

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
May 8, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Dr. Richard Costlow
Robert DeHaven
Joe Rumsey
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC Committee

Absent:

Michon Blake
Todd Fischer
Dave Sponseller
Dan Vaitis

Chairperson Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM

All present participated in the pledge of allegiance.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan noted that he records the audio of the meeting for his convenience in preparing the minutes.

Mr. Meehan also noted that he met with Dave Kraynik and Dennis Carney on May 5th, and they provided a verbal update on items the OSPAC has been following. Their update comments will be passed on to the Committee as shown in the minutes as "Mr. Kraynik or Mr. Carney reported" as the individual items are discussed in tonight's meeting.

Mr. Meehan also reported that Towamencin was not successful in its application for a \$10,000 PECO Green Region Open Space Program Grant. He passed on information that Dennis Carney said based on his work experience with various Townships, many municipalities and groups apply for these grants and therefore competition for them is great. Since this grant money was earmarked for planting trees along the Kriebel Road trail, the Committee will have to seek other sources of funding if we want to use the entire \$20,000 budgeted for 2023.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was one resident, Bruce Bailey, attending tonight's meeting. He said he was happy to be here. Mr. Meehan welcomed him to participate in the Committee's discussions.

APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES – April 10, 2023 Meeting

Mr. Meehan said there was a correction needed on the minutes he prepared for the April 10, 2023 meeting. He said on page 5 of the minutes in the paragraph with the heading **Grist Mill Park Engineering Plans** the sentence in the minutes should say "Mr. Meehan said Simone-Collins (S-C) has been asked by the Township to submit a proposal to prepare engineering plans for the bidding of the Grist Mill Park Phase I improvements". He said he will make the correction to the file copy.

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any other comments or concerns about the minutes of the March 10, 2023, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted. Mr. DeHaven seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

Towamencin Day - May 13, 2023

Mr. Meehan reminded the Committee about Towamencin Day which will be held this coming Saturday at Fischer's Park. The Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee will have a table to be able to interact with residents. He said he will bring some of his copies of individual Park Master plans to show residents and discuss with them.

He asked who might be available to participate at the table between the event time of noon to 4 PM. Mr. De Haven and Mr. Rumsey said they will help at the table. Others said they will be in the Park during the event

and will share their time among the organizations they will be representing. Mr. DeHaven volunteered for the early shift beginning before noon and going for a couple of hours. Mr. Rumsey said he will come as soon as he can around 1 PM and should be available for most of the afternoon.

Mr. Meehan said this should be an enjoyable event and hopes the weather is favorable. Mr. Meehan said he would check to see if others who were not able to attend tonight's meeting are available.

Arneith House Tour

Mr. Meehan said he was mistaken when he talked at last month's meeting about an imminent demolition of the Arneith House on Fischer's Park. He said his comment was prompted by the fact that the Township had gotten a cost quote from a demolition contractor. He said Mr. Kraynik, when he saw this in last month's minutes, clarified that the quote was only to provide an estimated cost for demolition so it could be compared to the cost for rehabbing the structure. Mr. Kraynik noted that the demolition is not imminent and if the OSPAC group would like to tour the house that can be arranged.

Mr. Meehan asked if the committee would like to look inside the house and the response was yes. He asked when would be a good time that would work for the committee and asked for members to respond to him by email with their preferences. Mr. Costlow suggested using an app named "doodle" to get everyone's preference. Mr. Meehan said he is not good at working with such apps. Ms. Smith looked it up, set it up for the committee, and emailed a link to each committee member. Each member should now respond to the email so we can come to a consensus on a tour date and time.

OLD BUSINESS

TA Trail - Valley View Way to Trumbauer Road

Mr. Kraynik reported that the final work on the TA trail is down to only a few items which will be completed soon. After that, inspections will be held, and a dedication /opening ceremony set up. He said a dedication is being looked at for either May 18th or May 25th and when a date has been set, invitations will be sent out.

Mr. Costlow said he noticed some pavement markings installed on the trail and wondered why they were placed there. Mr. DeHaven felt they were there for bicyclists and others agreed. The trail has a hilly profile and bicyclists could pick up some speed on the downhill and markings are helpful.

KRT Trail - PECO Powerline Crossing on Kriebel Rd to Green Lane Park

Mr. Kraynik reported that work has gotten underway on this trail and based on feedback from the contractor it should be finished in only a little over a month.

Mr. Meehan said he has observed the early work removing overhanging trees and trees in the footprint of the trail. He said the contractor is making quick progress on these operations and if this continues, he agrees the trail will be completed quickly.

Mr. Meehan also noted the Township has identified another potential grant to take this trail from the terminus near the sewer treatment plant entrance to Bustard Road. The grant opportunity is for \$250,000 from the Department of Community and Economic Development. He said a grant application is to be prepared for this grant and asked that the OSPAC endorse the recommendation to apply for this grant. Gilmore and Associates will be preparing the application. The application deadline is May 31st, 2023. Mr. Meehan made a motion to endorse applying for this grant to DCED to continue the Kriebel Road Trail. Ms. Becker seconded the motion. All committee members voted in favor, none voted no or abstained. The motion was approved 5-0.

Going back to the trail presently being constructed, Mr. Costlow asked what measures are to be installed at the crossing of Kriebel Road from the south side to the north side at Green Lane Road. Mr. Meehan said he hasn't seen the final construction plans, so he doesn't know. He said he recalls that a flashing light was originally intended for this location but when the project costs were trimmed down because of the high costs, this was modified. Ms. Smith said she recalls signage and pavement markings at the location with a goal of a flashing light if deemed it would help, and if funding was available.

The Committee further discussed some of the details of this section of the trail, including its width as it approaches Green Lane Road, and possible three way stop signs.

Updates of Budget Items approved for 2023.

Potential soccer field at Green Lane Park

The Township has requested that CKS submit a proposal for an engineering plan showing the necessary regrading work regarding constructing a soccer field at the Green Lane Park site. Excess material excavated

from the salt storage building construction at Bustard Road Park will be going to Green Lane Park and used in the grading of the soccer field there.

Drinnon Park Trail

Mr. Meehan said the ball is in his court to get a letter to the residents of the neighborhood informing them of the plan for the trail/path running from Tennis Circle to the playground and then continuing to the cul-de-sac at the end of Drinnon Way. He said the Township has given approval to having a meeting with the neighbors and he will communicate with the Township Manager's assistant on gathering mailing information and preparing a letter notifying the neighbors of a meeting. He said maybe we can have the residents attend an upcoming OSPAC meeting.

Butch Clemens Field - Engineering for Pavilions/restroom

Mr. Meehan said after many requests, he received an email indicating TYA's preference for location for a restroom/pavilion at Butch Clemens Field. TYA's response showed a first and second preference. Mr. Meehan showed an aerial view of the park with the preferences. (A copy is attached to these minutes) Referring to the aerial photo, preference # 1 was on the left side between the parking area and the North Penn Water Company property. Their preference #2 was on the right side, between the parking area and the soccer field near the left field foul pole of the baseball field. The email also noted that there is a need for additional parking at this active park and TYA proposed looking into making a connection to the paved parking area of the North Penn Water Co. to allow overflow parking when needed.

The Committee discussed this additional parking proposal and agreed this is a good solution if it would be allowed by the water company. The parking area seems to be used only by the water company for parking employee vehicles and is fenced off from other water company storage areas. Being that the overflow parking usage need would occur in the evening and on weekends, there should not be a conflict with employee parking. The Committee understands that the first step in looking into this would be to talk to the water company and this was best done by the Township, perhaps Supervisor Marino. Ms. Smith suggested Bill Dingman, who is the township representative, to the water company. Mr. Meehan said he doesn't know if TYA has mentioned this proposal to the Township. He said he would include it in his discussions with Mr. Kraynik. He said he would also pass along their preferences for locating the restroom/pavilion facility.

Bocce Courts in Fischer's Park

Mr. Carney said the Township after getting a bid price for the planned improvements to the Fisher's Park Bocce courts, reached out to a COSTARS contractor who had not bid on the work and asked for a price for constructing the retaining walls and installing the drainage shown on the CKS plan. The price quoted by the COSTARS contractor was not significantly different from the bid received so the plan fell back to the modified PW plan with the walls and drainage being installed by PW and the court surfacing being installed by a specialist company, Top-a-court. The Township had gotten a quote from Top-a-court, but it seemed high for the work to be performed and Township Supervisor Marino, who has worked as a contractor with Top-A-court in the past was going to talk to them and see if they could do better on the cost. The plan is to construct the hybrid PW plan using Public Works forces for the walls, drainage and grading and a court surface contractor for the courts. The plan is to get this accomplished in 2023.

