

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
November 13, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Dr. Richard Costlow
Robert DeHaven
Michon Blake
Dan Vaitis
Dave Sponseller
Todd Fischer

Not attending

Joe Rumsey
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC Committee

Chairperson Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 on Thursday November 9th, who then provided the Township's update on items the OSPAC has been following. Their update comments will be passed on to the Committee as the individual items are discussed in tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Dennis McGeehan was present, and he will comment when the Committee discusses the TA trail.

APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES – Meeting of October 9th, 2023

The minutes of the September 18th meeting had been distributed to the Committee by email prior to tonight's meeting. Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments on the minutes as written and distributed. Mr. Vaitis noted there was an incorrect heading in one of the paragraphs. On page 4, 2nd paragraph, the heading should read "Connection between Green Lane Ballfields and Bustard Road Park Ballfields". Mr. Meehan agreed that was an error and said he would correct it. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes with the above-mentioned correction made. Mr. Vaitis seconded the motion. All Committee members then voted in favor of the motion to approve the minutes as corrected. None were opposed and none abstained. The minutes were approved. Mr. Meehan said he will forward them to the Township staff to be posted on the Township website.

OLD BUSINESS – Updates

Mr. Meehan said he intended to provide a summary of the 2024 Budget as it relates to the Parks Capital Fund Budget and the Arneith Fund Budget, but he can only provide information he saw at the BOS's last budget meeting where the draft budget was presented and approved for advertisement. As of today, he said the full budget is not shown on the Township website.

Based on the Budget Presentation at that meeting, he said it is likely some items the OSPAC requested will not be approved because of their high cost. Among them was the addition of pickleball courts at Fischer's Park. In the budget as presented at the BOS Meeting, the proposed courts have been lumped together with two other improvements at this location, a pavilion and a large parking area, and the total cost is estimated at over \$2,000,000. which puts this well out of reach. He said further details of this item were not discussed at the presentation and perhaps when the budget is published, more will be shown in it.

Another item that was included in the budget was \$250,000 for the planned improvements at Grist Mill Park. This will be used to match the \$250,000 grant received from DCNR. At his meeting with Mr. Kraynik, Mr. Meehan said Mr. Kraynik anticipated that the Township would add this into the 2024 budget, while also applying for an LSA Grant of that same amount for this park. If the Township is successful in obtaining the grant, the grant money would be added into the budget and the original budgeted funds released for other uses.

Updates

- **TA trail** – Mr. Meehan said after the October OSPAC meeting, he met with Mr. Kraynik to discuss several items, among them the cost summary for the TA trail which seems to have gone above budget. Mr. Meehan said he asked for a more detailed summary of the project's costs, looking to see if there were any lessons learned that could be applied to future projects to avoid unbudgeted, unexpected costs.

Mr. Kraynik said he will request this information from the Finance Director and then we could meet and review the costs. Dr. Costlow suggested Mr. Kraynik explain these costs to the OSPAC at one of our meetings. Mr. Meehan said he would ask for his attendance at one of our meetings once we have the summary of costs.

- **Green Lane Park Soccer Field** – Mr. Meehan said he was told CKS has nearly completed a concept plan for soccer fields at Green Lane Park. Mr. Kraynik recommended he contact Mary Stover, the Township Engineer, and coordinate with her to show the concept plan to the OSPAC. At the same time, it will be shared with others who attended the stakeholders meeting held in October, for their review. Then another meeting will be held to get a consensus from all the stakeholders for the plan going forward. Mr. Meehan said he will be contacting Ms. Stover to get a copy of the concept plan so we can provide our thoughts on the plan, which can then be taken to the meeting with the other stakeholders. Mr. Meehan said he also was told this plan does not address anything other than the fields. Parking is not included because there are not sufficient funds to prepare an engineering design for parking at this point.

In the meantime, fill material continues to be accepted at the site as can be seen in the large amount of material being stockpiled there. The major work would be re-grading the site using the stockpiled material to level off the area. It seems the task for re-grading might be given to Public Works to perform.

