

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
July 12, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Jim Roberts
Dave Sponseller
Michon Blake

Dr. Richard Costlow
Todd Fisher

Laura Smith, Towamencin Supervisor, BOS Liaison to OSPAC (Came into this meeting after making a presentation at the Planning Commission Meeting that was being held in the main meeting hall)

Absent:

Nancy Becker
Peter Murphy

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan noted that he met with the Interim Township Manager, Ms. Brooke Neve, on July 9th. to get an update on items that might be of interest to the Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee (OSPAC).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There being no members of the public in attendance, there were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of June 14, 2021, Meeting

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes to the June 14, 2021, meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Mr. Roberts made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Sponseller seconded the motion. All committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

OLD BUSINESS

a. TST Financial Assistance.

Mr. Meehan said he discussed the financial assistance the Towamencin Swim Team (TST) had requested from the Township with Ms. Neve. She informed him the Board of Supervisors (BOS) recommended the Township Finance Committee look into the Township's lease agreement with StandGuard to see if the increased costs being passed on by them to the TST were allowed under the lease agreement. Once their assessment is completed, the BOS will respond to the request for financial assistance.

The overriding message was that the Township will push back with StandGuard and not allow any unwarranted costs to be passed on to the TST. This however also needs to consider the overall relationship between the Township and StandGuard, so the lease agreement is not jeopardized.

In his meeting with Ms. Neve, Mr. Meehan said she mentioned that the lines of communication with the TST need to be brought under control so that inquiries come from one designated spokesperson representing the team. Currently emails, letters and texts have been coming from various team people putting a burden on Township staff to respond and creating confusion.

In the past, the TST has brought issues to the OSPAC for its consideration and input. The OSPAC thoughts and recommendations on the issues are then passed on to the Township staff. In view of the need to improve communications the OSPAC discussed this and provides the following thoughts:

The OSPAC is only an advisory group that considers the activities and plans of other organizations such as TST and TYA as they relate to the parks and open space activities. The OSPAC welcomes sharing its thoughts on actions being considered by these organizations, however the organization must also approach the Township independent of OSPAC, inform them of its plans and if needed get approval of their proposals.

Further, the OSPAC recommends the Swim Team, the Township, and StandGuard each have a designated spokesperson who would be the only one to communicate with the others. The StandGuard and TST spokespersons would only communicate through the Township and not directly with each other. The Township should establish a process for acting on and communicating the results of any actions it takes, to TST and StandGuard. The OSPAC would like to be included in these communications, so it is aware of any actions approved and or taken.

TST Requests a food truck be allowed at the pool site during swim meets

A written request dated June 14, 2021, made by Mr. Adinolfi representing the TST, asked the Township BOS for permission to permit a food truck at the pool parking lot during swim meets this season. The proceeds would be shared with the swim team and help make up for the fund raisers they can't hold because of Covid 19. Mr. Meehan was copied on the letter in keeping with the practice of keeping the OSPAC aware of such requests. At last month's meeting, the OSPAC reviewed the letter and endorsed having the food trucks at the meets, provided it was acceptable to StandGuard. The endorsement was passed to the BOS who approved the food trucks with the same condition that StandGuard not object to their being there. Subsequent to the BOS approval, StandGuard was approached and StandGuard objected to their presence. The food trucks were therefore not allowed at the swim meets.

Mr. Sponseller mentioned that unfortunately during this same time period, at the local level, the pool manager and the swim team came to an arrangement on having the food trucks. The pool manager did not fully understand the terms of the lease agreement and made error in agreeing to the arrangement. This mistake emphasized the need to have all communications flow through a designated spokesperson. The OSPAC agreed that such miscommunications can sour the relationship between the Township and StandGuard who are the parties of the lease agreement for the pool.

Mr. Sponseller also mentioned a new issue that has arisen at the pool and not related to the swim team. He said StandGuard has been allowing large numbers (about 20 or more) of day-pass users into the pool especially on weekends. He said at times the day-pass attendees ignore the pool ground rules and can be rude and unruly in the eyes of regular pool users. The OSPAC wants the pool to be a pleasant experience for everyone and that means a certain decorum needs to be maintained. To maintain this decorum, the OSPAC feels StandGuard's pool manager needs to be ready to enforce the rules and back up the young lifeguards who are on duty. Day-pass users are a source of revenue for StandGuard but maybe the number per day be limited. Other pools in the area have limits. The OSPAC suggests the Township discuss this issue with StandGuard along with any other issues like this that arise.

b. Friends of Fischer's Park

Mr. Meehan distributed a draft of an advertisement seeking volunteers to become "Friends of Fischer's Park". He was looking for comments on the draft before submitting it to the Township for posting.

