Mount Rose Avenue property. The minutes of the BOC were posted on the Spring Garden Township (SGT) and, as always, the BOC meetings were open to the public for their participation. The environmental concerns were satisfied without the requirement for remediation and new flood plains and wetlands were delineated. An architectural firm was chosen and they continue to work through their design timeline.

Since December 2016, public feedback at the BOC meetings has been overwhelmingly negative and, at times, overly critical of not only select Township staff, but also of supporting staff and of the Commissioners, down to the level of personal attack and abuse. Although there have been individuals who attended these meetings with the intent to speak in favor of the proposed development, the semi-organized civil activists were so loud and abusive with their words and actions that these citizens were intimidated to not speak.

Local media outlets have covered the story on local news and in the newspapers. However, even with the public awareness at its height, few individuals have stepped up to voice their favorable support of the Mount Rose development. Does this indicate that, overall, Township residents are satisfied with the recreation opportunities available to them?

Numerous forms of recreation have developed and expanded their programs since 1999 including recreation centers such as the JCC, Heritage Hills, YMCA, and many larger municipalities with fields and organized programs. Leagues for soccer, lacrosse, t-ball, baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, dodge ball, bocce, and other team sports are readily available.

SGT is now at a crossroads not only in terms of recreation, but also in terms of the Mount Rose property. If it is agreed that the recreation needs are satisfied through our existing neighborhood parks and through non-Township facilities, then, in my opinion, continuing with the Mount Rose development is not the best direction for the Township. And if this is the case, then the Mount

Rose site is no longer justified for the consolidation of Township police and administrative services.

Due to the lack of adequate community support, evidenced by the last three months of BOC meetings and discussions with my neighbors and constituents, I can no longer support the development of the Mount Rose Avenue property. The development of any recreational fields and improvements at Mount Rose is clearly not in the best interests of our taxpayers.

It is suggested that all work be discontinued on the Mount Rose Avenue site and that any outstanding invoices be paid.

The following development alternatives should be investigated:

1. Reprogram the Tri Hill property with police, administrative, recreation, and public meeting facilities whether in a one-story or two-story building with elevator. Incorporate Public Works to the Tri Hill "municipal campus". The potential financial penalty for losing the ball field should be investigated although a public playground should remain at this site.
2. **OR:** Move all of public works to the Spahn Avenue/Yale Street property if a long-term lease or outright acquisition can be made. Appraise the property in its "As Is" condition if acquisition is a viable alternative and get cost estimates for making required improvements to the property (garages and shelters for machinery/equipment, office and restrooms) since adequate facilities do not currently exist.
3. Appraise and obtain bids to sell Ogontz Street if agreements for Spahn Avenue materialize or if a move of Public Works to Tri Hill is agreeable.
4. Appraise and obtain bids and sell the Mount Rose property. Serious consideration should be made to incorporate an "Overlay District" within the currently-zoned A-O zoned district.

--Eric M. Lehmayr, President Commissioner – Spring Garden Township