July 23, 2009

Dear Resident:

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has advised the Township that the Hershey Mill Dam, located at Greenhill Road and Hershey Mill Road, does not meet their current requirements. Their concern is that during a major rainfall event the dam could overtop and possibly fail.

The Township Engineer has developed and estimated the cost for three alternatives to correct this condition. Two of them involve the creation of a secondary spillway that would allow the water to safely pass the dam and the third alternative is breaching the dam. The following is a summary of each alternative.

Alternative 1 would require the construction of secondary concrete spillway that would extend eastward from the current spillway for distance of 200 feet. The cost for this option was estimated at $260,000.

Alternative 2 would require the installation of construction of an articulated concrete block secondary spillway that would extend eastward from the current spillway for distance of 200 feet. The articulated concrete blocks would be connected with cables to prevent them from moving when the secondary spillway was in use. The open areas of the blocks would be filled with dirt and seeded. After the grass becomes fully established the blocks would no longer be visible. The cost for this option was estimated to be $280,000.

As of this date the Township has not been able to locate any grant or funding for either of the spillway alternatives.

Alternative 3 would involve breeching the dam and re-establishing the stream channels above the dam. The entire dam would not be removed and the breech would be done in such a manner as to make it look like the dam had failed. While the trees and shrubs in the immediate area of the breech would be removed, those further away from the breech would remain. The cost for this option was estimated to be $145,000.

In June of this year the Township was notified that it had been awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Conservation Resource Service (NRCS) thru their Emergency Watershed Protection- Floodplain Easement program. The NRCS grant would provide all of the funding for the engineering, permitting, and other work necessary to breach the dam and restore the floodplain above the dam to its natural state. There would be no cost to the Township.

Unfortunately under this program funds are not able to be spent on upgrading or the rehabilitation of a dam. The intent of the program is to return floodplain areas to their natural form and function.

The following is an excerpt from the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement webpage that outlines the purpose of the program.

Restoration of the Floodplain
The easement provides NRCS with the authority to fully restore and enhance the floodplain's functions and values to natural conditions to the greatest extent practicable. NRCS may pay up to 100 percent of the restoration costs. NRCS actively restores the natural features and characteristics of the floodplain through re-creating the topographic diversity, increasing the duration of inundation and saturation, and providing for the re-establishment of native vegetation.

The NRCS grant is funded by the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the construction must be completed by October 1, 2010. In order to meet this deadline the Board of Supervisors must make the decision on whether or not to accept the NRCS grant at their meeting on August 18, 2009.

In accordance with Township policy this letter is being sent to all property owners within 1,000 feet of the Hershey Mill Dam to let you know this matter will be on the agenda for the Board of Supervisors formal meeting on August 18, 2009 at 8:00 pm the Township Building.

There is information on the Hershey Mill Dam at the "For Your Information" section of Township Web Page (www.eastgoshen.org). Please give me a call at 610-692-7171 or e-mail me at rsmith@eastgoshen.org if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Louis F. Smith, Jr.
Township Manager

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