

**Towamencin Township**  
**Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**June 12, 2023**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Dr. Richard Costlow  
Robert DeHaven  
Joe Rumsey  
Michon Blake  
Todd Fischer  
Dan Vaitis

**Absent:**

Nancy Becker  
Dave Sponseller  
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC Committee

Chairperson Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:03 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 June 7th, 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 \$250,000 DCED grant for the improvements we are looking to make at Grist Mill Park. (Note: I am making a correction in the minutes to what I said at the meeting. The grant was for a \$250,000 Montco40 Grant not a DCED grant)

This grant was going to be a Green Region Open Space Program Grant. This grant was to be the match for the approved DCNR grant the Township already has for this Grist Mill Park project. He also noted that although the Montco40 grant for Grist Mill was not approved, another Montco40 grant for sidewalk and drainage improvements along Weikel Rd. in the amount of \$200,000 which was submitted at the same time, was approved. Mr. Meehan said to him this demonstrates the County's priority for trails, paths and connectivity. He also said the Township will now have to look for other sources of funds to match the DCNR grant and the time to find a match gets shorter and shorter because there is an end date by which the grant needs to be used on the Grist Mill project.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were eight residents attending this meeting. A copy of the sign in sheet is attached.

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any public comments.

Mr. Osea of Cambridge Way said the Government Study Commission (GSC) is dissolved and he is just a resident now. He thanked the OSPAC Committee members for coming to so many of the G.S.C. meetings, noting that members of the OSPAC probably had the highest percentage of attendance at those meetings. He said he feels this Committee has influence with the Board of Supervisors and asked the people on this Committee to request the BOS send a letter of termination of the sewer sale. Referring to the Grant not getting funded for Grist Mill he noted that

the Township has gotten \$600,000 from NextEra which according to Chuck Wilson, needs to go through the regulatory process so the quicker we get through that process, the faster we free up that money. He said he is heading for another meeting and just stopped by for a few moments to make these comments.

Mr. Ginther asked about the issue of farming on Township property. He noted this was an item on the November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting as old business and from there it was not carried forward. He said he had a meeting with Mr. Kraynik last week. He said there are still outstanding issues about the status and would like to see it back on the agenda. The Township said they would talk to the farmer. He said his primary questions were are they locked into farming the property and would they be amenable to farming without chemicals. Those are the two questions he would like to have answered. He said to his knowledge there was contact with the farmer but the discussions never advanced to the point those questions could be answered. He said his primary objective is to have the BOS offer its opinion on the matter. The November OSPAC meeting minutes suggested Mr. Carney, the interim Township manager, was going to transfer responsibility to the newly hired Township manager Mr. Kraynik. When he spoke with Mr. Kraynik last week, Mr. Kraynik said he would revisit the subject and for this reason Mr. Ginther is requesting it be put back on the agenda.

Mr. Costlow mentioned his understanding that there was an Agreement of Understanding between the Township and the farmer.

Mr. Meehan said he would put it back on the agenda for next month's meeting.

Ms. Rumsey thanked the OSPAC, and everyone involved for dedicating their time and effort from getting the grant and constructing this new trail from Trumbauer Road to Valley View Way. She said it is fabulous and feels the community really appreciates the effort spent. Mr. Meehan thanked her for her compliment and said he adds his thank you to all those involved especially the members of the OSPAC committee.

### **APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES – May 8, 2023 Meeting**

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the May 8, 2023, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Mr. Rumsey made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted. Mr. Costlow seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes as drafted. Mr. Meehan said he will now forward the approved minutes to the Township staff so they can be posted on the Township website.

### **OLD BUSINESS – Drinnon Park Path**

Mr. Meehan welcomed all the neighbors of the Drinnon Park neighborhood who came to learn about the path planned for the park. Mr. Meehan presented a brief summary of events and discussions leading up to the OSPAC recommendation for the path. He said years ago when the OSPAC was reviewing each Township park, one of the comments coming from the community surrounding Drinnon Park was a need for better access to the playground which was in the center of the park.

A path from Tennis Circle across the grassy park to the playground and then to Drinnon Way had been considered in previous years on the list of improvements to the Township's smaller parks but was bumped out of the budget by projects considered higher priority. 2023 was different and the path was budgeted. The objective of the path was to provide easier and better access to the playground for people who didn't want to walk with kids and strollers through the uneven grass to get to the playground. Another objective was to not reduce the grassy play area of the park by aligning the path away from the open play area.

This path is part of the OSPAC plan to upgrade access to the parks, especially the smaller parks. The thinking is that better access encourages greater use of the parks much like what happened when parking was added at Kibler Meadow Park.

