

Hello! Welcome to the November edition of the **Washington Township's Highlands Plan Conformance Report**. Over the past month we have seen an encouraging increase in interest towards the Plan Conformance process. Both township residents and local officials are beginning to recognize the potential benefits behind plan conformance and how a cooperative approach can ensure long-term economic, environmental, and social viability for Washington Township and the surrounding region.

Since our last report in October the township's **Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI)** has nearly reached completion. The Environmental Commission had several comments/corrections on the current draft. We compiled and forwarded their feedback to the Highlands Council for review and eventual inclusion into the final ERI product. Due to grant funding limitations and the ERI's informational (not regulatory) scope corrections will be added as an appendix to the adopted ERI document. A link will be posted to the township website providing a detailed background on the Environmental Commission's comments and concerns.

Project Planner Angela Clerico gave a second public presentation concerning the revised ERI at our November 14th **Land-Use Board (LUB)** meeting. Most questions from members of the LUB touched on the same concerns raised by the Environmental Commission. As stated above; comments/concerns from both entities will be made available in a separate document to be posted on the Washington Township municipal website. The ERI now goes back before the Environmental Commission for public adoption. An exact date to meet is TBA. The LUB seemed interested in work completed so far for plan conformance. As a result, two LUB members, Joel Schnetzer and Marilyn Sendell were appointed liaisons to the plan conformance process. These appointments make sense because nearly all plan conformance tasks fall under jurisdiction of the LUB.

After meeting with the LUB and having discussions with their appointed Highlands liaisons we have come to a collective decision on the proper course of action. Originally our focus following ERI adoption leaned towards the task of **Conceptual Centers Designation Planning**. This task is defined in the October report. However, before we entertain any discussion on appropriately balancing future growth and development with environmental conservation, attention may shift towards **farmland preservation & Ag retention**. Farmland is one of Washington Township's greatest assets, yet a comprehensive municipal FPP does not exist. This has become a top priority. We must develop a FPP which not only preserves farmland in the township, but fosters agricultural viability as a local economic resource. Preliminary work is underway to identify all farmland parcels and their property owners. Public input, especially from those involved in the local Ag industry, is and will be **strongly encouraged** throughout.

Thank you for taking time to review our November report! As we continue moving forward in the plan conformance process I encourage anyone with a vested interest, especially in FPP/Ag Retention, to not hesitate and please contact the Township Administrator or Administrative Assistant with any ideas, questions or concerns you may have. Have a wonderful day!

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