

**Towamencin Township  
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting  
September 19, 2022  
Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Nancy Becker  
Michon Blake  
Dr. Richard Costlow  
Dave Sponseller  
Dan Vaitis

Laura Smith, Liaison Board of Supervisors

**Absent:**

Todd Fisher

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

**OPENING COMMENTS**

Mr. Meehan noted he had met with Mr. Delamater, the outgoing township manager, and Dennis Carney, the incoming interim manager on September 15<sup>th</sup>. They provided him with updates on items that would be of interest to the OSPAC, and their update information will be included in the items as they are discussed this evening. He also noted that he wished Mr. Delamater the best in his future endeavors and thanked him for the help he provided to the committee.

Mr. Meehan also noted that he had been informed by Peter Murphy that he is stepping away from the Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee because of time constraints with work and family. Mr. Meehan told Peter he would pass this information on to Ms. Smith and the Committee, but Peter needs to also notify the BOS to make it official. Mr. Meehan said he thanked Mr. Murphy for his committee work over the years and wished him the best in the future.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Other than the Committee members shown above, there were no others in attendance. There were no public comments.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of August 8, 2022**

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the August 8, 2022, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to accept the minutes as drafted. Mr. Costlow seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Meehan passed the following information about the status of ongoing projects that are of interest to the Committee.

• **Kriebel Road Trail – Valley View Road to Trumbauer Road (TA Trail Grant)**

Mr. Delamater said the contractor continues working on the trail construction but paused on the work for a week because of an emergency on another project. He said the consultant inspection staff accepted the pause because the contractor appears to be ahead of scheduled work. The completion date of December 5, 2022 will not be impacted by the pause. Regular progress meetings attended by the Township, Contractor and Consultant are being held.

- **Kriebel Road Trail II PECO Power lines westward along Kriebel Road toward Fischer's Park.**

Bid documents for this trail from the end of the current Kriebel road Trail near the PECO power line crossing, westward to a terminus at Green Lane Road, are being prepared by Gilmore & Associates. Mr. Delamater said the Township is hoping to advertise this portion of the trail for bids in the fall of 2022 with construction in the spring of 2023. This is unchanged since the last OSPAC meeting.

- **Grist Mill Park DCED Grant Application**

The Township is waiting to hear from DCED about its \$250,000 grant application for facility improvements at Grist Mill Park. Announcements of the grants are usually made in the fall of each year, so this wait is not unusual. This is unchanged since the last OSPAC meeting.

- **Kibler Meadows Park Parking Area**

Mr. Meehan passed on information from Mr. Delamater who said work has been completed on the Kibler Meadows parking area. Several Committee members said they have been to the new parking area and find it a very welcome addition to Kibler Meadow Park. Ms. Becker said she had gotten text messages from people who have been to the park and were impressed by this addition.

- **2023 Budget Requests**

Mr. Meehan prepared a handout given to the Committee members summarizing the Open Space and Parks approved budgeted items for the past several years. (A copy is attached to the minutes). The purpose of the summary was to review what has been budgeted for projects in previous years, their status; and what has been spent and what remains unspent for each.

There are some items the Committee has recommended in past years and were budgeted, but for various reasons the projects have not moved forward and will likely not move forward in 2023. He suggests the Committee withdraw these items and "put the money back in the pot" for spending in 2023 if it is unlikely the project originally budgeted will not move forward. In some instances where engineering work is needed for a project, he suggests the engineering work be budgeted as a first step and then when the scope and costs of the project become more clearly defined in the engineering, the implementation of the project be included as a separate item in the Committee's budget request. The Committee was agreeable to this approach.

The Committee discussed several of the examples of projects needing engineering work first; such as the infrastructure work for pavilion/ restroom utilities at Butch Clemens Park; and the entrance improvements and a trail to the playground at Drinnon Park.

Mr. Meehan said for some he doesn't know what monies might have been spent by the Township toward a project so he will be sending the list to the Township's Finance Director asking that he provide a confirmation and/or an estimate.

