

Buckingham Township Update on the No Warehouse Committee Land Swap Proposal

No Warehouse Group Land Swap Proposal does not add open space acreage and would cost Buckingham Township taxpayers millions of dollars to move the development one lot away

The Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors recently announced that they have secured J.G. Petrucci's agreement to a Stipulation that will withdraw the warehouse use proposal in favor of a limited residential development of the land. J.G. Petrucci has agreed to the Stipulation and we are waiting on the No Warehouse Group to sign so we can bring a permanent end to the warehouse plan.

As the Township was making the announcement of this win for the community, the No Warehouse Group announced that they had secured an alternative proposal from the developer JG Petrucci, which includes a land swap and recreational upgrades. On the surface, their proposal of open space numbers and park upgrades may sound like a great idea for the community, but they didn't include the details. Most importantly they did not disclose that they hadn't secured the developers' approval of the land swap and asked for recreational upgrades. Even more egregious is the omission that the land swap proposal requires the Township to pay fair market value to the Airport Authority for the parcel we jointly own and would cost Buckingham Township residents millions of dollars for land that is already open space.

The land swap proposal says that it would enable a total 94 acres of open space; 26 acres in the stipulation and an additional 68 acres. What it doesn't tell you is the 68 acres are already preserved from development and owned jointly by the Township and the Airport Authority. The total open space of the two properties under the current stipulation also totals 94 acres of open space with the 26 acres of proposed open space on the DiGirolamo tract and the existing 68 acres of open space property that they want to land swap.

The Land Swap

Specifically, the land swap proposal suggests that instead of J.G. Petrucci building the homes on the DiGirolomo Tract, they build them on the 68 acre open space parcel adjacent to the DiGirolamo tract, jointly owned by Buckingham Township and the Airport Authority. The land swap proposal requires that Buckingham Township purchase the Airport Authority portion of our shared 68 acre property at fair market value and give it to J.G. Petrucci so that he can build homes on a portion of the property and then the Township can preserve the rest. Fair market value of even half of the 68 acre parcel would be millions of dollars that the Township would have to pay the Authority. Under the land swap J.G. Petrucci would then give the Township the adjacent 57acre DiGirolomo property and the portion of the 68 acre that they are not building on estimated at 35 acres. Essentially, the township would be buying land for a developer.

When the Township and the Airport Authority first acquired this 68 acre tract it was taken out of development. In fact, the intent of the Township and the Authority when acquiring the property was that the majority of the property would be “maintained for the benefits of the citizens of Buckingham Township and the Airport as open space, farmland, sports fields, recreational areas and/or spray fields or drip irrigation for the groundwater recharge of treated wastewater”. For almost twenty-three years the parcel has been open and farmed.

Potentially paying millions of dollars to purchase the Airport Authority’s interest in the property merely to move the homes to the adjacent parcel with no increase in the ultimate open space acreage when the developer JG Petrucci has already committed to building homes and preserving 26 acres on the DiGirolamo tract doesn’t make fiscal sense to the Township.

The Park Upgrades

The proposal also includes park upgrades of four pickleball courts and a splash pad at George M Bush Park presumably paid for by JG Petrucci.

The developer J.G Petrucci, like all developers in Buckingham Township under Township ordinances, must either build park amenities or pay a recreation fee to the Township to cover park improvements. The recreation fee is set by fee schedule each year and calculated per building lot. The fees collected are directed to the Park Fund for park improvements.

Park and recreation improvements or the collection of the recreation fees are typically discussed at the township public meetings when the project is being reviewed. The Township, with input from all the public, can consider all required recreational contributions including the requested pickleball courts and splashpad for appropriateness for George M Bush Park when determining the developer’s recreation contribution as the plan is reviewed during the land development process.