Mr. Costlow noted he recently participated in the Montgomery County Senior Games playing bocce on the Plymouth Township Courts. (He won a silver medal!!) He said they played after a weekend of heavy rain and the courts had drained sufficiently that there were no problems. He was not sure but thought the Plymouth courts were a Har-Tru surface with a base like that proposed for Towamencin a long time ago by Dave Fusco, a court "guru" and member of the Norristown Bocce organization.

Tree Planting for 2023 along Kriebel Road Trails

Mr. Costlow noted that he has not done much since the last meeting on the tree plan along the trails. He said he will pursue this further going forward.

Mr. Meehan said he asked Mr. Carney's advice on when it is best to plant in the fall planting period so we could work backwards from the planting date to know when we needed to have an approved plan for planting in place. Mr. Carney recommended planting between Halloween and the first frost as a good target for planting trees. Allowing about 90 days for approvals and ordering trees, we need to have the plan finalized by the beginning of August.

Mr. Costlow mentioned that the experts he talked to, recommended a maintenance plan for the first 2 years to reduce the risk of trees not surviving the first few years they are planted. Such a maintenance plan will be included in the proposed tree plan. He also said the plan should use a staggered start with some trees

planted initially and then infilled with others over the next few years. This would give trees of various canopy heights over time.

Mr. Costlow will use the base plan he was given at the last meeting to continue to develop a draft tree plan that could be used as a starting point to seek approval from the Board of Supervisors for planting trees along Kriebel Road Trails in the fall of 2023.

Pickleball Courts

The Committee continued with the discussions on pickleball court sites where they left off at last month's meeting. Last month the Committee had two sites rise to the top of the Committee's site preference. The number one preferred site was Butch Clemens Park (BC), and the number two site was in Fischer's Park in the ballfield area.

Mr. Meehan noted for the Committee's information that the Township seemed to be leaning toward the Fischer's site, combining additional parking, a new pavilion and pickleball courts into one package of improvements there. The Committee discussed concerns about how placing pickleball courts there would change the "character" of Fischer's Park transforming it from a "passive" park to a more "active" park and leading to more active sports activities there in the future. The Committee wants to continue to have the park thought of as "passive", attracting walkers, and families looking to enjoy the natural setting and quiet, away from everyday activity but also feels the demand for pickleball courts might be able to be accommodated there.

The BC site was discussed, keeping in mind that the Committee wanted to take the approach of looking at the negative aspects of having the courts since the Committee already considered why it was a good site. With this approach, the Committee discussed limited vehicular access to the site, the need for more parking, not infringing on TYA's uses of BC, and the distance from proposed restroom facilities. Mr. Meehan also added that the property line between the park and the Clemens property is not easily determinable when visiting the site.

Mr. Meehan showed a site plan to the Committee for the discussions. (A copy is attached to the minutes). In addition to the plan he also presented "scaled" outlines of different numbers of courts and also an outline of a parking area. These scaled outlines could be placed on the plot plan to give a perspective of the size of these features compared to the size of the overall park property. The Committee concluded that each of the negative aspects had a solution and the courts at BC park should continue to be considered a good site.

The Committee discussed the BC site and/or the Fischer's Park site and concluded consideration should be given to courts at both sites. Maybe four courts at Fischer's Park and six courts at BC. Based on inquiries from residents about when courts will be available, and the general trend for demand for courts, the Committee feels that once constructed, even with this number, the courts will be fully utilized.

The Committee wants to continue this discussion further with the Township Staff getting their input. It was suggested they be asked to attend an upcoming meeting where the Committee could lay out in detail its thoughts on the courts. Mr. Meehan said he will discuss this with the Township staff.

Insect Hotel

Mr. Meehan noted that the Insect Hotels has been installed in Fischer's Park along the path connecting the two playgrounds and near the Rain Garden. The individual who proposed this now needs to "furnish" the hotel with the natural materials that make up the habitat of the insects that will be attracted to this addition to the park.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on June 12, 2023