

The Bedford Township Master Plan has been cited several times in reference to the recent request by Jon Whitman to re-zone his property. Even the township planning consultants, Wade Trim, have based most of their recommendations concerning the re-zoning of the Whitman property on the "Bedford Township Master Plan". I would like to relate my experiences while serving as a member of the Bedford Township Master Plan Committee.

Back in the late 1990's, my husband and I were very excited to join the "Master Plan Committee" for Bedford Township. There were open meetings inviting any citizen who was interested. At our first meeting, we were given large sheets of paper with Bedford Township displayed on it with property division lines. The lines represented the ownership of parcels in the township. We were broken into groups of 5-6 people with a total of 4 groups. Each group was given a set of markers and told to color in broad areas on our maps where we would like to see residential, commercial, manufacturing, farmland, and green space (or parks).

After touring the new town of Celebration in Florida, I had some really good ideas for what a functional town should look like. Our group circled the three main downtown areas of Samaria, Lambertville, and Temperance and marked them "Town Centers". We created walking/bike paths connecting the town centers, added in general areas for commercial and manufacturing and continued creating our "New Bedford Master Plan".

A lot of groups were very confused in creating the new maps. The company conducting the meetings stressed not to be hung up on specific parcels, that this was a general overview of our township. The next meeting, each parcel in the township was color-coded on an overhead projector image to represent the type of usage each parcel would have. People were upset when an area they lived in wasn't what they wanted. The company conducting the meetings seemed very frustrated at the citizens for being so "hung up" on certain parcels.

Specifically, I remember the argument amongst groups about the corner of Lewis and Sterns. With the general Lewis Avenue area shaded to be commercial, a couple of residents threw a fit about this and wanted it "green space". Most of us argued that the whole area was more fit to be commercial with the four lane road through that area, commercial would be more appropriate.

After several meetings and a lot of arguing and confusion, I noticed something strange. What was originally shaded in the color to represent a commercial area had been changed by the final meeting to be "green space". That area was the corner of Lewis and Sterns. I am not sure who changed it, but it was changed between our meeting and the final product. I would not say the current Master Plan is perfect or reflects the total "vision" of what the Master Plan Committee agreed upon.

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This letter was read at the Bedford Township Planning Commission meeting on April 27, 2011 during the public hearing concerning the re-zoning of the Whitman Property.