

## Update #2—Friends of Abolition Hall

(This was an email sent to the Whitmarsh Township Supervisors,  
the Township Manager, and key staff)

SUBJECT: **Corson land and Cross County Trail opportunity [in Plymouth Meeting]**

DATE: 11/5/2017 9:09 PM

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Dear Supervisors--

The Friends of Abolition Hall heeded your advice and met with the K. Hovnanian team to present our Alternative Site Plan (see attached). We have had two meetings, and are pleased to report that the developer has accepted some of our recommendations, including the concept of a two-acre publicly accessible "welcome park," and the elimination of the proposed right-of-way for a realigned Butler Pike. At the same time, however, the team told us that the developer now has an adjacent parcel under agreement of sale--the Haub land, which fronts onto Butler Pike. Furthermore, with the addition of this acreage, he is adding townhouses.

**We continue to believe that a unique opportunity is unfolding here that all of us must seize—a chance to collaborate for the public good. We can be visionary and bold in creating a public-private partnership that not only recognizes the developer's right to build, but also protects historic resources, benefits the community by ensuring public access to a welcome park, and embraces the plan for the completion of a public trail through historic Plymouth Meeting. Similarly, we affirm that the future of the historic Hovenden House, Abolition Hall, and Country Store/Post Office should not be imperiled by a Butler Pike right-of-way that would likely contribute to their demise.**

### *Proposed Density and Possible Density Buy-Down*

Hovnanian's original plan, which was reviewed and approved by the Zoning Officer (an opinion that was upheld by the Zoning Hearing Board), showed 48 townhouses on the 8+ acres of open fields behind Abolition Hall. The latest iteration of the plan shows 63 townhouses, with a few more likely to be added before plan submission. We are not pleased by the increase in units, and previously had been hoping to negotiate a density buy-down using Township Open Space funds. That remains a possibility, assuming the Township chooses to move in that direction.

*cont'd.*

### Plymouth Meeting Welcome Park

We are relieved that the current plan eliminates the cluster of townhouses closest to Abolition Hall, and that an area of approximately two acres will remain as open space. Where our plan shows the welcome park on that land, the developer proposes a storm water detention basin. The size of the basin has yet to be determined, and we have requested that it be kept small enough so that there is sufficient and meaningful space for the park. We would like the park to include interpretive signage, a few benches, and a variety of native plants.

### Cross County Trail Easement

Among our plan objectives is to create a connection to the expanded Cross County Trail. The county previously had identified the Haub land as a preferred route from Butler Pike heading east to connect to Township-owned open space, and eventually making its way to Flourtown Road (see attached). With this parcel now under agreement to Hovnanian, there is an opportunity to encourage the developer to provide an easement for the trail. We will be conveying our hope that such an easement be included. The county will soon be announcing the launch of an advanced feasibility for this section of the trail, which means that now is the time to convince Hovnanian to design his development with this in mind. The county has funds to acquire a trail easement; the maximum right-of-way width required is 17 feet. In planning for the trail, we have to be mindful of creating a safe crossing from the west to the east side of Butler Pike, somewhere between the office park boulevard (where the trail is intended to emerge) and the north boundary of the Haub parcel. In the event that a warrant study requires signals at the townhouse boulevard, that would create an ideal (and safe!) crossing. The addition of a sidewalk on the east side of Butler would provide access to the trail.

The Friends of Abolition Hall looks forward to working with the Township, the developer, and the County in negotiating a well-designed and comprehensive plan for this iconic homestead.

Very truly yours,

Sydelle Zove

Friends of Abolition Hall