Mr. Costlow said he would like to see it seek out volunteers for all parks not just Fischer's Park since other parks have different needs and might attract volunteers matching those needs. Mr. Meehan said he originally started the draft as seeking "Friends of Towamencin Parks" but then limited it because he felt it was trying to include too much information in a small advertisement format. He said once we get started with volunteers with Fischer's we can expand the initiative into other parks using the network of volunteers to spread the word. Along with this would be a more detailed advertisement.

Mr. Costlow mentioned that he contacted the resident interested in using the green-houses in Fischer's near Metz Road for starting plantings. He will follow up with her.

Mr. Meehan said he spoke to Ms. Neve about using the Township's website, e-news and social media for the advertisement. Ms. Neve said she would check further on placing the advertisement as requested. Ms. Smith said she would also mention the request at the next executive session meeting.

Mr. Costlow said some of the members of the bocce group have expressed willingness to help with pressure washing the Stable pavilion which is directly adjacent to the bocce courts. He added that much of the dirt and debris in that pavilion comes from the birds nesting in the roofing trusses and some sort of netting should be considered for keeping them out. Mr. Meehan said that this had been discussed in the past, but Mr. Hillmantel was of the opinion that the pavilion needed much more in the way of repairs and upgrade and he did not think installing netting to solve this one problem was worth the effort and cost. Mr. Hillmantel favors removing this pavilion and replacing it with a smaller, lower maintenance, safer pavilion. The OSPAC and the recent Simone-Collins Park Evaluation report also made this same recommendation.

There being no further comments on the draft advertisement, Mr. Meehan said he would forward it to the Township staff for posting.

c. Possible closure of Kriebel Road from Bustard Road to Springer Road – Meeting with stakeholders to get their input

Mr. Meehan said he has had communications with Ms. Neve regarding arranging a meeting with internal stakeholders and impacted residents to uncover any impacts of closing Kriebel Road between Bustard Road and Spring Road. The benefits coming from such a closure would include eliminating a motor vehicle road division of Fischer's Park thereby allowing safe passage of pedestrians from one area of the park to another; providing an already paved area which could provide much needed, additional parking for the park; and also providing an alternative to paving a trail alongside this stretch of Kriebel Road providing a new walking access to Fischer's Park.

Ms. Neve preferred an "internal" meeting before including others. She said before we involve others we should get input from the Township Staff, the police chief, the fire services commander, and the Township engineer. The outcome of this meeting will determine if others should be involved. Mr. Meehan said he agrees with this suggestion. Ms. Neve said it might be best to hold off in arranging such a meeting until the Township Manager comes on board in early August.

Mr. Meehan suggested talking to Mr. Hillmantel about possible subsurface soil conditions along the alignment of the other alternative eliminating the "S" curve near the Hank's house. A few exploratory test holes dug to about the depth of the new alignment vertical profile would indicate if there was rock that would need to be excavated. Encountering rock would increase the cost of this alternative and might influence the decision on which alternative was feasible.

d. Event for Senator Mensch

Mr. Meehan reminded the Committee that an event to thank Sen. Mensch for his help in obtaining a DCED Grant of \$25,000 to be used for preparation of a Master Plan for Veterans Park, is going to be held on July 29, 2021, at 10:30 AM at the entrance to Veterans Park. The event will be about an hour and include a vocalist singing the Star-Spangled Banner, a Revolutionary War re-enactor and speakers thanking Sen. Mensch for his help. All are welcome to attend.

e. Water fountains in Fischer's Park

Mr. Meehan mentioned that at his meeting with Ms. Neve she mentioned that the Township was working on the recommendation to replace the water fountains in Fischer's Park with "bottle-fill" type fountains. She said the Township was working with the North Penn Water Authority on the replacements and there was a possibility the Authority would change the fountains at no cost to the Township. This is still being worked on. The Committee sees this as a great partnering idea.

NEW BUSINESS

a. New Township Manager Appointed

Mr. Meehan noted that a new Township Manager has been selected to replace Mr. Rob Ford who retired on June 1st. The new manager is Mr. Don Delamater who will be starting in the position on August 9th. He is a Towamencin resident and has experience with administration of other municipalities spanning many years. The Committee will invite him to one of our meetings once he has gotten settled into his new position.

b. Open Space and Parks Impact Fee Funds from the Core 5 Warehouse Development and the Franklin Street Storage Unit Development

Mr. Meehan said he was recently informed that several development projects are now moving forward. As a result, substantial Open Space impact fees will be coming to the township and be available to be used for budget requests which did not make it into the 2021 budget because of the lack of funds. The Committee is being asked to review those items and now request them. The Committee reviewed and discussed them. Some of the “below-the-line” are covered in grant applications that have been submitted. Among them are a basketball court, pickleball courts, a pavilion and playground at Grist Mill Park. The Committee felt the Pavilion there should be a high priority and it should move forward and could be counted as a part of the Township’s match for this grant. Others are listed below:

The OSPAC recommends the following items be done now with some of the impact fee monies. More recommendations will be coming in the future.