Mr. Meehan reminded the Committee that development Open Space Impact Fees are the main source of revenue for parks capital projects. The exception is Fischer's Park where projects are funded thru the Arneht annuity fund. In the past few years open space impact fees have been a healthy amount but the available funds will be less for 2023. For 2023 the only substantial source of impact fees would be from the Delp Drive warehouse development in the amount of about \$133,000 and this is not yet certain because the development has recently changed hands. He continued saying that this is the reason why he suggests putting unspent funds from previous year's funds "back into the pot" and reallocating them towards projects that have risen up to be more likely to proceed in 2023.

Recent impact fees came to the Township from a Wambold Warehouse development (\$20,000) and also Dock Woods Health Care Addition ( \$7,000) for a total of \$27,000. The BOS already committed

to using \$25,000 of these fees for CKS to start engineering work for the new soccer field at Nash School.

#### Lane Line Reel for Township Pool

One item for the 2023 budget request is the need for an additional stainless steel lane line reel capable of holding at least five lane lines. This is a follow up to the 2022 request for reels when there was insufficient budgeted funds for two reels and only one was purchased.

While discussing the reels the committee's conversations led into discussions about repairs to the water loss in the Township "H" pool encountered in 2022. The BOS gave authorization for CKS to investigate and come up with a solution for the water loss problem at the Township's "H" pool. The Supervisors directed CKS to find the cause and prepare a plan for fixing the problem. They were directed to have the pool leak problem corrected and be fully operational with no problems before the pool opening in 2023.

Further on the pool, Mr. Sponseller noted that he recommends a "2022 season debrief" with the pool managers (Ken Hall and Mike Potts). The Committee agreed with Mr. Sponseller's recommendation especially in view of the excellent work they performed and their interest in making the pool experience better. The managers have provided a list of their recommendations for facility improvements at the pool. Some are minor in scope and some not so minor. Correction of these need to be discussed and addressed. In general, the Committee agrees that communications regarding the pool need to be improved and all parties provide their input in a forum where everyone involved knows of problems or potential problems and can provide input on a solution.

Impacts from the closure of the H pool for a time in 2022 are not yet known. The impacts are waiting on feedback from StandGuard.

The Committee's discussions turned away from the 2023 budget when Mr. Vaitis mentioned that he has been talking to an investor willing to fund a turf soccer field in Towamencin in an amount of about \$225,000 to \$250,000. The investor is interested in creating this "turf surface field" at Grist Mill Park. The investor and Mr. Vaitis talked recently, and Mr. Vaitis said he loves the plan. He sees it fitting in the area of Grist Mill Park between the proposed Phase I improvements (Basketball Courts, Pickleball Courts etc.) and the west end of the Park at Forty Foot Road. Parking is Mr. Vaitis' only concern.

Mr. Vaitis said he doesn't know where to go with this investor's proposal. The investor would like to get something moving before the end of the year. Ms. Smith said she is in favor of a proposal for a turf field and said she is working with Horsham Township on a similar proposal.

Mr. Sponseller said Grist Mill Park is a "gem". With a turf surfaced field it could be a complete family destination park with activities for all ages.

Mr. Meehan suggested that Mr. Vaitis confirm that what the investor is proposing would fit at Grist Mill. Mr. Vaitis said he feels there is room for two smaller game fields (77 & 99) which when combined could then serve as a larger practice field for all groups. Mr. Vaitis said he would check the size of the available park space for such a field. In addition, Mr. Meehan asked him to look into the investor's proposal in more detail and present it to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee returned to 2023 budget discussions to discuss a proposed shade structures at the bocce courts in Fischer's Park. After discussion of size and type of structure the Committee agreed to request budget in 2023 for two shade structures located in the median of the bocce courts, one at each end of the median. They are to be twelve feet long and ten feet wide and be of a two level roof design for ventilation. They will be anchored to the median. The estimated cost for the two shade structures delivered and installed, and some miscellaneous maintenance and support items, is about \$20,000.

The discussion then moved to a full cover over the proposed bocce courts at Grist Mill Park, something not included in the Grist Mill Grant Proposal. The intent is to have the courts covered, something closely resembling the Palmer Park Bocce Courts in Skippack Township. The Palmer Structure covers its bocce courts with additional area around the perimeter for benches and storage. Mr. Meehan said he estimates a structure 41' Wide and 81' long would work at Grist Mill Park. Using \$72.50 per sq. ft, the total cost for the structure alone would be about \$250,000. Ms. Blake suggested this might be better considered for the 2024 budget.

