



## **VISTA 2025 Goal 1:**

***Maintain and enhance “quality of place” as a key component of economic health***

### **Goal 1 Team Meeting**

**March 16, 2018**

#### **Meeting Notes**

**Team Members Attending:** Lou Beccaria, Julie Brady, Denise Day, Beth Harper-Briglia, Claudia Hellebush, Ernie Holling, Susan Marshall, Molly Morrison

**Also Attending:** Dan Arbucias, Marybeth DiVincenzo, Bill Gladden, Susan Hamley, James Logan, Brian O’Leary, David Sciocchetti, Gary Smith

#### **Molly Morrison**

Welcomed all team members and invited everyone to introduce themselves. Requested comments on meeting notes from previous meeting. None were received. Asked Susan Hamley to provide an update on the Citadel Country Spirit USA event.

#### **Susan Hamley**

Stated that the Chester County Conference and Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) mission is to build awareness of and promote Chester County as an ideal place for visitors. Added that CCCVB has a worldwide market and a vision to become the premiere mid-Atlantic destination. Noted that attracting strategic events can draw prospects for future economic development.

Explained that Citadel Country Spirit USA and activities like it support quality of place by building awareness of quality of life opportunities in the county and building awareness of the county’s assets. Noted how visitor spending contributes to county economy. Described how recent “Tough Mudder” attracted 15,000 spectators, 89% out of Chester County, 42% out of state, and \$6.9 million in revenues.

**James Logan**

Asked about Chester County visibility entering the region and was advised that it continued to be a work in progress.

**Susan Hamley**

Explained the importance of events to building recognition of the county as a destination. Noted that for large events like the Citadel Country Spirit USA the story reaches the entire country.

Described the event as a three day weekend event with a hope that in the first year we can average 8,000 attendees per day. Noted that the performers are top tier current country western singers and well recognized up and coming performers. Expectation is that the event will sell out all of the county hotels.

**David Sciocchetti**

Asked if the county had previously held a similar event in size and scale.

**Gary Smith**

Commented that back in the 1960s-1980s we had a large country music venue, but they have been gone for 30 years.

**Susan Hamley**

Suggested that this country music festival may be able to bring that back. Noted that In Facebook, this event suddenly picked up 3000 people when it was announced.

**Marybeth DiVincenzo**

Asked about the status of a conference/event center for the county for events like this.

**David Sciocchetti**

Commented that one key issue is what type of venue is needed, noting that a conference center is not the same as an event center. Added that the Desmond can only seat around 200 – 300.

**James Logan**

Mentioned the Staples Center in Los Angeles and asked if there was a way to structure contracts for Chester County to secure event dates for a conference/event center.

**David Sciocchetti**

Commented on the results of the analysis of the proposed Coatesville velodrome as an event center noting the complex range of issues associated with such a facility including location and access, financing and competition with other venues for content.

**Susan Hamley**

Stated that a concert hall venue doesn't mix well with business conference centers.

**Ernie Hollings**

Noted that the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors has used the facility in Hershey that can handle 6,000 people, adding that they shuttle attendees to the event.

**Molly Morrison**

Asked whether when an event like Citadel Country Spirit USA is investigated, is it as a multi-year event.

**Susan Hamley**

Responded affirmatively explaining that you want to be able to build on the experience of the first year. Explained that the event has to be at the right site in terms of size of facility and access. Added that there are numerous local approvals and responses to navigate and negotiate. Noted that it is important that the event reflect the nature of the community.

Commented that in the press release for the event, we show that it's in Chester County's Brandywine Valley. Noted that we got 60,000 unique visitors in one day. Added that there are national news networks that have picked up this story all over the country.

**Dan Arbucias**

Asked about security for the event.

**Susan Hamley**

Replied that it was part of the producer's responsibility.

**James Logan**

Asked about local business involvement.