- Shade Sails at Fisher Park tot playground and at the bocce courts. \$40,000
- Construct a pavilion at Grist Mill Park. (This was included in the Grist Mill Grant Request and could be considered part of the Township’s matching fund requirement) \$54,000
- Add a playground at Morgan Way. \$35,000
- Add a parking area at Kibler Meadows. \$15,000
- Remove dead trees along trails and at edges of park woodlands. \$35,000
- Plant new trees in various Township parks other than Fischer’s Park. \$15,000
- Advance the improvements to the drainage of bocce courts. (Combine with some Arneith monies. \$15,000 Arneith + \$15,000 impact fee monies.)
- Upgrade township park entrance signs. Engage S-C to prepare a new “standard” for park signs which would use materials with “character” and make the entrances stand out as representing a Township with pride in its parks. Start with the major parks, Fischer’s, Grist Mill, Bustard Road, and Butch Clemens. \$50,000.
- Begin infrastructure installations at Butch Clemens field. \$50,000

Mr. Meehan said he will pass these recommendations on to the Township Staff.

c. Butterfly Garden in Fischer’s Park

Ms. Bertolazzi and her son Andrew returned to the BOS at the June 23, 2021 meeting with a proposal to install a Memorial Butterfly Garden in Fischer’s Park in remembrance of the tragic passing of Eliza Talal as a result of the flooding during a storm in August of 2020. The presentation answered the questions brought up at their previous presentation earlier this year.

The BOS approved the new Memorial Garden Plan. Ms. Bertolazzi said she has a landscape contractor who is prepared to start the work in late July and complete it before the anniversary of Eliza’s passing. A memorial event is being planned for the anniversary and the OSPAC is welcome to attend. More details of that event will be coming.

d. Trail Loop

Mr. Meehan said he “zoomed” into the recent BOS Meeting and during the Public Work Committee report there was mention that PW would be constructing a loop trail on the north side of the new bridge across Towamencin Creek. At this time, Mr. Meehan said he did not have any further details and would check further on this.

e. Articles for Fall Newsletter

Mr. Meehan said the fall 2021 newsletter is approaching and he was looking for articles that could be prepared by the OSPA. For one, he said he would contact Andrew Dolan who made a presentation on birding to the Committee last month and offered to prepare an article for the newsletter. Mr. Meehan said he would take him up on his offer and ask him to write an article. Other suggestions were for an article about volunteering for Friends Of Fischer's Park and an update about the spotted lantern fly.

d. Entrance sign at Bustard Road Park

Ms. Blake mentioned that while riding her bicycle recently she was stopped by a motorist looking for directions to the entrance to Bustard Road Park. The motorist was bringing children to a TYA tournament at the park. The sign for this park was removed months ago when the property owners asked that it be removed from their property. Mr. Fisher said giving directions to this park has been a problem because the GPS on-line providers use different names on their services and TYA has tried unsuccessfully to get them to use Bustard Park, the Township's name for the park. The OSPAC recommends a sign be reinstalled on Bustard Road at the Park entrance as soon as practical, so the park entrance can be readily identified.

TOWNSHIP PARKS GRANT UPDATES

Grant Updates. Mr. Meehan provided the Committee with the following updates regarding Grants for Parks and Trails.

- DCNR and DCED Grant Applications for 2021 have been submitted (Both for Grist Mill Park Improvements. Each in the amount of \$250,000.)
- KRT I - TA Grant – Valley View to Trumbauer Road (Township has a grant for \$850,000 for construction. The construction is advertised for bids. Bids have been postponed to August 12, 2021. NTP set for October 12, 2021, with Completion by July 8, 2022).
- KRT II – DCED Grant Application– PECO Powerlines to Fischer's Park. Submitted.
- KRT II - Montco 40 Grant – (\$190,000 Awarded - Gilmore and associates authorized to proceed with design of a 2500' portion (Not west of Bustard)
- Veteran's Park – DCNR and DCED - Master Plan development underway. First meeting held already by Simone-Collins with the Township Veterans Committee

ITEMS OF INTEREST

- a. **Backyard Chickens.** Ms. Smith said she made a presentation this evening seeking to change the Township ordinances regarding raising backyard chickens. Her proposal would be less restrictive than the current ordinances. More to follow on this as time goes on.

With there being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM

The next OSPAC meeting is on August 9, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph F. Meehan
Chairperson, Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee