NORRISTOWN STATE HOSPITAL PUBLIC HEARING

LAND PLANNER STUDY: PHASE ONE DUE DILIGENCE

- - -

Tuesday, October 9, 2018
Commencing at 6:30 p.m.
Norristown Municipal Hall
235 East Airy Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania  19401

PRESENTERS:

TROY D. TRUAX, AICP,
Senior Associate Planning Services Division Manager
-- Michael Baker International

JILL GAITO, Technical Consultant
-- Michael Baker International

TRACEY VERNON, PP, AICP
-- Vernon Land Use

TODD J. POOLE, Managing Principal
-- 4ward Planning, Inc.

- - -
INDEX

PRESENTATIONS
Troy Truax 4
Jill Gaito 14,29
Tracey Vernon 19
Todd Poole 32

PUBLIC COMMENT
Senator Daylin Leach 51
Mark Cassell 54
Marla Rivera 57
Kim Henderson 58
James Walters 59
Ken Christovich 60
G. Hayward Simpson 63
Marla Rivera 67
Denisse Agurto 68
Christopher Jaramillo 68
Theresa Lauer 69
Mary Ellen Moran 71
INDEX

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kara Rothschild-Rode 74
Bill Caldwell 78
Anthony Uhrich 81
Susan Shannon 83
Kim Henderson 85
Kym Ramsey 86
Bill Corbett 89
Chris DiPaolo 91
Tory Bright 99
Abby Grasso 110

---
MR. TRUAX: Good evening everybody. Thank you so much for coming out this evening. Hopefully everybody can hear well with the microphone.

I am Troy Truax, the project manager for the Land Planning Consulting Team that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hired to conduct this study with Michael Baker International. I'm out of the Harrisburg office, but we very much have a local presence too here in the Philadelphia area, et cetera.

Tonight's objective is to give you an update on the Land Planner Study for the Norristown State Hospital. We just completed what we call our Phase 1 Due Diligence Technical Study. We wanted to give you an update on what we learned so far. And then, more importantly, this is an
opportunity to provide and obtain
more input from citizens,
residents, stakeholders, and others
that have an interest in this
project, and the future of the
State Hospital, and the potential
highest and best use of that
property going forward.

Just by disclosure, the
meeting is being recorded by the
stenographer. So the goal is after	onight this presentation will be
made available on the
Commonwealth's website, the
Norristown State Hospital website,
Department of Human Services, along
with a transcript. That is a good
way for us to capture all the
information, and then you have the
ability to have that available too.
So we will have a copy of this
available on the state's website,
and we will share that information
with you.
So again the consultant team consists of Michael Baker, we are the lead engineering consultant on the project. Joined with us is Vernon Land Use, Tracey Vernon is here tonight as well. Joining me is Jill Gaito, from Michael Baker. Moonstone Environmental has helped us with some of the environmental assessments on the campus, and we will explain that information. And then the real estate advisers, they looked at the real estate from an appraisal process. And then also 4ward Planning, Todd Poole, president of 4ward Planning is here, and is going to provide information on the market analysis relative to the highest and best use, and we will talk about that information as well.

So in terms of our agenda tonight, our goal is to be done by seven o'clock, so around
seven o'clock time frame we will give you an opportunity to come to the microphone, provide your name and address, and provide a comment as well. We'll talk about a little of those ground rules here at the end.

So we want to give you an overview of what our study objectives are; what we are charged with doing as part of our contract with the state, with this project; give you an overview of our overall work plan and the time frame that we are scheduled to complete the study, conduct the study; and then getting into some of the meat of the information. Again, completing what we call our Phase 1 Due Diligence Technical Studies, and that includes extensive stakeholder outreach with a number of folks that are in the room tonight, but also too those that haven't had a
chance to participate and provide input. This is exactly why we are here tonight, to give you that opportunity. And then we'll talk about the next steps, where do we go from after here after tonight's public meeting, relative to the next several phases of the project. And then we will open it up for your comments.

So our objectives for the project are, number one, we have to look at the highest and best use opportunities for the Norristown State Hospital campus, and we will show what we mean by the actual area of the campus that we're looking at specifically. And then, number two, determine if any portion of the property can be, number one, economically and legally subdivided, while allowing those portions of the property that still operate as a State Hospital
under its charge with the Department of Human Services to provide ongoing mental health treatment for the individuals that need those types of services.

So this information here, Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3, outline our scope of work, what we are technically obligated to provide back to the Commonwealth for this project.

Phase 1 is where we're -- we just completed Phase 1, so that was through the May and August timeframe of this year. We've looked at various types of technical studies, and we are going to give you an overview of that information. We are now just entering into the Phase 2 part of the study, and that includes this public meeting where we are obtaining additional input, and also providing a report out on what
we learned so far.

So we are not in a position to offer any recommendations on the project at this point. We are still in the discovery mode, and this is really an opportunity to report out what we've learned so far, and then get information back, obtain information back from you as additional stakeholders for the project.

And then moving on, Phase 3, which will begin after this October, this fall looking into early the first quarter of next year, we will be producing the actual feasibility study that will provide layout recommendations, et cetera.

So with respect to the project study area, there's two things to keep in mind: Number one, the red area is both the
Norristown Farm Park. That's the large property with all the underdeveloped area. And then down in the lower left-hand corner, outlined by the yellow, that is the campus of the State Hospital. We are specifically looking at the yellow area, not the red area, but the yellow area is where we are concentrating our study of focus. And that encompasses all of the actual campus property of Norristown State Hospital.

And then with respect to the municipalities that are involved, you can see the yellow dash line, generally outlines whether the municipal boundaries exist within those properties. So you have West Norriton Township, Norristown Municipality, and East Norriton Township. None of the campus exist — or in terms of the campus itself is located in East
Norriton, but you can see by the yellow line that approximately half of the campus is situated in both Norristown and West Norriton Township.

So this area again, in a different view, again looking at that yellow area, and the yellow dash line, this is the campus area that we looked at, and it is shown in the previous slide. It's 198.8 acres, and that also does not include, on the campus there is a Pennsylvania State Police operation sitting right at to the bottom, at the very bottom of the graphic right where the yellow line is, there's a Pennsylvania State Police Dispatch Center. That is not being looked at. There's like an approximately five acre area that is not being looked at for this project. And then there's about 65 acres of the campus located in West
Norriton Township. And the total number of buildings on the campus, there's 55 buildings in total, that are situated in the entire campus area.

So in terms of the site history -- this is a historic bird's-eye view of the State Hospital campus, many, many years ago. But the State Hospital was completed, in terms of its construction, in 1879, and operations began in 1880. So it's very much been part of this community for well over a century.

By 1947 the facility grew to support approximately 5,000 individuals needing mental health services -- so again it just gives you the context of the large size of operation that the hospital once was at. And then forensic services began in 1937 with the development of Building 51. And that's still
in operation today as a forensic unit.

So the current hospital operations, I'm going to turn this over to Jill Gaito. Jill is with Michael Baker, and then she will walk through the current operation of the campus.

MS. GAITO: I always make sure I know how to work the remote.

Okay, so one of the tasks that I felt was very important to our study is to get a good foundation of understanding of what exactly is going on out on the campus. Because when Tracey Vernon and I were doing stakeholder studies, it became very clear that there was not a comprehensive understanding of all of the operations that were happening out on the campus. So this is a breakdown of what is actually
operating out on the campus right now.

Of course you have the State Hospital operations, but you also have county mental health operations in addition to some other not-for-profit tenants and some community activity, which I am going to breakdown in a further slide.

In total there is 1,195 people that are working on campus right now in different operations. There are 12 non-state, not-for-profit major organizations working on the campus, in addition to State Hospital campus.

We provided this map and color coded it, it's a little bit easier to see when you go back online and look at the presentation online. But it's pretty clear that only the dark blue are actually hospital psychiatric care
buildings. The green are leased buildings, which I'm talking about other tenants that are operating on campus. So you can see that there's quite a variety of operations happening there, and that it's a little bit spread out on the campus.