Mr. Meehan presented the OSPAC's recommended path alignment along with details of the width at nine feet. He said, the Committee's original alignment was almost a straight line from one entrance to the park to the opposite entrance, but after conversations with the Public Works Director (PW), the alignment was curved "south" behind playground and an existing tree and then curving back to the north to the Drinnon way cul-de-sac. Having this curving alignment kept a larger piece of the open field area unaffected by the path. The work would be performed by the Township public works (PW) department. Having PW perform the work would save money and stay within the budget.

Mr. Kratz a Keeler Road resident said he has lived on the property since he was born in 1959. He said pretty much everything on the east side of Keeler Road was the property his great, great, grandfather had purchased in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The property he now lives on has been in the family ever since. The park and all the other homes came when the property was developed in the '60s. He said he knows the property, starting from when it was just open fields as he was growing up. He says he recalls that an area in the park that the proposed path crosses over was used by the developer as a land-fill area for debris. He said the area over time developed into a sinkhole that has settled. He said the sinkhole area was recently "dressed up" by the Township PW workers. He said he expects the area will likely continue to settle and he didn't want it to become a problem for the path and the Township. He recommends moving the path to the north side of the playground into the shade of the existing trees and closer to the benches. Mr. Meehan said the original OSPAC alignment was closer to where Mr. Kratz recommends but was moved to allow more room to remain as the uninterrupted open field area. This current alignment proposal was also recommended by Mr. Hillmantel, the PW Director. In light of the information about the sinkhole/landfill area, Mr. Meehan said the Committee will bring this potential problem to the attention of the Township PW Department and revisit the proposed alignment.

The neighbors mentioned the width of the trail and there was discussion with the residents about it. They were unanimous in saying that nine feet was too wide for a path in such a small park and might lead to motorized vehicles coming straight off Heebner Rd. at Tennis Circle or other vehicles just using it as a shortcut to Drinnon Way. They said this could be dangerous. They felt six feet was more than adequate for this walking path and that even with that, they thought bollards or pylons should be installed at the connections with the roadways at either end. They also pointed out that at nine feet it increases the path's impervious surface by thirty three percent when the Township is trying to manage increases in impervious surfaces. The OSPAC considered this and discussed the width and the impervious surface with them.

Another resident also spoke saying he felt the path is well intentioned but because he feels the playground is little used, he doesn't see it worth the investment. He said the equipment in the new plastic playground is "gooney" stuff and not fun like it was when his kids played there. He said the old playground which was taken out had the fun stuff. He said there's almost never any kids there. He asked if there isn't a better project to spend the money on? He said he's not vehemently against this project but just wondered if there is another project that is more urgent. Mr. Meehan said that although there might not be a lot of kids using the playground recently, it appears the demographic of the neighborhood is trending younger. He said this is a low-cost project that will provide better access for all and with better access the park will likely be used more by people of all ages but especially the younger families.

Another neighbor living near the park entrance from Tennis Circle adjacent to his property, said there is a side slope and drainage issue at that entrance. He said that area doesn't drain well and when it gets wet the high school kids coming across the park from Drinnon Way would choose using the path, if it were there, instead of coming through his yard. He is in favor of that.

There were no other comments from the neighbors. Mr. Meehan thanked them for their input and invited them to stay for the remainder of the meeting, but most chose to leave at this point.

The Committee continued discussion of the input from the neighbors particularly the concern about its width at nine feet which opened the possibility of it being a "roadway" with motorized street vehicles using it and also the area of a reported sinkhole in the area the new path alignment was running through. Being worth the investment was also discussed with the consensus that this is a project that has been on our list of "improvements to park access" for many years and there will always be questions about the possibilities of using the funds for other projects. But because this is an item that will address ease of access and seen as encouraging greater use of the park which are goals of the OSPAC, the committee sees this project as a low-cost improvement which meets the goals.

As a result of the further discussions, a consensus was reached, and motion made by Mr. Costlow and seconded by Mr. De Haven

*"That the following revisions be made to the proposed path through Drinnon Park beginning at Tennis Circle to the park playground and continuing to the Drinnon Way cul-de-sac.*

- *The path be reduced to a six-foot width,*
- *Bollards/pylons be placed at the ends of the path where it intersects with Tennis Circle and Drinnon Way,*
- *A possible area of old "landfill" left by the developer be discussed with public works to (a) determine its location and (b) if warranted, re-align the path from the south side of the playground to the north side to avoid the area where settlement has occurred in the past. (The landfill area needs to be discussed with PW who filled in the settlement not too long ago.)*

All committee members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Meehan said he would forward this recommendation to the Township staff.

## **OLD BUSINESS UPDATES**

**TA Trail – Trumbauer to Valley View Way** Construction work has been completed and the trail was dedicated in a ceremony on May 25<sup>th</sup>. The trail is now officially open to the public.

