

## **Suburban REALTORS® Alliance News Brief Headlines**

Scroll down for full text of articles

### **General**

- Job loss and medical bills top factors contributing to PA foreclosures
- 422 plan has some people nervous

### **Bucks**

- Yardley Borough's Main Street nearly complete after nine months of construction
- Newtown Township cuts the ribbon on new \$7.4 million municipal complex
- Northampton adopts ordinance regulating construction of alternative energy systems
- Sewer facilities draft plan raises financial concerns in Upper Makefield

### **Chester**

- Slip ramp OK'd for Turnpike, Route 29
- East, West Marlborough and Newlin develop regional plan
- West Chester University outlines plans for expansion of student housing
- Eastern Shore Natural Gas Co. to expand its pipeline
- DASD forges plan to cut debt

### **Delaware**

- Darby Borough wants funds redirected to sewer
- Aston adopts amendment for fraternities
- Ridley Township appoints manager

### **Montgomery**

- Improvements promised in Norristown building inspections, code enforcement
- Conshohocken planners revisit 'preserving the borough' initiative
- Willow Grove train station study approved by board

## **General**

### **Job loss and medical bills top factors contributing to PA foreclosures**

Job loss and unexpected medical bills are among the top factors contributing to home foreclosures in Pennsylvania, according to a survey commissioned by the Pennsylvania Association of REALTORS® (PAR). Five hundred Pennsylvanians who encountered home foreclosure during the last 12 months were surveyed by Florida-based polling firm Strategic Guidance Systems (SGS) between June 22 and 27, 2010. Fifty-seven percent of the sample said their household had experienced a wage-earner's job loss in the 12 months prior to their foreclosure, while 47 percent said they had been hit by unexpected medical bills. Thirty-six percent indicated they had other "unexpected bills." [Click here](#) for the full article.

*Source: PAR Just Listed; 8/4/2010*

### **422 plan has some people nervous**

Representatives of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and the Montgomery County Planning Commission appeared before the supervisors to provide an overview of the U.S. 422 Corridor Master Plan. The corridor includes 24 municipalities in Berks, Chester and Montgomery counties. Leo Bagley, assistant director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission, said his agency had been working with the DVRPC and municipalities on the master plan for several years. Bagley said the possibility of making Route 422 a toll road was under consideration as a way to generate revenue for the area. He added that the county and regional planning commissions would be presenting information about the results of that study later in the year. Over the next several months, a team of traffic consultants would be modeling different scenarios to see what their potential effects might be, including whether tolls on Route 422 would be viable. While the study was expected to be completed by the end of the year, it will probably take several years to get through the process of actually turning the highway into a toll road. If it were to happen, it would be in the form of a high-speed system using E-ZPass.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/5/2010*

## **Bucks**

### **Yardley Borough's Main Street nearly complete after nine months of construction**

After nine months of construction and traffic delays, the work on Main Street in Yardley Borough is nearly completed. On Monday, Aug. 2, workers from James D. Morrissey, Inc., began paving Main Street, signaling the end is near for the project conducted by PennDOT and PECO. Throughout the last nine months, workers installed 19 additional storm drains and a new gas pipeline through the borough, and it has been completed ahead of schedule. "We are about six weeks ahead of schedule, and by the end of the project, we will have made more streets in the borough ADA-accessible, we will be free of potholes on Main Street, and the road should not flood every time it rains," said Yardley Borough Manager Bill Winslade.

*Source: Yardley News; 8/4/2010*

### **Newtown Township cuts the ribbon on new \$7.4 million municipal complex**

Newtown Township officials cut the ribbon dedicating the new \$7.4 million Newtown Township municipal complex on Durham Road (Route 413). "These buildings are for the future," said Rob Ciervo, chairman of the Newtown Township Board of Supervisors. "We're doing this so we don't have to build new municipal buildings in Newtown Township for a very long time." Ciervo added that the township was able to avoid tax increases to fund the project through the issuance of a municipal bond. The new building is in compliance LEED standards.

*Source: The Advance; 8/5/2010*

### **Northampton adopts ordinance regulating construction of alternative energy systems**

The Northampton Township Board of Supervisors on Wednesday night approved an ordinance that will regulate the construction of alternative and emerging energy systems in the township. The new law, while encouraging wind turbines, solar energy panels and geothermal heating and cooling systems, will regulate the construction of what officials said could be "potentially intrusive facilities" in the township. The ordinance adopted this week adds regulations to the township's zoning ordinance for the installation of the systems. While the new law bans wood-fired burners and essentially relegates wind turbines to the less dense R-1 zoning district, it eases traditional setback requirements for residents and businesses contemplating systems like solar panels. While solar panels would be permitted in every zoning district, they are restricted to behind the front façade of a building and no systems would be permitted in the front yard. Panels would also have to be designed and located in order to minimize sun glare toward an occupied home. The ordinance would also require owners to consult with a qualified inspector every 12 months, but does not spell out how that would be enforced.

