

Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
July 17, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Dr. Richard Costlow
Joe Rumsey
Michon Blake
Todd Fischer
Dan Vaitis
Dave Sponseller
Nancy Becker (by phone)

Absent:

Robert DeHaven
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 mentioned the need to rearrange the agenda to address important matters that often got only a hurried review when discussed near the end of a meeting. Tonight's agenda puts these items first.

He noted that Ms. Becker is participating via phone.

Mr. Meehan reported he attended a recent meeting with Dave Kraynik and Dennis Carney, and a joint visit to Drinnon Park, where they provided updates which will be discussed further as topics come up in tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Katie Cleary was present as an interested Township resident. She said she had no comments.

Participating by phone was Kevin Sekula who is a swim team parent and interested in the OSPAC's discussions regarding the pool and swim team. He also had no comments. Mr. Sponseller said he suggested Kevin participate in the OSPAC meetings since the Sponseller children have moved on from the Township swim programs and he thought a new swim team parent should start getting involved.

APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES – Meeting of June 12, 2023

The minutes from the June 12th meeting had been distributed by email to the committee members. Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or corrections on the minutes as written. There were none. Mr. Costlow made a motion to approve

the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Blake. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes as written and distributed.

PRESENTATION

The presentation by a Boy Scout originally planned for this meeting was deferred to a future meeting at the scout's request due to a last-minute commitment he had not anticipated.

OLD BUSINESS – Updates

Mr. Meehan noted he has rearranged the agenda from the format previously used at these meetings, to prioritize matters that required agreement so the 2024 Budget Requests could be submitted to the Township before the end of July deadline. The Parks Capital Project recommendations for the 2024 budget carried forward from the last meeting, were discussed. These included a pavilion at Gristmill Park, engineering for the utility connections to a pavilion at Butch Clemens Park and replacing fencing at some Bustard Road Park softball fields. He noted that pickleball courts although discussed at length and a consensus agreed upon for a number and a site, were not included in the list of our requests. He noted that such items need to be specifically added to the Committee's budget requests.

Since the Committees' last meeting and in preparation for submitting the budget requests, Mr. Meehan said he sought out cost information for each of the items being requested which he shared with the committee.

The discussion began with the top priority items of a pavilion at Grist Mill Park. Mr. Meehan said he contacted a pavilion manufacturing company to obtain a price quote for a 28 by 40 feet pavilion. He received a quote which includes the structure, erection, shipping, and additional elements like concrete slabs and foundations. The cost totaled around \$140,000. This size pavilion is larger than the one proposed in the Grist Mill Park improvement concept plan and it will be important to consider this new size when planning it along with the other facilities to be added to this park.

Mr. Meehan continued, moving to the Budget Request to match the DCNR grant for improvements at Grist Mill Park. He said the deadline for using this grant is December of 2025 and to date we have not started anything yet. Since the Grant was for \$250,000 and it requires a dollar-for-dollar match, in 2024 we should be requesting \$250,000.

Next was the budget request for connecting the utilities (water, sewer and electric) from the nearest location in the street to the site of a proposed restroom/pavilion facility at Butch Clemens Park. To approximate the cost for this item, Mr. Meehan said he referred back to the records of the costs to install the same type facilities in Grist Mill Park and Green Lane Park in 2017. From the record he determined a cost per LF and factored in a price escalation of 28%, based on the Engineering News Record Construction Cost Index resulting in an estimated cost for installing the utilities to the approximate location of the proposed facility in Butch Clemens Park to be \$243,000.

He also shared the cost estimate he got for constructing six pickleball courts from John Coll of Top-a-Court. Mr. Coll provided costs that came from bids received by Upper Gwynedd Township for four (4) courts. Mr. said this was dated information but was valuable since it showed multiple bidders' prices for the four (4) courts which he then adjusted for inflation and also for construction of six (6) instead of four (4) courts and the price for six (6) came to \$315,000. Mr. Meehan said this is the cost he will use as the estimate for pickleball courts.