**Kriebel Road Trail II – PECO Powerlines to Green Lane Park** Construction is underway with a substantial amount of work already completed, including the paving. A concern with a drop off to the creek along a short section of the trail near Green Lane Road is being addressed by adding a fence through this section. Because of the low construction bid received, this fence and some other additional items will be able to be done without exceeding the approved budgeted funding. The committee discussed the trail's separation from the roadway. It was noted a white traffic line has been painted on the edge of the path side of the roadway near Green Lane Road.

### **Kriebel Road Trail II Continuation – Green Lane Park (near sewer plant entrance) to Fischer's Park**

Mr. Meehan noted that an application is being submitted for a DCED grant in the amount of \$250,000 for this next section of the trail. The details of the full scope of the work will depend on the amount of funding so the details of the design will wait until the Township knows whether or not it was successful in being awarded the grant. The Committee briefly discussed the options for the portion between Bustard Rd. and Fischer's Park.

**Green Lane Road Park – Soccer Field** – A proposal was received from CKS for engineering work to prepare a layout, a design and bid documents. The BOS decided they want to get additional proposals from other firms, so they are not relying on a single proposal. Proposals are being sought from other firms and until the time a proposal is accepted, further work is on hold.

**Bocce Courts at Fischer's Park** - Mr. Kraynik provided the latest update. The Township continues to push for a meeting of Supervisor Marino and Top-a-court to explore options for a lower cost for the work they might be able to perform on the courts. He has not heard of the results of that meeting or if it has taken place yet. He said the next PW Committee meeting is Jun 14<sup>th</sup> and he expects the BOS to make a decision on this at its June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Committee expressed concerns that this is not moving forward and concerns that PW will not be able to perform their part of the work in 2023 because of the tightening timeframe remaining this year.

**Grist Mill Grant** - Mr. Kraynik said the Grist Mill Park Montco40 Grant did not get funded, however the Township's application for Weikel Road was funded to the amount of \$200,000.

Mr. Meehan said the Township will now look for other funding sources including looking at the possibility of funding the match with Township funds. Mr. Costlow raised the question of possible use of funds from the sewer sale APA transaction, which is money the Township did not anticipate having.

**Pickleball Courts** – Mr. Meehan reminded the Committee that at last month's meeting we came to a conclusion that the Committee favors constructing four pickleball courts at Fischer's Park and six at Butch Clemens Park with Butch Clemens (BC) being the preferred site. We hadn't decided on which might come first so there was no preference for timing if it came to a choice between the two.

Mr. Meehan said he passed this on to Mr. Kraynik and Mr. Carney and in his discussions with them they noted that it seems to make sense to spread the courts to different areas of the Township. They also noted that placing courts at BC would need not only construction of the courts, but also vehicular access to the courts and parking for the courts whereas at Fischer's the construction would initially involve only construction of the courts. Access is already there; parking is there within short walking distance and more could be added as part of the plans to provide more parking for large events.

They mentioned that building four courts first at either location could be a trial balloon confirming the demand for courts. They said we can only build what we can afford, and the Fischer's Park site seems the most affordable.

The Committee discussed their input and was swayed by it. The Committee favors constructing six courts for the trial balloon acknowledging that at neighboring Township's courts, people are waiting in line to play. There was no doubt in the Committee minds that if built, they would be fully utilized. The Committee also felt that because of economies of scale, if building four, building six instead at one time would be smart.

After a full discussion, the Committee reached a consensus on a recommendation for pickleball courts in the Township. It recommends as an initial venture into pickleball, the Township construct six pickleball courts at Fischer's Park on a portion of the ballfield area used for overflow parking. This could be done in conjunction with plans being considered to construct a pavilion and a permanent parking area on this largely unused ballfield. Then in the not-too-distant future, add four more courts at Butch Clemens Park directly behind the Wawa.

Mr. Costlow made a motion to formalize the recommendation of the Committee.

*"That the Township construct six pickleball courts at Fischer's Park and four or more in the future at Butch Clemens Park"*

Six of the committee members voted in favor of the motion, one abstained, no one opposed. The motion passed. Mr. Meehan said he will forward this recommendation by the OSPAC to the Township staff.

**Butch Clemens Field - Engineering for Pavilions/restroom** - At last month's meeting the Committee discussed a mention made in TYA's email regarding the pavilion location that the Township explore using the North Penn Water parking area adjacent to Butch Clemens Park for overflow parking. Mr. Meehan said he thought this would be a question explored by TYA directly with the Township and the Water Authority. Both Mr. Vaitis and Mr. Fischer said that they felt it should start with the OSPAC. Mr. Meehan said he has not looked further into this but if the expectation was that the OSPAC would initiate that discussion, he will follow up on it. Beyond this there is nothing further to report on the engineering planning for the pavilion/restroom.