These are the buildings that are operated by the State Hospital operations themselves. And there are 754 folks working for the State Hospital itself, on campus. And you can see the buildings and the type of operations that are specifically the State Hospital.

These numbers are very current; I just got these about a week or so ago. There's a hundred and two civil beds operating in the State Hospital campus and a hundred eighty-seven forensic beds.

The forensics -- it's
important to note how many counties
are served by both of those
operations. The Commonwealth has
only two facilities that provide
forensic services. Norristown, of
course, is one serving the eastern
part of the state, and Torrance
State Hospital serves really the
majority of the counties west of
here.

This is a list of the
county mental health services that
are operating on the campus. There
are six different organizations
that are providing mental health
services to the community, not just
Montgomery County. You can see how
many counties, again, are served.

There are a lot of
misconceptions about how the county
operations work. It's really a
joint operation that provides
services that individually counties
would not be able to provide in
their individual county if they
didn't work together to financially
provide these services as a
cohesive unit. And, again, there
are 441 people employed in the
mental health county -- in county
mental health services.

And then finally there
are nonprofit and community
organizations also operating on
campus. Philadelphia Search and
Rescue, providing search and rescue
teams for a four-state area. We
have the Stony Creek Anglers who
are providing the trout nursery and
a lot of fishing activities for the
community. And then the Norristown
Youth Eagles Football League uses a
lot of the green space that is
being provided by the Department of
Human Services and EGS.

I know one evening we
were out there for an evening
meeting, and if I had to guess I
would say there were at least 300 people there using the different fields, either playing football, or soccer, or just running around, a lot of parents and kids. So it's a very heavily utilized green space that provides a benefit for the community.

So as part of this we're going to talk tonight about the findings of the Phase 1 activities, which included a lot of stakeholder outreach, and a lot of technical studies. And with that I'm going to turn it over to Tracey Vernon to give you an overview of the stakeholder outreach that was conducted during Phase 1.

MS. VERNON: Thank you, Jill.

I am going to give you a quick overview of the stakeholder outreach conducted as part of this project.
The first --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hold your microphone up.

MS. VERNON: How's that?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right.

MS. VERNON: Okay.

Perfect.

So the first phase of the study included pretty extensive stakeholder outreach, which we will talk about in a moment.

The outreach in Phase 2 starts tonight, because this public meeting will be able to provide us with some input. And then throughout the Phase 3 study of the project, we'll be reaching out to stakeholders, as well, to talk about some of the findings as we move forward.

So for Phase 1 of the Land Planner Study, a small team
was originally scoped to conduct 25 individual meetings. That scope has expanded, and we have ended up working with 129 individuals representing over 50 different organizations. We conducted 24 in-person meetings, 13 telephone interviews. And there was also an online public survey conducted as part of the project, and that was open in the month of August, and we had 352 responses.

So in all, nearly 500 individuals were involved in the Land Planner Study for the Phase 1 portion of the project. So that included individual one-on-one meetings, focus group meetings, and then also the ongoing public survey. Our stakeholder outreach took place from June to the end of August this year.

We offered two stakeholder workshops in August.
We had 32 participants and those stakeholders included neighbors who live in the proximity of the Norristown State Hospital campus, and those are neighbors from Norristown and West Norriton Township, and additional stakeholders identified by Norristown.

I am going to give you a real brief overview of some stakeholder perspectives, things that we heard during the meetings, and then I will give you a high-level overview of the public survey response.

From the stakeholder perspective there were a lot of expectations and concerns that folks brought up to us. They want to make sure the consultant team knew that we need to manage the expectation of this particular project going forward. There were
also some concerns about relocating existing services from the State Hospital campus; and also concerns about keeping existing services on the State Hospital campus.

The next was lack of communication and outreach. Several stakeholders -- in fact, pretty much most stakeholders identified that there seems to be a lack of communication between what is happening from the Commonwealth perspective and individuals in the community. There was lack of understanding of knowing the operations that happen on the State Hospital campus.

Third, many indicated that there are many underutilized land and buildings on the property, and there was widespread concern why those buildings being left in the condition that they are in, why aren't they being improved.
Next, in talking to
Norristown, there's some concern
with revenue generation.
Norristown has 92 churches within a
two-mile area. There's concern
that between community groups and
also that the county's largest
employer, the county, there's
concerns with revenue generation.
But then also we learned that
there's a lot of redevelopment and
reinvestment going on in
Norristown. There has been a lot
of expansion, at the Elmwood Park
Zoo, also a lot of reinvestment and
reinvigoration in Downtown
Norristown.

Several stakeholders
expressed concern about relocating
existing social services from the
Norristown State Hospital campus.
And folks really indicated why
would the state want to relocate
services that have been located on
the State Hospital campus since its inception. There was a lot of concerns: Why would the state want to relocate facilities that's providing services to the public?

On the other hand we heard a lot of concerns from folks about why continue existing social service operation on the campus, why aren't those operations dispersed throughout Montgomery County?

Some potential future uses in areas that we heard, we heard everything from mixed use development to adoptive reuse of the buildings; sort of having a high tech incubator campus on the space; using the campus for existing educational uses and new educational uses. Then on the other hand we had a lot of folks that said: Leave the campus the way it is. Leave the existing
operations in their current state, providing valuable services to the community.

So it was a pretty broad perspective that we heard from different stakeholders.

I am going to briefly go over the public survey results. We had 352 responses -- these were open-ended questions, so it wasn't multiple choice. So we went through responses to all four questions. What you see on the screen we're providing the top ten responses to four questions we asked.

The first was: As a citizen, how do you view operations at the Norristown State Hospital campus?

Overwhelmingly, folks indicated there were a lot of deteriorated and underutilized buildings. People also said there
was value for mental health service
provided on the campus.

A lot of folks said:
We don't know what goes on at the
campus. So I think that the slide
Jill went over showing the
operations is for the -- about what
happens on the campus.

The second question:
If the campus remained as is, how
would you be impacted?

Most folks said there
would be no impact if the campus
remained in its current condition.
But a lot of folks said there would
be negative impact to the
community's economy.

The third question: If
a portion of the State Hospital
campus is made available for
redevelopment, how would you be
impacted?

Overwhelmingly, folks
said if it was made available for
redevelopment there would be some
type of traffic concern, traffic
issues.

People also indicate
that would be positive impact to
the community's economy, bringing
some revenue generation. A lot of
folks said there was lots of
recreation space, open space on the
campus, that would be potentially
lost.

The last question:
Five or ten years from now, what do
you envision happening on the
campus property?

People are very
concerned about making sure that
open space and recreation remains
intact. And people also want to
make sure that there's space for
community and social services, and
improved delivery of mental health
services.

With that I turn it
over to Jill to talk about development.

MS. GAITO: So Moonstone Environmental was the firm that conducted the Phase 1 environmental site assessment, and really the bottom line is there is nothing in the soil and groundwater that is a huge impediment to redevelopment, or utilization of the space.

There were a few underground storage tanks that were removed in the early '90s before the tank regulations were developed, so the biggest recommendation is quantify and document the removal of those tanks, maybe do some sampling to make sure there was no soil contamination left behind when those tanks were removed.

So Moonstone recommended, and almost every Phase
I have ever been involved with, recommends Phase 2 environment site assessment. It's almost a given in most cases. And so they did recommend Phase 2 environmental site assessment prior to any redevelopment that would happen within the campus, and it would be focused to where they suspected the tank activity to the happen. And the cost for that activity is under $100,000 to do the Phase 2 environmental site assessment. And if anybody works in that field you know that's not a big number.

In the soil and the water there's really nothing there that is any kind of barrier -- significant barrier to redevelopment that we know of. The bigger barrier comes in the work that Moonstone did in the buildings themselves and the asbestos abatement that would have to be
done. Just given the age of the buildings, almost all of them have asbestos containing materials that would have to be removed either prior to demolition of buildings -- there are several buildings that have been determined to be structurally unsound, and may not be salvageable. The cost to do asbestos abatement on the buildings that are determined to be structurally unsound is almost $6 million just in itself.

