



VISTA 2025 Goal 1:

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

Goal 1 Team Meeting

June 15, 2018

Team Members Attending: Bo Alexander, Lou Beccaria, Julie Brady, Kim Brumbaugh, Beth Harper-Briglia, Ernie Holling, Michelle Kichline, Todd Pohlig

Also Attending: Dan Arbucias, Pat Bokovitz, Bill Gladden, Susan Hamley, Karen Marshall, Brian O’Leary, David Sciocchetti, Gary Smith

Michelle Kichline

Opened meeting with welcome and introductions. Noted Stoneleigh conflict for Molly Morrison. Requested comments on meeting notes from previous meeting. None received.

Commented on roles of urban areas like Kennett in maintaining balance of progress and preservation per VISTA 2025. Noted county assistance with Kennett economic development strategy. Introduced Mary Hutchins.

Mary Hutchins

Introduced Historic Kennett Square as a non-profit organization, founded in 1986 and focused on community and economic development in Kennett Square utilizing the Main Street model. Introduced Nate Echevarria.

Nate Echevarria

Explained that he was hired to implement the recently completed economic development strategy and has been on the job for 5 months.

Mary Hutchins

Provided three minute video giving a taste of Kennett Square using a Memorial Day celebration narrated by Clark Green. Commented that Kennett was lucky to have people in town like Clark Green who can tell our story. Added that the Congress for New Urbanism states that telling your own story is key, noting that if we don't tell our story, someone else will.

Commented that Kennett is fun, cool, and where you want to be. Noted that we have a farmer's market, held year round in the center of town. Added that Third Thursdays are our newest event running from May to September where we close the streets and bring out tables onto the sidewalk and street, creating a great experience for the kids and community. Noted other festivals are the Winterfest and Brewfest, which are our largest fundraising activities for the year, helping to support a \$600,000 annual budget.

Commented on new additions to the community including Braeloch Brewing and Kennett Brewing Company as well as the pending arrival of Trail Creek Outfitters. Explained that we promote shopping small at local businesses to keep the economy flowing within the town.

Added that we also work with Longwood Gardens (1.5 million annual visitors) to try to pull them into Kennett Square (Half day at Longwood and Half at Kennett promotion), including a Christmastime shuttle between the two locations.

Nate Echevarria

Reported that in 2014, utilizing County Vision Partnership Planning (VPP) grant funds, a consultant team was selected and charged with developing a joint economic development strategy for both Kennett Square Borough and Kennett Township. Explained that the two communities wanted to make sure they were growing responsibly.

Noted that the partners in funding this effort included Kennett Square Borough, Kennett Township, Longwood Gardens, Genesis, Chester County Planning Commission and Historic Kennett Square.

Explained that the study was a market driven analysis identifying new and unique issues, challenges, opportunities, etc. that was conducted over 18 months. The study identified areas within the borough and township that have development potential but noted that each has challenges and needed a distinct vision. It resulted in multiple prescribed areas of focus – including: Ways Lane, Millers Hill, State Street, Cypress Street, the NVF site and Birch Street.

Mary Hutchins

Commented that arrival of Victory Brewing put a stake in the ground indicating that developers were interested in Kennett, adding that some of the residential units in that overall project sold

for \$330,000 up to \$700,000. Noted that a more recent development, Cannery Row, is a mixed-use project with 12 apartments and 20,000 square feet of office which sits in both the borough and the township. Added that to facilitate that development an agreement was reached that the developer had to only go through the Borough to build the structure.

Indicated that the latest challenge is 23 acres that comprise the former NVF site. Commented that development of this site is critical as it will set the tone for development in that area.

Nate Echevarria

Added that the NVF site that is a brownfield that is currently zoned industrial that will need to go through a public process to be rezoned.

Mary Hutchins

Noted that the VPP grant used for the study was the first multi-municipal economic development study in Chester County.

Nate Echevarria

Commented that the next step is to bring on a consultant to look at our zoning and determine where our economic development goals and our zoning, etc. are not aligned. Added that a second VPP grant request to update the regulatory environment was in the works. Suggested that some form of overlay district was a possible approach.

Also explained that his position was funded by Kennett Square Borough and Kennett Township for a three year period. Noted the importance of open communication between all of the parties as a key to success.

Susan Hamley

Asked if there was any connection between Liberty Street and State Street to make a more connected downtown.