Mr. Costlow suggested providing a cost range instead of a specific number in our budget requests to allow for potential fluctuations. Mr. Meehan noted that the Capital Projects Budget Requests due by the end of July 2023, asked for estimates supported by cost quotes. The estimates being used include some contingency and that was considered sufficient. Others on the committee agreed.

This led to a discussion of procedural Issues with requests for Capital Parks Budget Items. Procedural issues were identified and discussed regarding how requests from organizations like TYA should be handled and who should make the requests. The Committee agreed this should be discussed with all the parties involved and proper channels be agreed upon, to ensure a consistent process and avoid conflicts.

A case in point was a fencing request from TYA softball. Issues arose due to information received by the Township Public Works Staff from TYA representatives that was not in alignment with what was being planned through the OSPAC. The importance of establishing a designated representative for TYA to communicate requests and adhering to the established process was emphasized. This case highlighted the need for streamlined communication and decision-making.

Another request will be made for planting trees in 2024. Mr. Meehan suggests that we earmark \$25,000 each year to plant trees. Funds already exist in the Township budget which comes from developers, who pay money in lieu of planting all the trees required. This request would be to transfer funds in the amount of \$25,000 from this "tree fund" to an item in the 2024 budget.

Mr. Meehan noted that a new item not discussed at last month's meeting but that he is considering including now is a request to begin engineering work for Veterans Memorial Park. (VMP) He said the Veterans Committee is anxious to have a plan more substantive than the VMP Master Plan to use for seeking grants and other sources of funding. This request is for developing an engineering design based on Simone-Collins concept Master Plan.

Concerns were raised about who was responsible for asking for funding for this new park since the Veterans Committee was responsible for developing the concept plan. Mr. Meehan cited similar questions about items for which TYA was responsible which were discussed at last month's meeting and in that instance the OSPAC felt such requests should be followed up on by the OSPAC unless a different direction was given. This request for VMP is similar and so we should be consistent. This request for VMP would be for Capital Projects Funding which the OSPAC is preparing for other Township

Parks.

A funding request estimate of \$100,000 for Engineering Work to take Veterans Park to the next step was proposed and will be included in the 2024 budget request.

Mr. Meehan said at the last meeting the committee's preliminary consensus was to request the aforementioned items, with the exception of the VMP item. He said now, going forward the committee needs to make a motion that these are the items it will pursue budgeting for 2024.

A motion was made by Ms. Becker and seconded by Mr. Sponseller that the items for which funding be requested in the 2024 budget are;

- A pavilion at Grist Mill Park
- Funds to match the DCNR Grant at Grist Mill Park
- Funds to install utilities for restroom facilities at Butch Clemens Park
- Fencing replacement at Bustard Road Park
- Tree Planting
- Six (6) Pickleball Courts at Fischer's Park
- Engineering for Veterans Memorial Park.

With the motion on the table the committee discussed some of the items further. For the fencing at Bustard Park the committee recommends combining the \$10,000 already approved, but not used for fencing in 2023 with another \$10,000 for 2024 and replacing that fencing along the older girl's fields baselines because of the safety concerns for spectators getting hit with hard hit, line drive, balls. The Committee agreed on this.

A question was asked by Mr. Sponseller if the \$25,000 being requested for tree planting would reduce the amount of funds for other requested items. Mr. Meehan said the tree funding request was a transfer of already budgeted funds and would not take away from funds being considered for other requests.

The Committee also discussed the pickleball courts further. Discussed was the option if funds were very limited, should the committee recommend four (4) courts. The question was do we recommend six or none, or do we include an option to reduce the number to four (4) if six (6) were not "fundable". The Committee agreed that an option should be given with Plan A being six courts and Plan B being four courts with the OSPAC preference being six courts, with even more in the future. The Committee members recounted the excitement that is generated in conversations, when residents are told about plans for pickleball courts and there was going to be a continued demand for courts.