Another item not covered in the original Grist Mill Grant was the bocce courts themselves. They are being substituted for the sand volleyball court and there is a cost differential involved with them as a substitution. The volleyball courts construction was estimated to be \$7,500 and the bocce courts at more than \$75,000. This differential now needs to be accounted for outside the grants and needs to be requested separately.

Mr. Vaitis asked who creates plans and designs for work like this. Mr. Meehan said it is done by a qualified consultant and could be CKS or Simone-Collins or another qualified consultant selected by the Township. Mr. Vaitis said he knows of a firm, "Keystone" who engineers and build facilities like we are considering for Grist Mill Park. They are a "Design to Done" firm doing all the design and construction. This firm covers everything and expedites the entire process. The Committee embraces this concept and felt it should be checked on further. Mr. Vaitis said he would. He also asked the Committee's opinion on lighting at Grist Mill. After initially thinking lights would be objectional to the Jacobs Woods residential area adjacent to the park, instances were presented where low to the ground lights are said to have worked. The Committee also said this is worth looking into further. Mr. Vaitis said having lights is a factor in getting good return on investment for the investor since ballfields are very popular later in the day and after dusk. Ms. Smith asked what he meant by return on investment? How do the investors get their return on investment? Mr. Vaitis said he doesn't know. Ms. Smith said Horsham sell sponsorships on scoreboards and the like. Mr. Vaitis said he would include this question when talking again to the investor. The Committee liked the idea of low to the ground lights if they did not create problems with the adjacent residential areas and felt it would further enhance this park as a gem in the Township Park system.

For budgeting purposes, Mr. Meehan said the Committee should be considering certain park improvements in phases such as Planning and Engineering, then Implementation. For 2023 there are several items that we should consider this way. First the pavilion/restroom facilities at Butch Clemens Park, second the improvements at Drinnon Park and the other which is already moving forward with this approach is the soccer field at Nash School. The Committee concurred with this approach going forward.

For 2023 and in the future the Committee is requesting that each year a portion of the funds from the Core 5 Warehouse Development Tree Fund be spent planting new trees in Township Parks and along trails. The Committee agrees with this approach as a good way to replace all the ash trees taken down recently as well as add native species trees along trails. The Committee recommends deer protection be included with the new trees.

A new recommendation came from the Committees discussion on budget requests. Now that a parking area is available at Kibler Meadow, the Committee would like to see a bird observation platform constructed at Kibler starting first with engineering of a simple elevated platform at an appropriate site in the park. This will be included in the 2022 request.

- **Bocce Courts**

After a question from Mr. Costlow, Ms. Smith provided a status report on the engineering work for the correction of drainage at the bocce courts in Fischer's Park. She said CKS came up with a plan to build a wall instead of a berm to redirect the flow of surface water coming toward the courts. CKS feels this can be done without removing trees. In addition, the wall will provide a seating area at the courts. She also said Mr. Hillmantel is looking into other better draining surfacing materials which

could replace the existing material. Ms. Smith said CKS acknowledged that even with these improvements, some water will still collect on the courts during heavy rain events.

- **Do Not Feed the Ducks Signs**

Mr. Meehan said the Duck signs have not gone to the printer yet, but they will be in the next few days. He said modified the duck image but kept the same message as had been previously approved.

- **Farmers farming in Township Parks**

Ms. Smith reported that the Township has reached out to the farmer, Drew Bechtel but he has not responded. She said at the present time the BOS is leaning in favor of the farmer but his unwillingness to talk is undermining this position.

- **Reline the Tennis Courts at Heebner to Pickleball**

There is nothing new to report on this item.

- **Drinnon Park Improvements**

Improvements at Drinnon Park cannot proceed until engineering is done to prepare a plan that accounts for the drainpipe and headwall at the park entrance off of Tennis Circle. These plans need to be prepared by the Township Engineer, CKS. Initiating plan preparation by the engineer will be pursued with Township staff.

## **New Business**

### **PECO Green Region Grant**

There is a grant opportunity available from PECO for up to \$10,000. Mr. Meehan said the grant announcement will be passed to the Township staff to consider. The Committee's consensus was that this opportunity fits well with some of the projects we have in mind and recommends that the Township apply. The Township has applied for these same type grants from PECO in the past and those submissions could be used as a template for this application.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on October 17, 2022**