Nate Echevarria

Responded that the issue is being looked at but has numerous challenges including sidewalks, streetscapes, parking, mixed-use buildings, etc.

Brian O'Leary

Asked about consideration for affordable housing. Commented that reviewing zoning provided an opportunity to provide bonuses for affordable housing.

Nate Echevarria

Noted that they were still at the beginning of their regulatory review but that this was a topic of discussion.

Mary Hutchins

Added that there is a housing task force in Kennett that takes an active role in this type of development.

Lou Beccaria

Commented that Kennett is in a good position now because you have leverage with the developers.

Bo Alexander

Asked about the brownfield area and its industrial zoning.

Nate Echevarria

Indicated that the vision for the area was a mixed use residential development.

Todd Pohlig

Commented that having the tools in place is critical as developers want a clear set of ground rules. Added that if there was a desire for workforce housing, bonuses were helpful.

David Sciocchetti

Commented that walkable downtowns were becoming targets for co-working facilities and small business incubators.

Nate Echevarria

Responded that a co-working space called Philter had just opened in the Borough and another was looking.

Pat Bokovitz

Asked how much retail was enough to maintain the downtown character.

Mary Hutchins

Responded that they were actively working to maintain retail in the downtown area.

Nate Echevarria

Added that there was not enough inventory for the demand, commenting that vacant storefronts don't stay vacant long. Noted that high-end boutiques are becoming more popular in Kennett.

Michelle Kichline

Transitioned to the next agenda item by noting the deep historical roots of Chester County and introduced Karen Marshall, County Heritage Preservation Coordinator

Karen Marshall

Explained that the Historic Preservation Network is all about the nuts and bolts of how preservation happens. Noted the challenge of keeping a large volume of historic structures standing but added that 61 of the 73 municipalities in Chester County have some form of historic resource protection. Added that we are fortunate to have so many historic resources—second most in PA after Philadelphia

Explained that Heritage tourism is the practice of traveling to experience historic and cultural attractions to learn about a community's past in an enjoyable and informative way. Added that Heritage tourists tend to spend more money and stay longer than traditional tourists. Noted that Heritage tourists tend to seek more authenticity, rather than manufactured rivals (Disney). Adding that when visitors come to the Philadelphia area, they are seeking an authentic heritage experience. Stated that historic spending in Pennsylvania is a \$1 billion plus industry with more than 32 million visitors.

Commented on several featured attractions of Chester County like the Iron and Steel Heritage Tours program, explaining that no region in the US has more connections to the history of the iron and steel industries. Explained the Forges to Furnaces promotion noting that there are many Pennsylvania forges and furnaces along Rt. 30 dating back to the 18th century. Added that, "You can't have heritage tourism if you can't touch it." Commented that in heritage districts, the key is to keep them authentic without manufacturing different districts.

Described the Town Tours and Village Walks program that honors innovation and industry in Chester County that is put on by locals and attracts 2,500 participants annually. Noted that it focuses on different topics every year.

Noted one of the major County attractions is the 35,000 acre Brandywine Battlefield. Commented that with the opening of the Museum of the American Revolution in 2017, we try to link our activities and programs with them.

Also discussed the Kennett Underground Railroad Center (KURC) that highlights multiple sites in the county that were part of the Underground Railroad network. Added that the KURC is a part of the Harriet Tubman National Scenic Byway.

Gary Smith

Asked about cooperation with boroughs and property owners to preserve these properties.

Karen Marshall

Indicated that the Historic Preservation Network provides technical assistance to encourage boards to work with property owners to find a balance for historic preservation. Added that the goal is to seek to avoid permanent changes to the character of historic structures. Stated that that county effort seeks to advocate and advise and is a proponent of carrots, not sticks, to incentivize people to protect their history.

Susan Hamley

Asked about efforts to enhance the Brandywine Battlefield.

Karen Marshall

Responded that the opening of the museum in Philadelphia helped out the Brandywine Battlefield task force to enhance the historic record, which is encouraging the park associates. Added that some of the geographic locations are on private lands, and we are working with them to open up their properties for educational purposes.

David Sciocchetti

Commented on VISTA 2025 Goal 4 team review of recent Chester County innovation history (past 50 years)

Karen Marshall

Responded that 20th Century history is important but that it is difficult to get our communities to understand that importance. Offered to assist with the Goal 4 Team effort.

Michelle Kichline

Noted the importance of telling the American story written by our ancestors.

Meeting was adjourned