And then there are other buildings where we felt could be reutilized, and you would have to remove the asbestos, replace it with other material such as other types of insulation, things like that, and the cost to just handle the asbestos abatement and replacement on those buildings is over $14 million.

So as you can see that
the asbestos issue is a much bigger issue than soil and water when it comes to the environmental.

With that I will turn it over to Todd Poole who did the Highest and Best Use Study, another one of the technical studies that we did in Phase 1.

MR. POOLE: Thank you, Jill.

Good evening everyone, my name is Todd Poole with 4ward Planning. We're a land use economist, so I get to work on real estate and economic analysis for development.

The first thing I want to take you through is really understanding what Norristown State Hospital currently represents as an economic entity, or an engine, if you will.

And you can think of this as a factory, you can think of
this as an office corporation, but
when we talk about number of
employees and the economic impact
that that particular facility has
it really doesn't differ all that
much if you had a factory there, or
if you had a large office building
with a lot of workers.

Because as you see on
the screen, and as was mentioned
earlier, directly there's just
under 1200 people who work on that
campus on a day-to-day basis,
combined for Norristown State
Hospital, 1466 jobs. That's
direct, indirect, and induced.

And when we say
"induced" -- and we're getting into
a little economic jargon here,
directly is the people that work
there, indirect are the suppliers
and servicers who provide services
because of all that employment.
And induced is if I get a paycheck
from that campus, I go into the
local community and purchase goods
and services, I go to the grocery
store, I'm creating employment
secondarily because I spend my
paycheck in a local area. That is
also categorized or included when
we talk about economic impact for
employment.

So you can see the
Norristown State Hospital site; the
NSH Campus Tenants, which Jill and
Tracey mentioned, you know they're
just under 600 of those folks who
work there on a daily basis; and
then we look at Total Impacts, a
little over 2,000 jobs, direct,
indirect, and induced. And
having -- you know, based on the
employment wage, $140.5 million
that is not only on the campus but
rippling through both the local and
the regional economy. It's not
just captured locally, but it
certainly spills out. And then finally underneath the Sewer Utility Fees is what is paid to the local wastewater utility from the State Hospital. So that's a relatively significant number on an annual basis.

We, too, also conducted a survey. In this particular case we conducted a survey of employees at the hospital. We sent out approximately 650 surveys, were distributed online using Survey Monkey. And our objective here was understanding the kind of economic influence that employees at the State Hospital have, in particular, on the local economy, the local economies of Norristown, West Norriton, East Norriton, and all the other local municipalities.

And so here are some of the takeaways: 190 people actually responded, which is about
30 percent participation rate, which is not that bad. 80 percent of the respondents lived beyond the area: Norristown, West Norriton and East Norriton.

Why is that important? It's important when you think about it this way: Those folks who live beyond the area that work here are importing their dollars into your community, okay?

There's no difference than how the United States likes to sell stuff abroad and bring money back into the United States. You can think of it the same way here. The hospital acts in that way to the extent that you have roughly eight out of ten, at least, for those who responded of those employees who live outside of the area but are coming here, and as you see as you go further down this survey list, they are making
purchases on goods and services locally.

As a matter of fact, roughly half of the respondents make at least three weekly purchases in Norristown. One out of five respondents spent $75 or more each week in Norristown.

So, again, this is not insignificant, it doesn't tell the entire story, but it talks about the economic influence that State Hospital workers have in the community.

Now the market analysis was what we were retained to do, and spent the majority of our time doing. We got a map of the general area that we analyzed, study areas, that dark blue area here. And then we have what's referred to as a thirty-minute primary market area, or PMA.

And within that
thirty-minute PMA is where we typically identify where the majority, say 70, 75 percent of people who live, work, and play are going to be coming back and forth to influence the hospital site and live somewhere in the area, shop and recreate.

"Highest and Best Use,"
we've thrown that term around. What does it mean; right? You probably heard this term before. Highest and best use actually has to meet four tests in order for you to get to identification of the highest and best use for the land.

The first one it has to be legally permissible, okay, which basically means you can't go do something that zoning will not allow. Usually that's a relatively easy test to meet because if the citizens want it, and the governing body want it, they'll make sure
that the zoning permits for it.

     The second one is it
has to be physically possible. For
this one, think of you can't build
on the side of a cliff, you can't
build in a marsh, you can't build
on environmentally sensitive lands;
right -- a floodplain. Again,
obvious stuff, and for that reason
this one too is usually pretty easy
to meet in terms of a test.

     The last two are the
more challenging of the two to meet
because oftentimes a particular use
will not meet these tests.

"Market Receptive"
basically is -- and looking at that
from the standpoint of someone who
wants to invest is: Is there a
market for something? Is there a
market for housing? Is there a
market for retail? Is there a
market for office use?
Entertainment? Whatever it may be,
if there's no market for it, we can pretty much fold up the tent right there and you can go home; right?

So we test for that, and I will show you some of the results that we've identified.

The final test of a highest and best use is it needs to be maximally productive, which is another way of saying: If I'm the developer I need to know I'm going to get a fair rate of return given the risk of the project, and the time I'm going to spend doing this project, as well as the investment.

It can be market receptive, and I've identified many projects, plenty of land uses that are market receptive but they are not financially feasible, or, in this case, maximally productive, because of, you know, the rents would be too low, or the cost of development would be too high, or
some combination thereof.

Okay, there we go, this is a Readers Digest version of what we found. Right now and based on the analysis that we performed, in this case on the residential piece of our analysis, there is demand between 717 and a little over 1400 units of residential housing. All right, market and some affordable mixed into that. How do we find that out? We look at the primary market area, that thirty-minute drive time area, and we look at, you know, housing supply. We look at number of workers, and estimated pent-up housing demand. We look at the amount of housing coming into the market area, than the pipeline. We are certainly aware of the housing being built in the downtown, as well as on the periphery. We also are aware of housing out, housing ages and
becomes physically obsolescent, so that's taken into consideration as well.

Long story short, of the 14,340 residential units in the primary market area, that thirty-minute market area that we believe will be needed by 2022, under the assumption that no new housing gets built in Norristown, more specifically on our site, we would assume you should be able to capture 5 to 10 of that amount. That represents the 717/1434 number. So that's where that comes from.

We've identified demand for nearly 1800 senior housing units/beds. Thinking of beds in terms of a nursing home care, dementia care, in addition to independent living, and assisted living.

There is a fast-growing
demand for continuum care, what's now referred to as life cycle community planning, and Norristown will be -- you know, this whole area is kind of right in that sweet spot. We have an aging population, we have a larger segment of persons who are 75 and older, which represents a good chunk of that demand, and so this is what we've identified for senior housing.

Here's what we've identified that is not market receptive -- I am going to explain the reasons why. This location is not market receptive for office for a couple reasons. Number one -- and for those of you pretty familiar with the local region you know you have a lot of commercial office space in the area: King of Prussia, Plymouth Meeting area. And where is it located? It is located principally off of major
arterials. Obviously, first the most being the I-76 corridor or the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

You also have a glut of office space that is available, that is vacant. You have close to -- actually slightly more than a million square feet of office space in the area which is vacant. And that's not going down anytime soon. If anything it will be more inventory coming online having to do with technology, having to do with businesses not needing as much space and a variety of other reasons.

All told what we are seeing is while you could develop some office space product on the site, it's going to be relatively small. And it's probably going to have more to do with co-locating next to what is there.

The site also lacks
visibility. This is important for both office and for retail. As you might imagine, most of the retail that you are familiar with -- and I'm talking regional type retail, national retailers, regional retailers, they want visibility, they want accessibility. You do not have that with this site.