*Source: The Advance; 8/4/2010*

### **Sewer facilities draft plan raises financial concerns in Upper Makefield**

Several relatively new homeowners said they don't know if they can afford the cost of connecting with a proposed public sewer system in the Taylorsville section of Upper Makefield Township. Calling the situation serious, township consultant Bruno Mercuri of Mercuri and Associates, Inc., said some on-site disposal systems have failed in the Taylorsville area as well as in Dolington. Proposed for the Taylorsville Area Sanitary Sewer Extension is a low pressure sewer system with individual pumps that would replace existing private on-lot disposal systems. The estimated cost of the project is \$1.33 million, including 37 connections. The cost per dwelling unit would be approximately \$36,180. The Taylorsville project would be scheduled for start-up sometime in 2012. Upper Makefield Township's current 537 Plan has not been revised since its adoption in 1978. The next Upper Makefield Board of Supervisors meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 4 at 7:30 p.m. A full copy of the Draft Revision of the Sewer Facilities Plan is available to view at the Upper Makefield Township building, 1076 Eagle Road, Newtown, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call the municipal office at 215-968-3340.

*Source: The Advance; 8/5/2010*

## **Chester**

### **Slip ramp OK'd for Turnpike, Route 29**

Chester County will finally get its slip ramp, an all-electronic interchange linking Route 29 in Great Valley with the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The announcement was made Wednesday at a gathering of state, county and township officials, transportation experts and the developers who have hundreds of millions of dollars invested in local corporate and retail parks. Located midway between the Downingtown exit (#312) and the Valley Forge exit (#326), the new ramp will provide access to and from such business parks as the Great Valley Corporate Center, the Commons at Great Valley, Atwater and the newly opened Uptown Worthington. Each day about 45,000 to 50,000 vehicles travel the 14-mile stretch of turnpike between Downingtown and Valley Forge, Brimmeier said. By 2025, Turnpike studies estimate 150,000 vehicles a day will use that stretch.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/5/2010*

### **East, West Marlborough and Newlin develop regional plan**

Three townships in the southwestern part of Chester County are developing a regional comprehensive plan with the goal of preserving agriculture and managing growth. The three townships, East Marlborough, West Marlborough and Newlin, formed an ad hoc regional planning taskforce in the spring of 2009. A draft copy of the Unionville Area Regional Comprehensive Plan was recently posted on East Marlborough's website. The proposed plan will be a roadmap for conserving the area's natural resources and directing future development and growth in areas that are already developed and business corridors. East Marlborough Township Manager Jane Laslo said Wednesday that the regional planning taskforce hoped to have a public meeting on the draft plan by the end of the year and adopt a plan by mid-2011.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/4/2010*

### **West Chester University outlines plans for expansion of student housing**

West Chester University officials told local residents that the university plans to expand its student housing operation. Officials said the university just spent \$4.2 million to buy College Arms, student housing at High and Rosedale that had been privately owned. Officials said the university will renovate the building and reopen it in 2011. And officials said the university plans to add 240 beds to University Village, university-owned student housing on South Campus in East Bradford. University officials also said \$500,000 has been spent to acquire a property at 624 S. High St. for offices. These announcements made some residents uneasy at the university's Monday night community update meeting. Some said they had been under the impression that the university did not plan to grow its student population. Residents also said they were concerned about the university's acquisition of College Arms and 624 S. High St. Both of these properties are outside the "superblock," the area bounded by Rosedale Avenue and New, High and Sharpless streets that traditionally form the border of North Campus. Residents said the university's recent purchases appear to signal that the university intends to expand beyond the superblock and into borough neighborhoods.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/3/2010*

### **Eastern Shore Natural Gas Co. to expand its pipeline**

Another natural gas company is expanding its pipeline in the county. Eastern Shore Natural Gas Company, which transports natural gas to customers in Delaware, Maryland and Pennsylvania, has a plan to construct a 16-inch diameter pipeline about 8.3 miles through Lancaster and Chester counties. The new pipeline through West Sadsbury and Salisbury townships will extend Eastern Shore's pipeline from Parkesburg to a point west of Honeybrook Borough.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/2/2010*

### **DASD forges plan to cut debt**

The Downingtown Area School District has crafted a plan to reduce its debt service and how much it pays annually in interest. The district received a Qualified School Construction Bond for \$28.3 million in June that is part of the federal stimulus package. The bond is interest free and is appropriated for the district's new projects — the third middle school, scheduled to open in 2012, and the STEM Academy, slated to open in 2011. During a finance committee meeting Wednesday, Chief Financial Officer Richard Fazio said the district had been saving money for those projects and has some cash on hand; however, he noted that the interest-free bonds are very appealing. Therefore, the district will utilize the QSCB to pay for the construction and use the cash to pay off some of its other debt services that have interest payments.

