



June 3, 2022

Press Release

Questions have been posed to Malvern Borough regarding the proposed pump track. This statement is intended to provide background for the project and to give a brief summary of a process that has been going on for several years.

In September of 2001, Malvern Borough Council granted a conservation easement to the Willistown Conservation Trust to permanently preserve 38.2 acres of land now known as "Randolph Woods". This land is a portion of the "Waterworks" land that served as the source for the Borough's drinking water for decades. Another portion of that property had previously been transferred to the Malvern Fire Company, another portion is used as the Public Works facility, and another small portion is leased to Comcast. The small parcel being developed for an active recreation use had previously been leased to the owner of a tree nursery. When it reverted back to the Borough's control, after construction of the adjacent fire station and access drive, the depressed area from where the nursery stock had been removed was gradually overtaken by invasive species of plants, including the Spotted Lantern Fly host *Ailanthus altissima*; trash and dumped construction debris. It is an isolated fragment of mixed vegetation, in a busy commercial, residential and institutional area.

In contrast, the 38.2 acres comprising the conserved Randolph Woods area is mature, largely native woodlands that is adjacent to another extensive wooded area on the Malvern Retreat Property. Together, these woodlands plus the woodlands on the Paoli Battlefield tract are extraordinary for an urban location. As stated in the draft Comprehensive Plan "Some of these woodland blocks are significant enough to contain interior woodland (areas inside of a buffer 300' from the woodland edge.) These interior woodlands are significant in that they tend to harbor plant and animal communities that are threatened by disturbance. These areas also tend to be richer, have a higher biodiversity, and are less impacted by invasive species that can take advantage of conditions found along woodland edges."

As part of the Randolph Woods planning process, concerns arose about damage and disturbance to the interior woodlands and wetlands that had resulted from active use of mountain bikes and the creation of inappropriately graded trails. Recognizing that the residents of the Borough should be afforded a range of recreational activities while preserving the most valuable natural resources, the pump track was proposed. After a lengthy analysis with input from many constituencies, the location was chosen. Of importance, the selected parcel is already owned by the Borough so no additional taxpayer funds will be spent for acquisition. In addition the proposed project has received support from Chester County in the form of grant funding to help the Borough fulfill its obligation under state law to provide recreational opportunities for its residents.

Space for active recreation uses in the 1.3 square mile Borough is limited. There is no other portion of the former Waterworks parcel that is suited to the use, either because of the existing uses, topography or the conservation easement. The entire Paoli Battlefield property, including the portion adjacent to Warren Avenue and Quann Park, is also deed restricted against active recreation use. The funding to buy the Battlefield property from Malvern Preparatory School including County, Commonwealth and federal monies, was expressly conditioned upon those restrictions. The Malvern Memorial Grounds, which already includes ballfields and tennis courts, is privately

owned, as is the Memorial Cabin property. And finally, it again should be emphasized that the selected location is not a woodlands of high quality and is, rather, a successional “edge” area that has been taken over by invasive plants and has been the site of trash and debris dumping.

In summary, Dr. Amy Finkbiner, president of Borough Council stated that “Borough Council designated the pump track property as such after a long process and is confident that the interests of all Borough inhabitants, human and otherwise, are being appropriately balanced. The questions being brought forward today have been asked and answered in multiple public meetings, and minutes of those meetings, as well as the Randolph Woods Master Plan, are available for viewing and copying.”

###