

## Update on Abolition Hall/Corson Land and Proposed Townhouse Development -- October 26, 2017

Here's what we know:

- K. Hovnanian's team (i.e., the developer) told us that the plan they will soon be submitting to Whitmarsh will NOT include the realignment of Butler Pike.
- That same plan will include approximately two-acres of open space next to Abolition Hall/Barn.
- The developer has signed an agreement of sale for an adjacent property, the Haub land that fronts onto Butler Pike. By combining the two parcels (Corson and Haub) to create more buildable space, the firm now proposes to construct 63 townhouses.
- The Corson parcel is shown on the current plan as being divided into three parcels—Lot 1 contains the historic Hovenden House and Abolition Hall/Barn; Lot 2 contains the open fields upon which the townhouses will be built; Lot 3 contains a small house and detached garage that front onto Marple Lane. Eventually, the developer will sell Lots 1 and 3.
- It appears that there are no additional zoning issues—that the developer can proceed by right.
- The proposed development is subject to Conditional Use Approval, which means that eventually, the Board of Supervisors will be holding a public hearing. The Township Supervisors can impose reasonable conditions on the developer.

Next steps:

- The Friends of Abolition Hall **oppose any requirement imposed by the Township Supervisors that Butler Pike be realigned through the Corson land and out onto Germantown Pike where the Country Store/Post Office now stands.** The Hovenden House, Abolition Hall/Barn, and Country Store/Post Office are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Moving Butler Pike onto this land will destroy the integrity of the site, and will not have any substantial impact on reducing traffic volume and congestion.

Action needed:

- Send the following message to the Board of Supervisors—  
*Do not demand that K. Hovnanian Builders provide a right-of-way for a realigned Butler Pike. Doing so will devalue the historic structures and limit their marketability. Protect the integrity of this stop on the Underground Railroad. Keep Butler Pike out of the Corson land.*

Send your letters/emails to:

Amy Grossman, Chair  
Whitmarsh Township Board of Supervisors  
616 W. Germantown Pike  
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444  
[agrossman@whitemarshwp.org](mailto:agrossman@whitemarshwp.org)

Please copy the following individuals:

Sherry Glantz Patchen, Chair  
Whitmarsh Township Planning Commission [same mailing address]

Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, Chair  
Montgomery County Board of Commissioners  
[val@montcopa.org](mailto:val@montcopa.org)

Matthew Edmond, Section Chief  
Transportation Planning  
Montgomery County Planning Commission  
[medmond@montcopa.org](mailto:medmond@montcopa.org)

#### Additional background:

Back in the spring, after the Whitemarsh Zoning Hearing Board denied an appeal filed by seven residents, K. Hovnanian's plan to build 48 townhouses on the Corson land at Butler and Germantown Pikes could have moved forward, but did not. We now know that the builder is ready to submit a formal land development request to the Township.

Over the summer, the Friends of Abolition Hall put together an alternative site plan—one that eliminated the proposed realignment of Butler Pike, reduced the density, preserved two acres of open space for a welcome park, and oriented the townhouses so that their garage fronts would not be visible from the road. We took that plan to the Supervisors. They advised that we present it to K. Hovnanian. We have met twice with K. Hovnanian's team, and they appear to have accepted some of our recommendations.

#### Why this site is so important to us and the community:

Abolition Hall is one of several Plymouth Meeting buildings listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places. The Plymouth Meeting National Register Historic District was Pennsylvania's very first of its kind, acknowledging the site's national significance. This crossroad village connects us to stories about early industry in the area (lime kilns), family histories (Corson, Maulsby, and more), a notable artistic family, the Underground Railroad and nationally famous abolitionists who spoke and stayed here. Open fields that have been cultivated for crops since the mid-18th century will have a townhome development built. Advocates want to work with both the developer and the township to manage change in a productive way that will permit development and preserve nationally significant history.