



Unofficial Recap of the
Edgmont Township Planning Commission Special Meeting
September 20, 2021

Edgmont Township Introduction

- 1) **Chip Miller, Chairman of the Planning Commission, introduced the Edgmont Township Planning Commission, Assistant Solicitor, Planning Consultant, Civil Engineering Consultant, Traffic Consultant, Manager and Assistant Manager.**
 - a) The Planning Commission members are all volunteers. It will make a careful and critical exam of the new elementary school after the district submits the proposal. The Committee can make a recommendation for or against a proposal or choose to not make any recommendation. The final decision is made by the Board of Supervisors.
 - b) The submission process has not yet officially begun. RTMSD had a public meeting on 6/29/21 to present their initial concept for the school and ask for resident input. The purpose of tonight's meeting is for RTMSD present the changes that they made as a result and to solicit additional public input. The plan will continue to be refined going forward before and probably after its official submission to the township at some point in the future. No decisions will be made at tonight's meeting.
- 2) **Robert Jefferson, Assistant Solicitor to the PC, explained the general process of a Zoning Amendment.**
 - a) The two parcels on Middletown Road are in the R-1 Rural Residential and Agricultural Zoning District. School use is not permitted within the R-1 district. Accordingly, RTMSD will be proposing a Zoning Ordinance Amendment at some point in the future.
 - i) RTMSD is permitted by law to request a zoning amendment.
 - ii) Only the Board of Supervisors (BOS) have the power to amend the zoning.
 - iii) The Zoning Ordinance Amendment process follows multiple steps in accordance with Municipal Code and statewide law.
 - (1) Proposed use must be consistent with township zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinances and must be consistent with the township comprehensive plan.
 - (2) Before voting, the BOS will hold a public meeting that has been advertised in accordance with the law. The proposed amendment will also have to be submitted to the Delco Planning Committee.

- b) Tonight's meeting is an opportunity to dispel rumors and receive feedback. No formal decisions will be made tonight.
- 3) **Tom Comitta, Edgmont Planning Consultant, explained that most of the Zoning Amendment proposals over the past 40 years have been modified in some way.**
 - a) Conditional Uses are permitted in Article 6 of the township planning code, meaning that specific uses are subject to Explicit Standards and Criteria. In other words, when RTMSD submits a formal application for a zoning amendment, the Planning Commission will examine it to determine what might be missing in order to ensure that the land use is as good as it can be.
- 4) **Chip Miller closed by explaining that tonight's meeting will allow the school district to get an understanding of what the Planning Commission wants ahead of time before they put together their formal plan.**

School District Presentation of Proposed Elementary School

The RTMSD presentation will be available at <https://www.roomtolearnroomtogrow.org/resources>

- 1) **Introduction of RTMSD Team**, including representatives from ICS, Phil Solomon (Program Manager), Schrader Group (Architect), Houtman (Civil Engineer), and RTMSD Solicitor
- 2) **Why do we need a new building?**
 - a) In a 2016 study put together by the district, enrollment was projected to grow by 20% over several years. The District has already utilized all flex space in existing schools.
 - b) The Administration recommended and the Board approved a new Elementary School.
- 3) **Process to Date**
 - a) In 2016 RTMSD began the process of determining how to best account for growing enrollment in the district. Over the past 5 years, this process has included enrollment, demographic and capacity studies, community input, projections, and facility evaluations.
 - b) *[Connect Edgmont Note: RTMSD also announced their intention to build a school in Edgmont at a location to be named later at two public meetings held in March 2020.]*
 - c) From Spring to Fall 2020 ICS (Program Manager) helped to determine that we need more space in a whole new building.
 - i) Neighborhood school (not a mega elementary school with 2000 kids)
 - ii) Small class size, keep existing grade configuration
 - d) Visit <https://www.roomtolearnroomtogrow.org/process> for an in-depth review of the process, plan and next steps.
- 4) **Site Selection**
 - a) Cost, location, size, site attributes and transportation impact were considered.
 - b) 23 sites were vetted across Edgmont Township.

- c) Why did the District decide on Edgmont?
 - i) All municipalities in the district except Edgmont have an Elementary School.
 - ii) All existing Elementary Schools are south of Route 1.
 - iii) Several housing developments have been built in Edgmont over the last several years.
 - iv) Young families with children are moving to Edgmont.
 - v) Edgmont kids are currently bussed outside of Edgmont, up to 45 minutes on the bus each way.
- d) 1501 Middletown Road: both parcels were needed because the Church property alone was not big enough.

5) Design Process to Date

- a) The ongoing design process and preliminary site layout takes resident concerns from the June 29th public meeting into account (see next section).
- b) Considering green energy:
 - i) Ground Source Heat Pump (geothermal) heating and cooling
 - ii) Solar Panels

6) Address Resident Concerns from June 29th Meeting

- a) Building looks too modern
 - i) Schrader Group presented three new conceptual designs of the exterior of the school that have been adjusted following resident feedback.
 - (1) Brick replaced with stone to match local buildings
 - (2) White entry sign with stone
 - (3) Bring scale of gym down slightly
 - (4) Possible gable roof on right side and/or pitched roof like a barn
 - (5) Big berm on right (east) side with trees on top for visual buffering
- b) Traffic and speeding cars on Rt. 352
 - i) A full traffic study is being performed for the site. The study will observe and collect vehicle movement data.
 - ii) The Township and RTMSD both want traffic calming.
 - (1) Bike lane in shoulder of Rt. 352. This goal is stated by the Township in the Comprehensive Plan.
 - (2) Traffic light at main entrance
 - (3) 15 MPH school zone
 - iii) Parents and busses are already using Rt. 352, they are just continuing past this location to get to school outside of Edgmont.
 - iv) The Edgmont location will reduce the amount of time that busses need to travel on the roads.