This site is challenged from the standpoint of providing any commercial user, whether it be office or retail, with good visibility or good accessibility in and out of the site. As a matter of fact, if you were to drop a small mall on this site, which you could because the land area is that big, you wouldn't want the traffic that went with it trying to get in and out of that mall site; all right? So you can think about it that way.

From a light industrial
standpoint, it's more or less the lack of access as well. And, again, while we're fully aware, or I'm fully aware, that you have some light industrial uses already in the area, you're probably maxing it out to put a lot more than we have light industrial uses there it would mean more truck traffic, more truck traffic that is going to impinge upon a residential neighborhood.

And with that I am going to hand over to Troy.

MR. TRUAX: Okay, thanks, Todd.

So just in terms of next steps, for us, again, we talked about the Phase 2, in addition to some additional stakeholder's meetings, specifically some outreach with municipalities and some other interested parties that we've
identified as part of the process, we are also looking at some other technical studies, including utility separation, because there's a lot of utilities serving the campus, trying to figure out that myriad or network of steam, power, electric, et cetera, as part of it, is what we're looking at as well.

And then we will be moving into Phase 3. That begins later this fall, and most likely will take us into early next year. But our target timeframe to have the study completed and published is around March of 2019. This will have our recommendation for Highest and Best Use of the property, based upon relevant factors that we've just talked about tonight. Also additional input that we're getting from stakeholders, we're going to be looking at different options, so it's not just looking at one
scenario, it's going to be looking at several scenarios.

And then also too taking your answers to your suggestions and identifying again, like Todd just did, some of the challenges to make sure we are all clear that as opportunities move for whatever our recommendations you understand the inherent challenges that come with that, either environmental asbestos cleanup, you know, in terms of market receptiveness, et cetera. So that's really what we wanted to make sure is available to any interested stakeholder going forward as part of this process.

So this wraps up what we wanted to present tonight in terms of our Phase 1 due diligence efforts, where we're heading in the next two phases of the project.

What we'd like to do,
to give folks that have come
tonight an opportunity to come to
the microphone, the stenographer
will record. If you could give
your name and address that would be
great.

And what we would like
to do, those that have not
participated yet either through a
survey, or a stakeholder interview,
we really like to give those that
really haven't had a chance to
participate a first opportunity up
to the microphone, and we like to
be cognizant there's a room full,
and if we could maybe think about
two five minutes of time that you can
provide.

One thing we have
provided is comment cards. When
you signed in did everybody get a
comment card? It looks like this
(indicating).

So on the front and
back you can provide written comment. There's a deadline to submit that card back to Municipal Hall here by next Friday. But also too there's an online survey. So whatever works for you the best, you can provide that additional feedback. And like I said before, this PowerPoint presentation will be available on the state website, and we will leave this up for you to look at, and then if anybody has any questions or comments to where that might be at, I have my contact information here as well. I know the -- Norristown, Randall Jones, will be happy to share additional information on how to get to the website.

So again, this PowerPoint and the recording from the stenographer will also be made available on the state website.

At this time I think
the legislature has another
appointment. So he's standing
right there ready to go so -- yes,
so after -- within five minutes,
try to maintain it, and then --
again, this is our time to listen
to you to get input. What we want
to do, if you have questions, we
will be recording those questions,
and then what we would like to do
is provide a written response back
to those questions, so that
everybody's questions that you may
have, we can provide that in one
stop shop feedback, and that will
also be posted on the website as
well.

So go right ahead,
please.

SENATOR LEACH: Thank
you. I've done something horrible
to the microphone, but I'm going to
try to see if this works.

I'm going to be
uncharacteristically short
tonight -- can you hear me? Oh, my
name.

Daylin Leach,
D-a-y-l-i-n, L-e-a-c-h, state
senator.

So we have been trying
to make sure that we had come up
with a solution to deal with the
whole issue in a way that is
sustainable, in a way that is
productive for the community.
We've tried to host a number of
meetings where all these issues
were discussed.

It's a very complicated
thing, as I'm sure you know,
everything from people's jobs to
tax bases, to of course workers, to
patient welfare, to community
well-being are at stake, and so --
the other thing is remember that we
won't get really a second chance to
get this right. Whatever we do
here is going to stay done for a while.

So I am really happy to see such a great turnout. Mostly what we want to do -- at least my office, is hear from you, what you would like to see happen, what you would like to see things look like, in two, five, ten years, and hopefully do everything we can to facilitate making that happen. I am agnostic on what the community decides. Whatever that is we will do our best to help facilitate that.

So we are just here to gather information and listen to what you have to say, and hopefully, we'll come up with something that is something everyone can live with and people are generally very happy about. So that's a high bar, but we're going to do our best.
So anyway, I thank you, and I look forward to hearing your comments. Be very careful with the microphone here.

(Laughter.)

MR. TRUAX: Anybody that wishes to provide a comment this is your opportunity to provide additional input, but, again, comment cards are available too, so those that may not feel comfortable getting up in a crowded room we give you that opportunity as well.

MARK CASSELL: Good evening, my name is Mark Cassell. I am the director of suburban surface planning and schedules for SEPTA. We are the public transportation providers for the State Hospital, through bus route 90, out of Norristown Transportation Center.

I would like to see our, at least, knowledge base
validated as part of the stakeholder process for this project. I was not even aware that Michael Baker was involved in the study until I showed up here tonight. I did have a conversation with Tracey on the phone, based on our outreach to her, rather than being contacted. So I just wanted to make sure that we were included going forward. And some of the information, including the market study information, I think has relevance to our service, as we continue to provide it to the State Hospital grounds.

As has occurred over time, because of the loss of activity in some of the buildings, our ridership has diminished pretty significantly over time to the State Hospital. And the uses that would come out of the study and the development that would happen,
depending upon what direction it takes, has a significant impact on the amount of service and way that we serve the property going forward.

Specifically, as was mentioned in this market study in regards to continuing care, or life care facility, that has very different components to what's needed in terms of providing access to jobs, than the kind of work that in many cases is going on there now. The other issue for us would be the community services that are offered at the site, if they were to be relocated, that would potentially have impact on ridership as well.

So I think some additional conversation about what the various possibilities would have for service to the site are relevant. We, just like the
senator, are agnostic to what is
decided, if there are things that
come out of whatever is decided, so
we would like to have a continuing
conversation in that regard.

Thank you.

MARLA RIVERA: Good
evening. My name is Marla Rivera.
I'm a resident of East Norriton and
also a healthcare worker.

What I didn't hear this
evening was where are the
residents, patients going to go? I
know, I am a transplant from New
York, and I know what happened in
New York when many facilities
closed out or had development, and
they were displaced.

One of the discussions
that have been or going to be
addressed regarding the residents,
the patients that utilize the
services, as well as their family
members.
I'm also a family member of someone that utilizes the facility, and it has been extremely helpful to her. Where are they going in the future? Knowing that development is critical but also the need of the patients as well.

(Applause.)

KIM HENDERSON: Good evening. My name is Kim Henderson, and I am an East Norriton Township resident. I'm also a Realtor in the area, I serve on the board of a nonprofit called The A-Team, and I also use the Farm Park on a regular basis for recreation, I run there and walk there.

I just would like to ask they make sure that whatever goes forward that we take our property values into consideration and our green space into consideration.

I would love to see
either a school happen there for
maybe a trade or a medical college,
something that's going to help our
community thrive.

And I just really feel
like it's important -- I was not
part of any of the shareholder
information, but I do have a very
strong stake in the community, and
I appreciate the meeting this
evening, and I look forward to
whatever else we can do. And I
also do care about the medical
community and mental health. So I
really appreciate a strong thought
process going into this. Thank
you.

JAMES WALTERS:  James
Walters. I am a member of the EAC
Anglers, and a resident of West
Norriton Township.

I am concerned with the
impaired condition of Stoney Creek.
And what I would like to see happen
is that massive stormwater concerns be addressed. Especially from the adjacent municipalities.