*Source: Daily Local; 7/30/2010*

## ***Delaware***

### **Darby Borough wants funds redirected to sewer**

Borough officials plan to ask the county to redirect \$100,000 in grant money into a sewer improvement project. Delaware County Council originally approved the funding to be used for clean-up efforts at 439 Main St., where a building collapsed more than two years ago. A local businessman recently purchased the property and plans to conduct the clean-up using his own funds, then build a barber school on the site. "It's our recommendation that we look at doing sewer work," borough engineer Eileen Mulvena told council at its business meeting. "With all the rain and snow we've had, the sewers are taking a beating." Mulvena said it would take about \$100,000 to repair the sewer line beneath Main Street, between Ridge Avenue and Mill Street. The project would include fixing the line, replacing two manholes, and reconnecting a number of laterals. Council unanimously approved a motion to request the change.

*Source: Daily Times; 8/1/2010*

### **Aston adopts amendment for fraternities**

Aston Commissioners adopted an amendment to an existing ordinance to provide for the definition of "fraternity." The purpose of the amendment is to provide the township's code enforcement office with a uniform and efficient mechanism for enforcement. Per the ordinance, fraternity is described as an organized living arrangement within a building having common dining and kitchen facilities and multiple bedrooms where residents are full-time students of a college or university located in the township. Property owners seeking designation as a fraternity must submit written confirmation from the university that the sorority or fraternity is officially recognized. In addition, a fraternity or sorority is only permitted in buildings where fraternity occupation is either permitted under the zoning ordinance or is a validly existing non-conforming use. Non-fraternity members may reside in a fraternity or sorority house provided the number does not exceed the number of fraternity/sorority member residents, except during the months of June, July and August.

*Source: Daily Times; 7/31/2010*

### **Ridley Township appoints manager**

The commissioners named second ward commissioner Maragert Keegan to be temporary township manager, filling a vacancy created by the death last April of long-time manager Anne Howanski. In a related matter, President Bob Willert invited any second ward resident interested in filling the vacancy on the board of commissioners to send a resume to the township office.

*Source: Daily Times; 7/29/2010*

## **Montgomery**

### **Improvements promised in Norristown building inspections, code enforcement**

Nearly two weeks after the Norristown Council learned in detail how the municipality failed to rigorously inspect new construction in 2006 and 2007, council members heard a report Tuesday night on recent improvements in building inspections and code enforcement. Former councilman David Hodo set the tone for the meeting by challenging council in public comments to "be more visible, exercise more control and tighten up supervision" of municipal workers. A Keystone Municipal Services report detailed an "inadequate and untrained building department," a lack of "ownership of the project by any municipal department, employee or consultant" and "a major lack of communication, coordination and cooperation between various municipal departments." The report described how the condemned, 26-unit condominium building at 770 Sandy St. was built without proper municipal inspections. Council President William Caldwell said council planned to conduct additional interviews with municipal employees to determine "accountability," while the municipality attempts to get a legal receiver appointed to repair the building. Norristown developer R. Bruce Fazio claims he cannot afford the "more than \$232,000" in repairs needed to bring the building back to code compliance.

*Source: Times Herald; 8/3/2010*

### **Conshohocken Planners revisit 'preserving the borough' initiative**

At its last meeting the Conshohocken Planning Commission contemplated improvements to its ambitious new initiative, dubbed the "preservation of the borough's community character." Simply put, the commission seeks to preserve historically significant buildings in the borough, and ensure buildings that are demolished are rebuilt with that historical significance in mind. Elizabeth Lankenau, a planning consultant for the borough and historic preservation specialist, said the issue was first raised when the borough constructed its 2007 comprehensive plan. It was not until several months ago that commissioners made historic preservation a real goal.

*Source: Times Herald; 8/2/2010*

### **Willow Grove Train Station study approved by board**

The Upper Moreland Board of Commissioners moved forward with a feasibility study to analyze the possibility of moving the Willow Grove Train Station from one side of York Road to the other. The township is expected to go out to bid this month Commissioner Kevin Spearing said. With a \$60,000 grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the township is looking at a cost of \$15,000, Spearing added. The move would not only alleviate traffic issues but further the township's redevelopment plan. If the station was moved, a parking garage, studio apartments as well as commercial and professional offices could all be a possibility for the area. The commissioners also believe that moving the station is a way to increase the tax base.

*Source: Public Spirit Willow Grove Guide; 8/3/2010*