**Planting Trees along Kriebel Road Trail** - Mr. Costlow said he has been working on a tree planting plan along the Kriebel Road trails. He said he has taken a list of species and laid them out on his plan. He has spoken to DCNR and found out American Chestnuts are not available so he will have to make some changes. To obtain more information on what species might be appropriate and available, between now and the next meeting he will send his plan to his contact at DCNR. American chestnut trees can be planned for the future when they become available. He also noted that his experts highly recommend that a maintenance plan be included in a planting plan. One option he suggested was to have volunteers take on the task of watering the trees until they are well established. He said he will provide more details of his tree plan at next month's meeting. Mr. Meehan said the OSPAC needs to agree on the plan soon if we intend to get some trees planted in the fall of 2023.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Request For 2024 Capital Projects Budget**

Mr. Meehan told the Committee he received an email from the Township notifying him that Capital Project Requests for 2024 need to be submitted no later than the end of July. In prior years they were requested by late October. This means the time to prepare those requests is compressed and we need to make preliminary decisions on our requests tonight to allow time to gather the necessary request information. He asked the Committee for their thoughts for Park Capital Projects we should be planning and pursuing for 2024.

The Committee reviewed the Capital Parks Projects requested for 2023 and their status. The Committee wants the items approved but not yet completed in 2023 be carried forward to completion in the remainder of 2023 or into 2024. Some of the 2023 budget items have changes to their scope. The soccer field construction at Nash School is changed to be the soccer field at Green Lane Park. The budgeted funds of \$150,000 are to remain the same, just the location is changed. The budgeted amount for planting trees in 2023 assumed getting a PECO grant of \$10,000, which did not happen. So this 2023 budgeted item of \$20,000 gets reduced to \$10,000 some of which was spent for five trees at Green Lane Park with the remainder available for planting this year.

Mr. Fisher mentioned that work budgeted in 2023 to replace fencing at the Bustard Road Park ballfields needs to be pushed. There is \$10,000 budgeted starting in 2023 and each of the following five years and this fencing replacement is a serious concern for TYA since spectators walking between fields #3 and #4 are vulnerable to hard hit foul balls that the existing fence being only six feet high don't stop. He recommends combining several years budget items into one and getting all the fencing work done at one time.

The Committee discussed the priority need for a pavilion at Grist Mill which is heavily used for TYA soccer. It has been on the Committees priority list for at least four years, either as a stand-alone project or as part of the Phase 1 improvements for which the Township received a DCNR grant which is on hold pending a matching grant. The Committee agreed that a pavilion there is much

needed and is the Committee's highest priority for 2024 funding. If the grant can be used for the pavilion, it would be great, but if not, some other way of funding a pavilion should be found.

The Committee also discussed the grant funding for Grist Mill Park from DCNR. This grant has a "use by" date and there is a lot of work needed to get engineering plans and bid documents prepared and then construct the improvements. The Committee requests the Township find some way of matching this grant even if using only the Township's funds so it is not lost. Matching this grant would also provide the funds for the pavilion mentioned above.

The Committee also wants to keep moving forward with the construction of restrooms and a pavilion at Butch Clemens Park now that we have gotten a preferred site for the location of this facility from TYA. Funding for the engineering of the first step to connect the utilities from the street to the site was approved in the 2023 budget and now the next step which the Committee recommends for 2024 is to bid and construct the utility connections "from the street" to the restroom site. This same process was used in building the restrooms at Grist Mill Park and Green Lane Park.

Regarding Capital Improvement items to consider for the 2024 budget, the Committee, in preliminary discussions, proposed the following improvements:

- A pavilion at Grist Mill Park (Highest Priority)
- Provide township funds to match the \$250,000 grant from DCNR for phase 1 improvements to Grist Mill Park whether an additional grant is available or not.
- Fund the connection and installation of utilities at Butch Clemens Park from their origin "in the street" to TYA's preferred restroom/pavilion facility site.
- Replace fencing at several of the Bustard Park ball fields first and third base "foul ball" protective fences along the baselines. Existing fences are low and a risk exists for spectators being hit by line-drive foul balls.

Mr. Fisher also noted that nothing has been done with the portion of Fischer's Park even though there is an apparent need for developing it. He strongly suggests developing a plan to utilize this part of the park for parking, more athletic fields and other uses that could make better use of the park. This should be brought forward as a higher priority as these needs become more critical with TYA's loss of ballfields at Bustard Road Park with the construction of a salt storage facility there. Other committee members echoed the sentiment but also acknowledged that we have to set priorities given the limited funds available for capital park projects.

With there being no further business, a motion was made, and the meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on July 17th, 2023  
(Originally set for July 10<sup>th</sup>, but pushed back due to conflict with the Planning Commission Meeting)**