    Thank you.

KEN CHRISTOVICH:  Good evening. My name is Ken Christovich, and it's spelled C-h-r-i-s-t-o-v-i-c-h. I am a 33-year resident of East Norriton Township. I shouldn't have touched the microphone. I think we're okay.

    A couple of observations I would like to make on tonight's presentation, and that it's very heavy on the things that won't fit, or are inadequate, so.

So I hope everybody goes through the presentation once, twice, three more times and try to figure out on maybe there's some flexibility there.

    I would like any consideration going forward to
consider particularly if we are looking at housing, to the gentleman's previous point, this is the fifth highest property tax for the purpose of funding education in Montgomery County.

    Housing values are not increasing in these three communities that are part of that district, for a number of reasons. Adding housing to this school district does a few things: First of all, it impacts the school district in terms of how many students we have space for. It impacts the school district in terms of what the net impact is on housing values.

    I think the Einstein Hospital campus proved to us recently, as recently as 2012, that institutional uses that don't even pay fees in lieu of taxes do not raise property values. They do not
enhance the quality of life of our neighborhoods. They do not bring taxable revenue into our communities. Anything that does not bring jobs and taxable revenue into the community with great impact -- and I'm not talking about people buying lunch at McDonald's or gasoline at the Wawa on the way in and out of to and from work. I'm talking real impactful, accountable dollars. That doesn't contribute to our situation.

And I have a comment, I suppose, and then perhaps in the further economic study we could look at that, but I heard a number that says of the 750-some-odd employees, 754 employees related to the hospital, contribute to a payroll of $70.6 million. That's $94,000 average salary for those 754 employees at the State Hospital.
And I'd just like to see where that number comes from. Because the average salary of a school teacher in this direct is around $75,000. And the numbers that we saw tonight says that the average salary for a worker at the Norristown State Hospital is $94,000, and I am just trying to make some sense out of that.

Thank you very much for your time.

G. HAYWARD SIMPSON: A couple things that I noticed from your report. The first thing is I think you can put certain types of projects in there that don't need visibility, like incubators, technical incubators, business incubators that produce jobs and bring in young talented minds, to be a little bit more creative in that space.

The other thing is you
don't need visibility to have this. So you don't need -- and you are not going to kind of run away or misuse, or over impact any additional space for those because you're looking at things that may be kind of industrial in a visible standpoint with space and room to be able to create and develop certain things, but you don't necessarily -- and it won't necessarily go unused or underutilized.

Other thing that I noticed is what you're pushing for is senior housing. That's what I got from this. So listening to things like this previously, whenever you start talking about that, that's the direction that the state wants to go to. And that's not the direction that Norristown needs the state to go to.

So I would truly, or
highly recommend that you don't push so much senior living, because I think there are spaces in places around that would be able to facilitate that. But things that can generate revenueed jobs potentially, things that create taxable property values, and not things that necessarily are related to non-prof.

I think one of the things you can also look at is some of the space that you have there maybe take those services that are there, put them in one building -- create a building and put them in one building so they don't have to go away. You're not losing jobs, you're not losing that ability, but you're creating a space where people can be housed in one. But you're also creating space that can be utilized that can create or generate jobs and et cetera.
So those are the things that I think you should look at, stay away from that -- the senior housing. I know I'm getting old -- maybe my kids might take me in at some point, who knows --

(Laughter.)

G. HAYWARD SIMPSON: -- but Norristown does not need anything else that does not generate. Anything that takes away from it is non-beneficial. And those are about the only things that I have -- oh. Jim hasn't changed, so make sure you protect the water, and make sure that the stormwater is running properly, and that you have catch basins for these things.

And the last thing, housing value in Norristown has increased. I've watched them increase, so when people say all that craziness, and you look at how
houses are selling -- they're not balloon increase like we had some years ago, but they are steadily p increasing.

(Applause.)

MARLA RIVERA: Hello.

This is Marla Rivera again. I'm here just to translate.

There are two family members that would like for me to translate their concerns.

These are...

MARIO VELAZQUEZ: My name is Mario Velazquez.

MIGUEL ROBLES: Miguel Robles.

BLANCA TELLEZ: Blanca Tellez.

MARLA RIVERA: These three individuals are members of the organization that help parents with their family members Latin and -- Latinos, and what they're asking is for you to reconsider the
fact that they currently work with children -- high-risk children in a club for soccer, and they occupy some of the spaces that you mentioned previously.

What they're asking is these children -- and that they see, and they see a maximum of 60 kids of diverse ages that participate in this sport three days a week. I would like for you to consider and to think about recreational use for these children, as we advance in this project.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

DENISSE AGURTO: My name is Denisse Agurto. So he's the person who ran the soccer club, so he is going to speak in Spanish as well.

CHRISTOPHER JARAMILLO:

(Read comments in the Spanish
Hello, my name is Theresa Lauer, L-a-u-e-r. And I am a 12 year Norristown resident.

I don't have anything prepared, but I just wanted to speak because I care about the community. I find it to be a very vibrant community. And I don't want to see any of the redevelopment benefit a few, I want it to benefit the entire community. Because it's not all about money.

The patients are important, we have enough mental illness programs on the street, like outpatient programs, there's many on my street where people have to go to outpatient programs, and they are kind of lost, they don't have a lot of assistance. So I wouldn't like to see any more of
that.

The open space is very important to the community. Like Philadelphia is going green, I think Norristown should go green, and the less we build, the better. We don't need to build everything. We don't need to do that.

Senior housing is important but I think we might -- we don't want to overload with that. We do have empty buildings that might be quite good opportunity for that also, and I don't want to see it benefit, again a few, maybe people with money, so now they have got the beautiful area and we have to walk past their houses when we go for a walk in Norristown State Park. Sorry, I don't like to speak in public, but it really is important to me.

Obviously the jobs, a lot of people raise their family,
work in Norristown in this community, their children still work there, like some of my neighbors. So I'm sure the jobs are very important to people.

So whatever you do, please consider the community. Again, I understand people want to make money, but you can make money in a sustainable way and in a long-term way that benefits everybody. Thank you. (Applause.)

MARY ELLEN MORAN: Good evening. My name is Mary Ellen Moran. I live in West Norriton Township. I just want to say as an aside I missed the West Norriton Township Meeting this evening to attend this meeting, and they are voting on some -- a rather critical ordinance in our township, but I thought the priority was to come here.
I am very anxious to see the final study findings of this state, or whatever this thing is that is doing the study. But as discussed during the briefing, a traffic impact study, you know, there -- that's a one-way street, or one-lane highway on Whitehall Road, it's a one-lane highway Sterigere Street. Norristown is quite congested in that area, down by the park, you know. I think that's a problem.

On some of your statistics of your studies that you have done, you had numbers that we couldn't see at the highest one. It would be nice to have percentages of the total population so you sort of get an idea of what people are saying. In one case you had 189 saying that they wanted the open space, and then you said there was 50 that wanted something else.
It would be sort of nice to see percentages of that value, to give the audience a better feeling of how the community responded.

You talked about senior living, also. There was some other development that was supposed to be starting at Montgomery Hospital for senior living in the -- I guess three years. I'm not sure how long Montgomery Hospital has been demolished, there has been one unit built, and not too much more. So senior development, we do have space in Montgomery Hospital. It was hard to see that building go.

I was also very happy to hear that there were children playing there. As a child, in high school, I volunteered at the State Hospital with the mental patients, and used to play tennis there myself, and I'm very glad to see that kids of the community have a
resource to do sports and, you know, use their energy in a positive and challenging way for them.

And last thing I would like for you to touch on is the environmental impact of development of Norristown State Hospital. Right now in -- near our township, and in Norristown, we have three open spaces left: Jeffersonville Golf Course, Westover Golf Course, and the State Hospital.

You know, the other areas, if you look at them aerially from the sky, they are heavily developed already, and I think we need some green space. So I thank you for your time, and your listening to me. Good night.

