

PRESS RELEASE

FROM THE DESK OF MAYOR KENNETH T. PALMER

JUNE 20, 2016

HERITAGE MINERALS PLANS CONTINUE TO EVOLVE

As you know, Manchester Township has been exploring development alternatives on the Heritage Mineral Tract. Recently, the Township Council passed Ordinance 16-022, approving a Redevelopment Plan that conceptualized a “Town Center” project. I supported the Council’s decision to approve the concept because I believe the manner in which the Heritage Minerals Tract is developed is the single most important issue affecting Manchester Township’s economic future. However, as I have repeatedly and publicly stated, neither I nor the Town Council were in favor of 6,543 units. That much development would never be in Manchester’s best interests. We agreed to the Redevelopment Plan in order to start the process of vetting out a possible plan that was “right” for Manchester Township.

As promised, since the Council’s approval of the Redevelopment Plan, we have sought input from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). They have indicated development beyond the 2004 settlement agreement’s 1,000 acre “footprint” would be extremely difficult given the various environmental issues, permit requirements, and effects on threatened and endangered species. Hearing the DEP’s concerns and those of our residents, I, along with the Town Council, have decided to withdraw the plan. As such, earlier this morning I vetoed Ordinance 16-022.

Please note, we still believe Manchester needs to re-consider the 2004 settlement agreement and the manner in which the Heritage Minerals Tract is developed. Currently, pursuant to the 2004 settlement agreement, Hovsons can develop a senior community of 2,400 homes without any input from the township (aside from the customary Planning Board approvals). While such a development would financially help the township in the short term, adding that many senior homes could realistically further tilt the state school funding formula against Manchester to becoming a ‘No-Aid’ district. While we only receive 14 percent of our school budget from the State, it does amount to approximately 8 million dollars. Therefore, I, along with the Council, will continue to explore concepts with Hovsons that will not affect the 2004 settlement “footprint” but does work in Manchester Township’s best interests.