- **Bocce Courts at Fischer's Park** – From his meeting with Mr. Kraynik, Mr. Meehan was told Supervisor Marino is the one coordinating with Top-a-court for the replacement of the courts playing surfaces. As we get deeper into the colder weather, it is less likely the courts' surfacing will be able to be done yet this year in advance of its originally scheduled spring 2024 timeline. It now appears it will fall into its original schedule time.
- **Drinnon Park Path** – Mr. Meehan said the path is now complete. He suggested trees be planted in the future along this trail to help with the wet conditions that exist at this park. He asked the committee if they agreed to consider plantings in the future along this trail in the section between the playground and the cul-de-sac. None of the Committee members were opposed. The Committee also suggested other plantings with lower canopies that improve the site and add interest to the park. This is also something the OSPAC should keep in mind for future years.
- **Tree planting along the Kriebel Road Trails** – Mr. Meehan noted that Dr. Costlow made a presentation to the BOS at their Oct 25th meeting asking approval to move forward with planting 22 trees along the Kriebel Road trail in 2023. The presentation included species selected for planting. (A copy of Dr. Costlow's presentation is attached) The BOS gave approval to move forward with planting the trees. Subsequent to the meeting, Dennis Carney of the Township Staff gathered price quotes from three vendors for supplying the trees, planting them and being responsible for their survival for one year from the time of their planting.

After reviewing the quotes, a recommendation was made by staff to accept the proposal from David Brothers in the amount of \$16,694 for the trees and the BOS at its session on November 8, 2023, approved the David Brothers, Landscaping Services proposal.

Mr. Costlow noted that he had a discussion with David Brothers who noted that the chestnut trees they are planting are a 90% blight resistant and 100% blight resistant trees are not yet available and they are working

on developing the blight resistance to get to 100% but getting to this is still only about five years away, hopefully. Mr. Meehan also noted the chestnut trees planted are not 2-2.5-inch caliper. The larger sizes are not available, and the size planted are what David Brothers included in their proposal.

The committee discussed restrictions on planting beneath PECO powerlines and distance between trees.

This discussion led to an update about the application for PECO Green Region Grant. Mr. Meehan noted that the grant application deadline was originally November 17th, but it has been extended to the end of November. He noted this extension will give some additional time to prepare the application. The application will essentially be a duplication of the trees now being planted along the Kriebel road Trail. The additional trees will be interspersed with these new trees and older trees and more added in open areas along the eastern/southern end of the trail.

- **Grist Mill Park Improvement Engineering Plans** - Mr. Meehan said \$250,000 is included in the proposed budget to match the DCNR grant for the improvements proposed at Grist Mill Mark. As said previously, at the same time, a Local Share Account Grant (LSA) is being applied for with the thinking that if the Township was successful in obtaining the grant, the grant money would be added into the budget and the original budgeted funds released for other uses.

With this approach in mind, Mr. Kraynik said he will be asking CKS for a proposal for the engineering work which will then need to be approved by the BOS before any work begins. Once the approval is given, the approach taken for funding the engineering will be to split the cost between the funds in the DCNR grant and the Township, with the possibility the Township portion would be reimbursed by the LSA Grant. Mr. Meehan said having the engineering completed and construction drawings in hand will be a big step in moving this project forward.

- **Additional Parking at Fischer's Park** – CKS has come up with a first draft of a plan which includes additional parking, a pavilion and pickleball courts. Mr. Kraynik asked Mr. Meehan to communicate with CKS and ask for a copy of the draft concept plan so the OSPAC Committee can review it. Mr. Meehan said he will talk to Mary Stover and request a copy of the draft concept plan for review at the next OSPAC meeting.
- **Pool Update** – Mr. Meehan said Mr. Kraynik indicated some repairs have been initiated at the pool and are now completed. Otherwise, all is well.

Mr. Sponseller mentioned that his kids have grown up and he no longer has the connection with the pool and the swim team he once had. The Swim Team Board wants to have a swim team parent involved with the OSPAC committee and there is a parent who is interested and willing but doesn't have the time to attend every meeting and be a full-time member. He asks could that individual be a member of the OPSPA as an "associate member" who would not have voting rights but would be someone who is kept in the loop with agendas and minutes. Someone who would come to meetings when there were pool issues and concerns on the agenda or be someone who would ask that an issue be put on the agenda.

The Committee discussed this, and members said there are likely other members of the community who might also like to be connected to the committee this same way, for example the birding community. Mr. Meehan said he will bring this up to Mr. Kraynik and see if the OSPAC could have associate members just like the Environmental Advisory Council. They would still need to be appointed by the BOS. They would not have the voting rights that a full Committee member has.

Mr. Sponseller asked how an individual could be appointed to the Committee and was told that the individual needs to fill out an application which can be found on the Township website. The application is then submitted to the Township. (Colleen Ehrle). And the individual should indicate in his/her application, his/her interest in the pool as a swim team parent as well as being an OSPAC associate member.

Mr. Meehan said he will present this OSPAC associate membership proposal to Mr. Kraynik for discussion with the BOS.

In response to a question about the numbers of pool members this past season, Mr. Sponseller said Standguard would provide those numbers only to the Township. The Township should request them directly from Standguard. Mr. Meehan said he would pass this along to Mr. Kraynik.