(Applause.)

KARA ROTHSCILD-RODE: Hello, my name is Kara Rothschild-Rode. I am a new homeowner in Norristown. I also work on the
grounds of Norristown State Hospital, but I prefer not to disclose which agency because I'm here as a citizen and not a representative for my agency.

First and foremost -- I have a few questions that I hope could possibly be addressed. First and foremost I was wondering is there any certain buildings that are going to be going untouched. I'm sure that everybody is aware of the current, or rebuilding of Building 10, in order to replace some people from Building 50 because of an issue with the ACLU, and an order against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. So there's been recent rebuilding, and I was curious what buildings go untouched, if any.

I was wondering what outreach and surveying has been done with agencies that are leasing buildings. I know that there was a
lot of information which I really appreciate, I think it is very helpful and important to know what conversations have been had with Norristown State Hospital employees, but as indicated there's hundreds of other employees that work for other agencies from these buildings. So I want to know if they were at all a part of the conversation, because I think it is important that they are.

And most importantly, I'm a therapist, so I'm kind of coming here for my clients that don't have a voice, that don't even know what is happening. And I'm wondering if there's any way to ethically involve clients in this conversation? Because I work with some people that Norristown State Hospital has been their home for a majority of their lives, and I can't foresee anywhere else they
could possibly live, for a variety of reasons.

And I don't even know the answer to that, if there is a way to ethically involve clients in the conversation, but for many people it is their home, it is all that they know. A lot of people that I serviced and a lot of people that receive services on the ground have been in the mental health system for a very long time.

That's a whole separate conversation, but I think it is really important that the general public be made aware of this, because it's not always talked about. Mental health is just recently being talked about. You know, historically, Norristown State Hospital was actually referred to, I think it's The Hospital For the Insane. Fortunately we've come a very long
way from that, but there's still a lot of stigma surrounding mental health and I think it is really important that the clients get some say in this, so I am doing what I can, by at least being a little bit of a voice for them here tonight.

Thank you very much.

(Appplause.)

BILL CALDWELL: Good afternoon. My name is Bill Caldwell. I'm a resident of Norristown, and I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to be able to speak this evening.

Number one, one of the things a number of people have said tonight has been -- a number of people questioned, I should say, is some of the stats that you gave us.

I think it would be -- perhaps behoove you guys to give a better breakdown of that. Because like all the people around I did
some quick calculations on the back
of a cell phone, and what I came up
with, with your figure of
80 percent of the people that work
at the State Hospital don't live in
East Norriton, West Norriton,
Norristown, I came up with a tax
revenue that comes in for those
three communities is about $60,000
a year, not -- I don't know about
you, but if I calculate that,
that's a -- from an average of what
people in Norristown, East
Norriton, and West Norriton pay in
property taxes, that's about ten
households that make up that. I
mean frankly that is not even
enough -- $60,000 is not enough to
keep the roads paved to and from
the hospital a year.
I mean it's -- I think
we've got to do, or one of the
things that the residents of
Norristown expect is that this
process gives us a much better
return on the investments that are
going to be made.

You know, I don't think
it's a secret to anyone in this
town, or again East or West
Norriton, that one of the things
that we need is rateable
properties -- frankly rateable
commercial properties. The burden
right now of our tax burden, you
know, property owners in Norristown
and communities, our tax burden as
the residential properties is what
bears the costs of doing all the
business that these communities
have to do.

This project, I think,
needs to focus on generating viable
commercial space and do that at
whatever it takes to do that. It's
the only really long-term solution
to either the municipality or
frankly the school district's
survival at a reasonable tax rate. We need that to be commercial. We need it to be generating income so we can operate the municipality, provide the services that everybody expects, and do it without overburdening the residents of the community. It's the only way we survive.

So I think, personally, and will always think it's incumbent frankly upon our partners, the Commonwealth, our government of the Commonwealth, frankly, to look at that very hard and not look for an easy, simple, quick fix. To make this work, make it work right, and make it work for the local community. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ANTHONY UHRICH: Anthony Uhrich, Norristown resident. As was mentioned previously, I think that if development were to occur,
one of it the priorities would be
to improve the impaired Stoney
Creek.

Second is if there are
only two forensic units in the
state I would assume that there's
an opportunity to seek out state
money in the form of grants, et cetera. Pennsylvania is a
pretty large state, so, you know, if we're taking pretty much the
whole eastern side there's got to be money available for that.

Additionally, the
native plant sale that takes place on the grounds, there are only a
few small greenhouses. I believe that that could be incredibly
improved upon, made bigger, made a lot more advertised to the public.

And, additionally, as mentioned, there's a West Norriton Township meeting now with an agenda item of using 80 minimum of native
plants in any future projects. So as it is a West Norriton/Norristown endeavor, I feel like they can work hand in hand.

And, lastly, if development were to occur, I believe it would be imperative to preserve as much open space as possible. Thank you.

SUSAN SHANNON: I didn't really prepare anything, sorry.

I'm Susan Shannon, and I work at 1210 Stanbridge Street, in Norristown. I am the executive director of HopeWorx, which is a nonprofit.

We were formerly located on the State Hospital grounds, we were in Building 6, and then Building 6 became uninhabitable, so we had to move, and we moved across the street. And we had to start paying rent.
And the work that I do is part of the mental health system here in Montgomery County -- all of Montgomery County, and it's funded by tax dollars. And now my -- by moving out the cost of my services -- the services that my agency provided went significantly higher, significantly higher.

Some of it offset, you know, I had to employ less people, some of it was offset by your tax dollars had to spend more money on me. And we are just a tiny little program. There's a lot of other places on the hospital grounds that are going to be facing similar situations. And to me I sit and think: Oh, my gosh. That's a lot of my tax dollars to relocate services off of the grounds.

But anyway, beyond that, I live in Norristown but almost everybody that works for me
does. We serve all of Montgomery County but we are very much part of the Norristown community. We participate in the community garden, we volunteer around town, we cater our parties from Norristown businesses, we go out to Norristown restaurants as a group. I mean it's not just the buying gas at Wawa, although we do that too, it's -- we really are committed citizens of Norristown.

And so it's just something that I really want people to -- my big question is: What is the plan for all the places that are on the grounds that are providing pretty efficient mental health services to our county and our state right now?

(Appause.)

KIM HENDERSON: Kim Henderson, again, from East
Norriton. I just saw on either 60 minutes or the Channel 3 morning --
the Sunday morning news about a park that was rehabilitated in
Moscow by an American developer,
and they created a space that has a philharmonic area.

I know the zoo is doing amazing things there. I don't know if they are looking to expand even further than what they are actually doing, but when I think of areas like this, I think of that live, work, play. And I also wanted to contribute that too. With this kind of park is a lot bigger, and be able to have a live, work, play area for the whole community, and to be able to bring in commerce and entertainment. I think entertainment is another thing we are kind of missing in the area.

Thank you again.

KYM RAMSEY: Good
evening. I'm Kym Ramsey, and I am an owner of Ric and Kym, LLC, which was created to establish the Willow School, a four-star quality education center. I have been in the heart of Norristown for six years. I'm also the founder and president of the newly formed Norristown Chamber of Commerce, that was established in January of 2017.

In such a sort time the Chamber has been able to attract and collaborate with over a hundred and twenty local businesses, nonprofits, community leaders and created positive outcomes for Norristown. And that's because it's based on our mission, vision and belief that Norristown is a great place for diversity, ingenuity, in which businesses and communities can come together to prosper.
So before us now, as many of you have stated, Norristown has residents, businesses, nonprofits and community leaders have an important historic opportunity. It is an opportunity that will determine and define the economic future for Norristown and, consequently, the success of all of us in future generations to come.

So tonight the Norristown Chamber of Commerce -- and I brought a small portion of our group here tonight, would like to present -- some of you have mentioned some very bold and innovative ideas for this use for the state grounds that we would like to show today. So we will do that in video form, and then verbally give summation of this innovative use that we have that benefits not just us but Norristown.
BILL CORBETT: Before we move on to this video, everybody here is here because they really care a great deal about Norristown -- Corbett, C-o-r-b-e-t-t.