### **Susan Hamley**

Responded that all of that is handled by the event producer who understands the need for local involvement. Added that the producer will ask us for local businesses to come and sell their products. Further added that we also try to get wineries and Longwood packages along with the event.

### **Beth Harper-Briglia**

Asked who the producer of the event was.

### **Susan Hamley**

Responded that it was Allen Jacoby and Impact Entertainment. Added that there is a \$2 million talent budget noting that the headliners are at night—Alabama on Friday, Toby Keith on Saturday, and (other band – not yet announced) on Sunday.

Stated that the charitable tie-in is Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), which is Citadel’s charity of choice.

Noted that the event starts at Noon on Friday and Saturday and 1:00 PM on Sunday through to the headliners.

### **James Logan**

Asked how parking was being handled and was advised that it would be offsite.

### **David Sciocchetti**

Commented that there is a chance that this starts off like South by Southwest – it begins as a music festival and then transforms into much more.

### **Molly Morrison**

Turned the meeting to the second agenda item, the proposed Chester County update to the 2011 Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) Return On Environment report. Noted that the purpose of the original study was to measure the economic benefits of preservation and communicate those benefits to policy makers and others to help influence public policy decisions on conservation.

Stated that the original DVRPC study had a tremendous impact in helping people understand the broader range of benefits from preservation including increased property values, positive impacts on water quality, avoided medical costs, jobs, etc.

Explained that what is currently being considered is an update to that regional study focused on Chester County. Stated that a proposal from Econsult, the firm that did the

original impact calculations, had been received that indicated the county update could be done for \$17,000. Noted that the County's Conservancies have committed \$5,000 out of the \$17,000 needed to conduct this study and additional funding sources are being investigated.

Commented that this is something that we continue to prioritize noting the constant need to remind and refresh this understanding in the minds of elected officials and the electorate. Added that it would be a highly effective communications tool, because it would be Chester County-specific.

### **Ernie Hollings**

Commented that some people are afraid of conservation because they think property values will go down when it appears that the opposite happens. Asked if we can frame a better explanation of this issue for the county municipalities.

Added that the effect of salt use for road clearing by state and local governments is evolving to be a problem for our rivers and creeks.

### **Lou Beccaria**

Asked if the William Penn Foundation had been approached and was advised that they are currently concentrating on water.

### **Beth Harper-Briglia**

Stated that this would be valuable information for the county to have.

### **Molly Morrison**

Agreed, but added that it was important for the business community as well. Suggested that ideally we'd want the public funds for this effort to be matched by private funds.

### **Gary Smith**

Also agreed, commenting that collectively and symbolically raising these dollars from public and private sources to fund this program would be ideal for Chester County.

### **Lou Beccaria**

Asked if we got more money from other sources, would we be able to get more area-specific within Chester County.

### **Molly Morrison**

Responded that if the funds are available, we'd have to see what the gaps are. Added

that the original report had a great case study around the Radnor trail. Explained that the case study noted that following initial resistance, residents living near the trails now put 'for sale' signs facing the trail instead of the road. Commented that the inclusion of this issue in VISTA 2025 distinguished Chester County and was hugely significant.

**Gary Smith**

Noted that since the announcement of VISTA 2025 there has been significant turnover in elected officials. Suggested that this new study is an opportunity to introduce the new additions to this important concept.

**Beth Harper Briglia**

Commented that case studies may help with community buy in.

**Molly Morrison**

Noted the current focus is on getting the base report completed and then we can move on to case studies.

**Ernie Hollings**

Asked if the Natural Lands Trust would be the fiscal agent for the project.

**Molly Morrison**

Responded that we are not there yet, but it could be the Natural Lands Trust.

**Gary Smith**

Stated that this study reinforces how economic development and preservation are not in opposition to each other and gives us the format to talk about conservancy in an educated fashion.

**Molly Morrison**

Stated that this effort also gives Chester County the opportunity to be a leader in this arena. Noted that when the recession hit, many counties put away their open space conservation efforts, but Chester County did not.