The Committee's discussion then focused on prioritization of the recommendations. There is a discussion about the order of the priorities, with consideration for potential grants and the need to prevent loss of grant funding for Grist Mill Park. The importance of conveying the specific needs and reasons for each project, including safety and grant deadlines, is highlighted. The discussion begins with the recognition of the critical nature of the upcoming budget due to limited funding availability. It is mentioned

that the budget situation is uncertain, and there might be a need for loans or bonds to cover recommendations. The goal is to present well-defined recommendations that align with the committee's priorities. After further discussion the Committee agrees to the following priority for the recommended requests for funding for 2024.

1. Match the Grant Funding for Grist Mill Park Phase One: The committee agrees to recommend \$250,000 be requested to match the DCNR and start working on the proposed improvements outlined in the concept plan so work is completed before the grant deadline. This concept plan for which the grant application was submitted includes elements such as a pavilion, basketball courts, playground, and more. For this reason, the Committee feels the "Match the Grant funding", the \$250,000 match is a higher priority than the pavilion alone as was suggested previously. The pavilion is included in the \$250,000. For this first priority request, the pavilion is not requested as a stand-alone item but is included in this Grant Match Funding request.
2. Pickleball Courts at Fischer's Park: The committee discusses the popularity of pickleball and its potential positive impact and sets this as the next priority. Two options are to be presented: building either four or six pickleball courts. The general consensus leans toward six courts due to demand and potential benefits.
3. Install utilities at Butch Clements Park: The committee is recommending budgeting funds to install utility connections (Sewer, Water and Electric) from the street to the proposed location of a restroom facility at the mentioned park.
4. Fencing at Bustard Road Park: It is noted that funds allocated for fencing in the 2023 budget will be carried over to 2024, potentially totaling \$20,000. The recommendation is to not wait any longer and install safety fencing along the baselines of fields B2 and B3 to protect spectators.
5. Tree Planting: The committee is requesting the amount of \$25,000 for tree planting, using money from an alternative fund source.
6. Engineering for Veterans Park: Engineering work for the new Veterans Memorial Park is being requested is given a lower priority unless/until adequate funds are available.

The Committee added this agreed upon priority to the motion made on the recommendations for the 2024 Budget Requests. All Committee members voted for this motion.

Mr. Meehan said he will prepare the Budget Request Forms and supporting information and send it for review to the Committee members before forwarding it to the Township Finance Director before the end of July deadline. He asked that all Committee members review the information promptly and get back to him with any comments. In consideration of this request, Mr. Costlow added that silence should be considered assent. The Committee acknowledged this.

UPDATES ON ONGOING PROJECTS

Mr. Meehan provided the Committee with updates on ongoing projects. The updates were information provided by Mr. Kraynik and Mr. Carney.