c) On site sewer or public sewer

- i) Public sewers are not available at this site. RTM's team is working on pricing out extending public sewer to see if it is an option, but the distance needed to extend existing sewers is >3 miles so it will be a significant cost.
- ii) On-site sewer (septic) is expected to work for this site. Years ago perk tests were done the parcel and the ground is still virgin so there's no reason why the ground would not pass a perk test now.
- iii) Septic requirement is for one field plus an additional back up field, so that's how the site is being designed now.

d) Noise

- i) Shrader Group presented the results of a noise test performed at Rose Tree Elementary School.
 - (1) A map showed multiple decibel (dB) measurements at varying distances during pickup, drop off and recess.
 - (2) At distances exceeding 150-200 feet, additional noise from children added minimal dB to existing ambient noise.
- ii) All plans for the Edgmont site take into account leaving as much greenery and trees as possible for noise and visual buffers.
 - (1) On the western side of the property existing woodlands will be left intact.
 - (2) On the eastern side of the property existing hedgerows and 25-50 feet of natural vegetation will be left intact. A large berm will also be installed.

e) Sports field and lighting spillover

- i) The preliminary site plan includes one field. This field is for field day, gym class, etc. and has no benches, no poles, no PA system and no lighting. The district anticipates outside group use of the field by township residents.
- ii) The only lighting on the property will be parking and security lighting.
 - (1) Parking lot lighting will be 16 foot poles with LED downlighting (very little spillover)
 - (2) Security lighting will be on the exterior perimeter of the building and will also be downlighting.

f) Existing trees

- i) The plan is to leave as much of the existing woods as possible. Some trees will need to be taken down for septic and the rear stormwater basin which discharges into a separate waterway.
- ii) The plan includes using the existing woodlands as a walking path for school children and as an outdoor classroom.

g) Buffering, site lines and deer

- i) The district will work with the township to determine the types of trees that are best suited for buffering (deer-resistant, non-deciduous) on the edges of the property and the berm discussed above.

7) Summation

- a) 181 children are currently bussed out of Edgmont to attend other public RTMSD elementary schools.
- b) The School District wants the new elementary school to be an asset to Edgmont Township.

Public Comment

Note: We have included public comments in this Unofficial Recap in an effort to accurately describe what occurred at the meeting, regardless of validity. Please consult the official Edgmont Township Meeting Minutes for detailed accounts of every resident's comments, including their name and address.

1) Approximately 18 residents of the school district offered public comment.

- a) 16 commenters were Edgmont Township residents, 8 of whom were residents of Middletown Road (Rt. 352).
- b) 16 commenters voiced concerns or mixed feelings about the school; 2 commenters spoke exclusively in support of the school.

2) Public concerns about the school included:

a) Process

- i) No mass notification of tonight's meeting
- ii) Transparency: What's going on behind the scenes between the district and the township?
 - (1) Township representatives confirmed that there has been no formal application. The township has Codes which the district has been going through. This is where the township requirements for buffering, sewer, septic, etc. exist.
 - (2) Tom Comitta from the Township confirmed that a site walk occurred with a certified arborist from Comitta's firm walking the site with RTMSD reps to evaluate the existing trees. They were just looking at vegetation, nothing else.
- iii) How has the district factored in kids who will go to private schools in demographic studies? How many students will be at this school?

b) Location

- i) School and location are not welcome; will negatively impact home prices
- ii) This is Edgmont, we want R-1, 2 acre lots with natural beauty. Find a different, less invasive site.
- iii) Why can't the school be at Elwyn/Sleighton site?

c) Traffic and Safety on Rt. 352 and surrounding roads

- i) Potential changes to the road that will make it larger or more like a highway.
- ii) A 15 MPH school zone will create more traffic than the Bates Hotel.

- iii) Do not want traffic lights.
- iv) A bike lane on 352 is a bad idea.
- v) Potentially only use green transportation? No parent pickup allowed except in emergencies?
- d) Design
 - i) Redesign of campus needs more work
 - ii) Add parking near the field.
- e) Geothermal Heating
 - i) Cost, Safety
 - ii) Not sustainable. What if it damages the aquifer? Will people along the route be required to tie into the public water system?
- f) Wells/Water
 - i) How will the school impact wells?
- g) Septic/Sewer
 - i) If public sewer comes in, will everyone along the route be required to tie in?
 - ii) What if our septic systems are affected?
- h) Noise of children
- i) Pipeline
 - i) Where exactly are the pipelines? What are they carrying?
 - (1) *RTMSD representatives said they would put together a map showing where the Mariner I and II and Texas Eastern pipelines are in relation to the school site and would verify exactly what each pipeline is carrying.*
 - ii) No safety plan for the pipeline. No evacuation plan.
- j) Bus Depot and Fuel Storage
 - i) *The district representatives confirmed during Q&A that there will be NO bus depot and NO administration building. The site is "just a school."*

3) Positive public comments about the school included:

- a) Will be nice to have a school close to home
- b) Thank you for redesign and providing acoustical and visual barriers
- c) Rather see a cute elementary school than a Toll Brothers debacle
- d) Will help mitigate overcrowding at Glenwood ES
- e) Will eliminate the long bus rides to Glenwood ES
- f) Will feel proud to see an Edgmont Elementary flag at Penncrest HS graduation
- g) Edgmont neighborhoods in the vicinity of the proposed school site are experiencing turnover with young families moving in; Glenwood is too far away.