A final note about the pool from Mr. Kraynik. He said the township is beginning to look at a pool rehabilitation/update plan for the future.

- **Farming on Township Property** – There has been no change on this issue. The farmer has not responded to the Townships request to discuss this matter. Mr. Costlow asked why the Township allows the farmer to continue and get the benefit of the farming and just keep putting off discussions by ignoring the Township's outreach.

Mr. Meehan said he doesn't know the reason the Township has not pressed the issue but in response to Mr. John Ginther, a neighbor bordering the farmed area in Fischer's Park, who complained about the farming, he agreed to keep the item on the agenda. Mr. Meehan said Mr. Kraynik has also talked to Mr. Ginther.

Mr. Meehan said he will bring this up with Mr. Kraynik again and ask if he can provide more information about moving this matter to conclusion.

- **Connection between Bustard Park and Green Lane Park** – Mr. Meehan said he looked further at the idea he suggested at the last meeting which was originally presented by parents of TYA baseball who suggested a path/trail connecting the ballfields at Bustard Park with the ballfields at Green Lane Park. He said, although on paper the connection seems workable, when visiting the site, he saw the two are separated by a deep ravine. The steep slopes and almost "cliff like" drop-offs especially at the Bustard Road Park end of such a connection and the possible need for a footbridge across the tributary of the Towamencin Creek make this connection likely costly and not something that should be a high priority when compared to other current needs. For this reason, he is withdrawing his suggestion that the OSPAC look further into this connector. Maybe some time in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

Connector Trail from the TA Trail to Brookside Farms Development – Mr. McGeehan a resident of Brookside Farms development was present to inquire about a connection from Spring Valley Road in his neighborhood to the TA Trail. He noted that years ago he was given a plan for what was then known as the KRI trail which showed a connecting path from the trail up to Spring Valley Road. He also noted that the recently completed Township Connectivity Study also showed this connection and the costs associated with constructing it. The cost was about \$27,000. He said he sent an email to Dave Kraynik who responded that through the OSPAC, the Township will ask for feedback from the entire neighborhood.

Mr. Meehan said he will work with the Township to send out letters to the residents of the development and tell them we intend to discuss this connector path at one of our meetings and ask them to attend and provide their input. He said the earliest meeting would be the February meeting. In the meantime, the property owners and addresses will be compiled, and the letters prepared.

Mr. Costlow said we should be prepared to show what the connector would look like. He said this is a steep slope and consideration to the flow down this slope needs to be looked at carefully to prevent erosion which would end up in the Towamencin Creek. He said channel flow in such steep conditions would likely need a sophisticated design.

Mr. Meehan said the next step is working toward presenting this to the neighborhood for their input.

- **Fischer's Park North of Kriebel Road** – Mr. Meehan suggested the Committee look further at the portion of Fischer's Park north of Kriebel Road. The area where the meadow and bird habitat are located. He said he has a plan prepared years ago by Simone-Collins as part of the early Fischer's Park Master Plans that shows Kriebel Road relocated and making a new connection with Springer Road. This relocated alignment makes a good separation of this area into two parts, one which could be for active use and one for passive use.

Mr. Meehan had a roll of plans prepared years ago by Simone-Jaffe (now Simone-Collins) that showed this section of Fischer's Park and the Kriebel Road "cut-off" to Springer Road. The Committee looked at these plans and discussed the many possibilities for improving this portion of Fischer's Park. Topics that came

up in the discussions were: moving the bird habitat to elsewhere in Fischer's; the ability to add additional parking providing a second entrance to the park coming through the an entrance over the pedestrian bridge; safer pedestrian access to the portions of Fischer's park south of Kriebel Road from a new parking area; possible creation of a new active recreation area with some ballfields; redesignation of parts of Fischer's as walking trail areas, another as active recreation area and others as a naturalized area; elimination of the not-too-safe "S" curve on Kriebel Road; and better access for large fire vehicles using Kriebel Road. The downside of creating this however is, as always, the cost.

Mr. Meehan suggested that if the plans being considered for the ballfield area for parking, a pavilion and pickleball are estimated to cost a significant amount, maybe this money plus a little more should be spent to develop the north side of Kriebel Road resulting in an overall park that could also better addresses some additional needs. Maybe there are grants that could be sought for this larger overall improvement. Mr. Meehan suggested we take another look at this possibility. Maybe walk this site and take some photos.

Mr. Meehan asked the Committee if anyone had any other new business. There was none.

With there being no additional business, on a motion by Ms. Becker, seconded by Dr. Costlow with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on December 11, 2023

Regarding the January 15th, 2024 Meeting (Meeting Hall likely will not be available because of setup for NPSD Referendum voting the following day)