

## Olivet Church hosts meeting about Coatesville Train Station

By Lucas Rodgers

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Standing from left, state Rep. Harry Lewis Jr., state Sen. Andy Dinninam, and Jennie Granger, project manager at PennDOT, talk about updates to the Coatesville Train Station project at an open house meeting at the Olivet United Methodist Church in Coatesville on Wednesday night. Lucas Rodgers — Daily Local News

COATESVILLE—State Sen. Andy Dinniman, state Rep. Harry Lewis Jr. and PennDOT Project Manager Jennie Granger were at Olivet United Methodist Church to present updates on plans for the new Coatesville Train Station and answer questions from the public.

Also on-hand at the meeting were representatives from local engineering firms working on the project, including Pennoni, EDiS and Bernardon, along with HDR, which is a firm based in Pittsburgh.

The meeting focused on plans for the Coatesville Train Station, the 3rd Avenue streetscape project and the planned career education and entrepreneurial center that will be located along Fleetwood Street between North 3rd Avenue and North 4th Avenue.

Every attendant of the meeting was encouraged to leave written comments about the project and offer suggestions about how to potentially improve it. The meeting had a very open structure, rather than a lecture or town hall style, so everyone was free to walk around, view design plans for the project and talk to the elected officials and project designers in attendance.

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This public meeting was also the final step in the federal regulation procedure to get approval to complete the designs for the project, and move on to construction, Dinniman said.

Construction is expected to begin by the end of 2016 for the streetscape project, which would implement improved streets, sidewalks, parking, lighting, traffic signals and pedestrian accessibility for 3rd Avenue from Lincoln Highway to Fleetwood Street.

"We're not just talking anymore in vague terminology," Dinniman said. "We're not talking about something that's in the far, distant future."

Construction of a parking structure is expected to begin in the summer of 2016, while construction of the new platform improvements, train station and education center are slated for 2017.

Dinniman said the new train station and education center would help revitalize the economy and support the community in Coatesville and the surrounding areas.

"The economy is fragile still, and we need to have the diversity of economic opportunity, and the one commitment that Harry and I are going to make sure with you: we promise that Coatesville citizens will have a role and a job in building the station, and will have jobs when it's complete."

Rep. Lewis said he was happy the project could get to this stage, and the meeting also served as a validation to the public that the project is moving forward, and it's definitely going to happen.

He also said he wanted to make sure the project would help youth in Coatesville. "My key thing is to create apprenticeships for our young men right here in this city, so when the construction starts, we will have young men and young women in place to work with these jobs and work with these different companies that are coming in."

Granger, who has been involved with the project for more than two years, said that fundamentally a train station is meant to move people, but it's also supposed to be an anchor in the community to make it strong, and help redevelopment efforts in Coatesville and Chester County as a whole.

She also said that the project for Coatesville's new train station has the full support of PennDOT and Gov. Wolf. "The plans that are on display tonight really are a result of this great collaborative effort with the community and the elected officials at the state and federal levels."

Train station improvement projects are also in the works for several other locations in Chester County, including Paoli, Exton, Downingtown and Parkesburg.

"The key to changing any community is hope, but you can only maintain hope if you see signs, and the hope has now blossomed to reality," Dinniman said. "The train has left the station, and is on its way."

Dinniman said he also hopes to convince SEPTA to return regional rail services to Coatesville and Parkesburg.

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Residents had a chance to view design plans for the new Coatesville Train Station, and speak with employees from the engineering firms that are working on the project. Lucas Rodgers — Daily Local News