COURT STENOGRAPHER: Could you use the microphone, please.

BILL CORBETT: I'm not loud enough that you can hear me? Oh, my God.

So what we want to try to get everybody to do here is take a moment and just imagine what could be. And this is a bold and audacious idea, but what I like about it is it conforms with a lot of what was said here tonight in terms of the economic development and the things that we need to do in this big parcel of wonderful opportunity left here in Norristown.

And I think we can
accomplish green space and the recreational ideas, and this great soccer team. I think we can bring in and take care of a lot of the people that are on the campus now that need the jobs. And SEPTA's going to be happy because we're going to have more people coming. But I think there was some talk about an incubator space, and creative space, and community space, the kind of space that we hear about with Philadelphia, the Point Breeze, and the Liberty sections, and the things that are going on around us, and how things get rebirth.

So when you watch this video, it's more than just a video, it's -- it's -- watch it as though it exists. And understand what that could mean to all of us that care about Norristown, all of us that work here, all of us that play
here, all of us that want to eat
here and hang here. And turn this
town into something that it needs
to be as soon as possible. And I
know we are all for that.

Norristown has a
phenomenal history and it's our
chance, right now, with this
development project, to return it
back to something that makes us the
designation town. So watch this
and dream for a minute. We could
make this happen if we stick
together and work on it.

(Whereupon, a video was
presented.)

(Applause.)

CHRIS DiPAOLO: My name
is Chris DiPaolo. I'm the owner of
Cyrten, we're a technology staffing
company located here on Airy
street.

And at Chamber we've
been having meetings over the last
several months kind of kicking around ideas, trying to figure out what would be the best integrative use for the entire campus, and we came up with several concepts that kind of drove that video. We wanted to share with the whole community.

First slide. We kind of looked at the Stoney Creek campus as the end unit for the economic livelihood for all of our surrounding area, targeting growth or knowledge in thought-based companies. Basically going after jobs that are in high demand today, and that we know will be into the next century. Jobs that are not easily outsourced overseas or automated. Adaptively reusing viable structures on the campus, or where we actually look at maker spaces, your entrepreneurial startups, different areas.
A lot of those buildings that are historically -- well, functionally obsolete are perfect for those sort of small startups. And then there are other areas where you can bring in other sorts of things.

But with that we wanted to focus on primarily the software, engineering, in the tech space robotics, automation biomedical, life sciences and research.

All of these industries have high demands right now for qualified people and they are projected to have high demand for the next -- you know, far out as we can look.

And the whole idea is that while we know the economy is cyclical, there will be a recession one day, we do not know when, but the whole idea is if we can insulate our community from the
effects of that as much as possible
this could be the engine that helps
us do that and keep those jobs
here.

Along with that it's a
fantastic space, so there's a huge
opportunity there to create great
community connections. A good part
of the community uses the State
Hospital grounds currently, but
it's really underutilized. A lot
of folks just don't know it's
there, or available for them to
use, it feels a little forboding.

So with this we can do
things like give access and more
opportunity by leveraging with the
Elmwood Park Zoo, which has seen
rebirth over the last few years.
We could leverage the unused rail
line. Connect Stoney Creek campus
to the zoo and the suburbs. That
rail line is fully active, it's
just not used. So in terms of job
creation you tie in right there to the entire SEPTA network.

Then you can leverage the Stoney Creek Greenway Plan by connecting and interweaving trails throughout the campus, to the farm park, to the creek. And it's one seamless recreation area, that travels -- the recreation travels through the entire campus.

And then create community. All right, the residents that live here have a huge stake in this. Not only economically, but just quality of life. So the idea is to create dedicated spaces within the campus that allow for folks to dine and socialize, play sports, walk or ride their bikes, and invite their friends and family to stay here.

One of the biggest things employers look at in locating a company is: Are my
people going to be happy there?
Are they going to, like, stay
there -- and not only stay there,
they want them to have a space to
be able to stay there and eat. And
so we want to try and attract those
folks and residents to mingle
together in one space, not
segregated, not at all like the
traditional office park where you
have to get in your car and drive
someplace to go get lunch, but
truly walkable and self-sustaining
community. That's what we have.
Thanks so much.

(Applause.)

BILL CORBETT: One

final comment. You know, when we
talk about --

MARY ELLEN MORAN: Your
five minutes are up.

BILL CORBETT: Pardon?

MARY ELLEN MORAN: Are
your five minutes up yet?
BILL CORBETT: I guess they are.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me real quick, Mike? Your name is Mike; right?

MR. TRUAX: Troy.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just need one thing to be understood. So when you're talking about redevelopment, you're talking about redeveloping only that which has already been developed, not affecting the green space that's already open, not into that --

MR. TRUAX: Yes, Norristown Farm Park, if that's what you're referring to --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I'm only asking because that's the same question about green space.

MR. TRUAX: Yes. That's totally off the table in terms of our focus area. It's just on the actual developed part of the
campus we're looking at.

Did others have comments, questions, that we can record? Again, what we like to do, your comments are absolutely on target in terms of what we want to hear back additionally from what we've already heard.

A lot of the information that you've already talked about, in terms of open space, or other types of uses, echo what we also heard with the surveys, but also through the stakeholder interviews and outreach that we've done. So your additional input reinforces that information for us.

What we would like to do is make sure that with the transcript -- and I know some have asked questions, we want to take the time to go through those questions and actually provide back
a comprehensive written response. 
And we'll get that out on the 
website as well.

Again, we will put the 
website up again, it's the 
Pennsylvania Department of Human 
Services Norristown State Hospital 
website. Even if you just Google 
"Norristown State Hospital," you 
will find that, as well in terms of 
the hit, the link.

We have more time, so 
please come to the mic.

TORY BRIGHT: Good 
evening. My name is Tory Bright, 
and I am the director for the 
Southeast Regional Mental Health 
Office. I also am an employee of 
the Norristown Borough for the last 
30-plus years. My office works on 
behalf of the five southeast county 
departments of mental health, those 
being Bucks, Chester, Montgomery, 
and Philadelphia. The regional
office has been in existence for over 18 years. We've worked collaboratively and on behalf of the county on special projects and on developing and supporting specialized community-based programs for those persons who have serious persistent mental illness.

Each of the five counties coordinate the system with behavioral health programs that serve their communities in promoting recovery for people who experience mental health challenges. Together as a region, we have combined resources to develop additional services and programs in the five counties, which support individuals who have clinically challenging behaviors or may have other co-occurring challenges which require specialized supports. The majority of the regional services support
individuals who come from state institutions or state hospitals.

In January of 2018, the Department of Human Services announced the agreement with Norristown Municipality to determine the future of the Norristown State Hospital property. The comments that I share this evening are specifically in response to item No. 3, which states "DHS will work with all providers currently leasing space on NHS's campus and their respective counties to development action plans by January 2020 for relocating their programs."

In May 2018 the Southeast counties, through my office, conducted a survey of all county contracted service providers on the grounds of Norristown State Hospital. A 43 question survey was sent to six provider organizations,
those being Montgomery County Emergency Services, Carelink Community Support, Circle Lodge, Resources for Human Development, Elwyn, and Horizon House.

These community providers have approximately nine distinct programs on the campus. Seven of the programs are located in Norristown Borough, while two are in West Norriton Borough. Four of the programs are contracted and funded by multiple counties, while the remaining five are contracted services for a single county.

It should also be noted that several of these programs on the campus were developed in response to the downsizing of Norristown State Hospital, and the Department of Human Services settlement terms in the ACLU lawsuit, in 2015.

Combined there's a
total capacity of 304 beds for individuals who are served at any given time among these nine programs. The total number of persons served annually range upwards between 3500 and 3800 persons. The total number of staff employed by these nine programs in a 24-hour period range between 260 and 275 staff. The individuals who are served by these programs, unlike other traditional community-based programs, do present with significant behavioral challenges.