- TA Trail – Trail is complete, the Township is working with Gilmore and Associates to determine the total cost information.
- KR2 Trail: Construction is almost complete and only minor tasks remain, including a short stretch of fence installation where the trail is close to the creek edge. Tree debris on the creek side of the trail also needs to be removed by the contractor.
- KR2A Trail: Mr. Meehan requested a copy of the DCED Grant Application submitted for this section of trail. It will be provided by Gilmore and Associates.
- Connectivity Study Grant Application: The Township is applying for a TASA grant to start work on some sidewalk connections recommended in the Simone Collins Connectivity Study. For the information of the Committee, Mr. Meehan described the sidewalk locations included in this application.
- Green Lane Road Soccer Field: The Township Requested Proposals from Engineering consultants to prepare a design for the soccer field at this park. Three were received and CKS's was the lowest cost. Mr. Meehan asked at his meeting with Mr. Kraynik and Carney what was CKS going to design for the site. Mr. Carney said they were talking about a 200' x 300' field. He said Mr. Carney mentioned that if the field was not that large and the site was terraced, perhaps multiple fields would work and maybe even reduce costs because the amount of earthwork would be reduced.
The Committee discussed the size of the site, the need for additional parking, replacement of the TYA field lost to the salt storage facility and other factors and felt that a meeting on site with everyone involved, the Township, CKS, TYA and OSPAC would be the best way to ensure that everyone had a full picture of the needs of TYA and to optimize use of the site to meet those needs. Mr. Vaitis recommended we get all together on site and in short order agree on the needs and the solution.
- Bocci Courts at Fischer's Park: Mr. Meehan said progress has stalled again. The work is to be shared between Public Works (PW) and Top-A-Court (T-A-C) with PW doing the walls and drainage and Top-A-Court doing the finesse work on the court surfacing. The issue at this point is the agreement on the division of these responsibilities and the costs of the work to be done by T-A-C. An attempt at a meeting to discuss and resolve these issues failed when all the parties did not show up for the meeting. If this gets resolved quickly, it is expected that PW will do their work this fall but T-A-C work would not be done until the spring of 2024.
- Drinnon Park Path: Mr. Meehan, Mr. Carney and Mr. Hillmantel met at Drinnon park and reviewed the proposed path. Mr. Hillmantel said he has not had any problems that he can recall with sink holes or settlement in this park. He recommends the path be the proposed curving alignment and be nine (9) feet wide. He recommends this width for ease of construction and lower cost. Mr. Meehan said at that meeting, the OSPAC will recommend the curving alignment but will recommend a six (6) foot wide path which the Committee feels is more in keeping with the smaller scale of the park and reduces the path's impervious surface footprint. Regarding bollards at the path's ends, both of the Township's representatives said they saw no need for this. For a vehicle to get onto the path it would have to jump a curb which they said they had not encountered at this park. There were Committee comments that bollards might make the residents feel more comfortable about their concern of vehicles on the path.
Mr. Meehan asked for the Committees endorsement of constructing a paved path of curving alignment and of a six-foot width in Drinnon Park. Mr. Costlow made that

motion, which was seconded by Ms. Becker. All Committee members voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Meehan said he will now request to be added to the BOS Meeting agenda, to make a presentation for the BOS's approval.

- Pool Update: Mr. Sponseller reported that he has received positive feedback from the pool managers indicating a significant improvement from the previous year. He said the pool managers indicated cooperation with facility management and Dave Kraynik has been fantastic. He added that the swim team is not having a contentious relationship with the snack stand manager as in the past, and fundraising has been successful. He said there has been no water loss beyond what is normal for pool operation.

- Farming on Township Property: Mr. Meehan reported from his conversation with Mr. Kraynik that there have been no new developments with the farmer. He has not been able to have a discussion with him.

Mr. Ginther said that as we were meeting the farmer is spraying on the property. No notice was given. He didn't know what was being sprayed. There is corn growing there. He said his main focus was maintaining a dialogue. He said only the farmer is benefitting from this farming. He asked what the next step is. Mr. Meehan said we give Mr. Kranik some more time.

- Additional Parking at Fishers Park: Mr. Kraynik and Mr. Carney said the Township is asking engineers to provide a concept plan for some engineering options. They will then select a firm to go forward with plans for parking, a pavilion and pickleball courts at Fischer's Park.

- Tree Planting: Mr. Costlow presented his latest plan for planting trees in 2023. It shows twelve (12) native trees being planted the first year with consideration of species diversity. He also said trees are being planted in specific areas needing habitat improvement. For this plan he has been collaborating with experts and organizations for selecting native Pennsylvania trees. His plan is his first step in creating a trail of trees. Copying his plan was discussed. Ms. Cleary said if she was given a digital plan, she would transfer the tree information to it so it could be copied digitally.

Mr. Meehan mentioned that the Fall 2023 newsletter is being prepared and an OSPAC and an article would be nice to have included. Mr. Costlow volunteered to write an article. The deadline for articles is August 25, 2023.

With there being no further business, the meeting concluded at 9:00 PM with a motion to adjourn.

The next OSPAC meeting is September 11, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph F. Meehan, Chairperson OSPAC