Many of the individuals may have high-risk behaviors and require intensive clinical supports which otherwise may prohibit them from living in traditional, what we consider community-based settings. Most individuals do not need a state hospital level of care; however, they do require
specialized and sometimes secure clinical support services.

The programs have been on the ground for an average of 18.3 years, with the longest being 44 years, and the shortest being one-and-a-half years. All of the providers lease their space from the Department of General Services and are required to pay an annual amount that varies based on the square footage, which includes a one dollar per year lease, plus utility costs for the space. The total occupancy charged collectively for the nine programs is approximately $1.8 million annually. These costs paid for by county mental health departments.

With the age of the buildings obviously there comes maintenance. And all of the programs have required significant maintenance and capital
improvements over the years. The improvement expenses are typically funded by mental health department contracts. The results from our survey indicated that providers that collectively spent approximately $4.7 million over the course of the last 10 years to maintain and/or do improvement over these buildings. This does not include the recently invested taxpayer dollars of approximately $1.8 million, for the Building 9 renovation, for a recently developed program that was created in response to the Department of Human Service settlement terms from the ACLU lawsuit. These are lost taxpayer dollars, if all these programs would have to relocate.

Providers were asked what would it cost to relocate the programs? Some providers looked at the possibility of new
construction, while other providers looked at finding existing sites and renovation costs per square foot for comparable space in the community. The collective minimum costs were calculated to be roughly -- and this is a soft estimate, $75 million based on square footage needed, construction and renovation costs and probable legal fees.

This would be $75 million of Pennsylvania taxpayer dollars to support this effort. These figures are relocation costs only, they do not factor in the day-to-day operations of the program. This doesn't include the economic impact on the lost dollars of past renovations, which as I said is roughly $5 million that went into just the building improvements. Not only would this be a financial loss to the
provider, the counties' investments, but also to taxpayers since the great majority of these dollars used for these services are public taxpayer dollars.

The estimated length of time for relocation, if the providers were to find an appropriately zoned and suitable community site, would be minimally two to five years. However, the experience with all of these providers in locating residential human service related properties throughout the five-county region is often met with attitudes and barriers of "Not In My Backyard," or referred to as "NIMBY," and typically requires extensive legal battles at both state and federal levels, increasing the costs, and, unfortunately, delays in services and great burdens on the mental health system.
The significant cost to the providers, the counties, the state, the taxpayers and, more importantly, the human costs of relocating the individuals who require services is incalculable.

The ripple effect of such a move of this proportion, and the burden on the already strained human service delivery network will be felt throughout the counties and Pennsylvania mental health communities for years to come.

We also know that this will require county and state leadership, support and influence, not just to mention intensive staff hours. And finally the proposed relocation would require 100 percent new fiscal dollars to support the initiative.

If Department of Human Service moves forward with this proposed "provider exit" plan by
2020, as indicated, we collectively need to ascertain in these difficult financial times where the minimum of at least $75 million will come from? We will need to continue the vital work of the providers to ensure public safety.

We are not saying that we are not opposed to this, but we will need to have collaboration throughout. The need to identify new funding to pay for relocation and increase operational cost is a challenge that will have to be met before relocation could realistically be planned or accomplished.

In order for the counties' Departments of Mental Health to support and implement this initiative, we need to be assured that the new funds will be committed to relocate the programs and the state county government
leadership will share in the responsibility to support this initiative.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share in our comments.

(Applause.)

ABBY GRASSO: I know we are after 8:00, so I will keep comments brief but hopefully poignant. My name is Abby Grasso, G-r-a-s-s-o. I am the executive director of NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, in Montgomery County. Our office is located in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, but we do an unbelievable amount of partnerships with programming and community groups, libraries, family members, all throughout the county, Norristown being one of our main areas that we are involved with in serving families and individuals impacted by mental illness.
Norristown State has been providing services for over 140 years. And this has been a safe environment for people to get better and have the opportunity and chance to live their best life.

As shown in the findings from the survey thus far, we talked about the employees that work on the State Hospital grounds but we didn't talk about the people, and the amount of people that are served. And in talking with many of our community partners, such as Montgomery County Emergency Services, providing inpatient hospitalizations and -- inpatient -- I'm sorry guys, this is what happens at this time of night -- inpatient hospitalization and crisis stabilization, as well as the CHOP Homeless Shelter, the Circle Lodge, Elwyn programs. With the combined impact of employees
and people served, we're looking at over 5,000 people annually. It grows a little bit when you add the people that are served on the campus, and not just talk about the employees.

And the question for future planning of the hospital grounds are more than buildings or programs, it's about developed plan -- not about development plans or rebuilding community, it's really about people.

We all want to live in a wonderful environment and a wonderful community that has good economy, and good neighbors, but what a lot of people don't realize is the programs that are on Norristown State Hospital grounds right now, that have people in their bed and their program facilities right now, are providing essential programs such as housing
for homeless population. They're providing education and skills so people can live their best life, so that they can come back and be productive members of our community.

I have colleagues right now sitting in this room that have been through programming on Norristown State and they're living wonderful happy lives. And I think that's what each of us want for ourselves and for our family members.

As the independent land study is completed with input from all stakeholder groups it's imperative to think about the people going through the programming.

Often those people are misunderstood, judged, and there's a huge stigma about them being in my community. We heard it here
tonight, I heard it last year at
the community stakeholder meeting
for Norristown State Hospital
Planning, so that's still alive and
well. So we need to have education
and help communities understand
that the programs in your backyard
are helping people gain skills and
knowledge and support, so that they
can live a good healthy life.

I urge you as we make
decisions and we make transitions,
to include people. Kara, I don't
know if there's an ethical or
nonethical component to this, but
family members and people served in
Norristown State Hospital grounds
have to be involved in the planning
for transition.

As Tory mentioned,
planning is supposed to be
happening and places identified for
2020. That is two years. That is
a lot of work to be done in two
years. And tonight is about community. It's about revitalization, and it is about economy, but it's about people. And that's what we need to leave here with tonight. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. TRUAX: Are there any others that would like to provide comment?

(No audible response.)

MR. TRUAX: Last call. I really want to appreciate everybody's time, I am really impressed by the turnout tonight. I think that was mentioned up front, it really shows that you care about this. And I want you to know that we are taking this all in.

I will have to admit we did actually interview some of the patients, so I will just end with that note too. We are looking at a
variety -- every aspect of the project, so we have interviewed the tenants that we just talked about and got input. Some of those interviews actually included some of the patients to give personal testimonies about the importance of the facility and the operations there.

So all of your inputs, you know, from the development perspective, the preservation perspective, the environmental perspectives, youth recreational program perspectives, it's all in what we are assessing in moving forward with.

So just like we talked about, the transcript and the presentation will be posted on the website. I know that's hard to read but it's the www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/statehospitals/norristownstatehospital.
If you just simply Google DHS Norristown State Hospital that will take you to that website. So that's is much easier than trying to write that URL out. But once this is actually posted too you will have access.

The other thing too, the comment cards, some of you actually may have written on the comment cards, that would be great. What we ask, if you have those already written out, please leave those at the table on your way out.

If you want to take time over the weekend, and next week, that is perfectly right to do, you have two ways: Number one, there is a QR code, so if you are into technology that will take you right to that survey, and it's simply an open text box to write your comments out. Those are due as well as the return cards by next
Friday noon. If you have the cards, please return them back to Norristown Municipal Hall here, and then we give you until next Friday to complete that online survey.

Again the opportunity -- if you weren't wanting to get up in front of the crowd to speak, there's your opportunity to provide some written comment.

So with that, we appreciate your time, we hope everybody has a safe trip home, and we will keep you posted and informed as we move forward.

Thank you very much.

(At 8:12 p.m., public hearing was concluded.)