

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee
Meeting of January 11, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Present:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Michon Blake
Todd Fisher
David Sponseller
Peter Murphy
Jim Roberts

Absent:

Todd Fisher
Lisa McKeogh
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC

COMMITTEE REORGANIZATION FOR 2021

This being the first meeting of the new year the first order of business was to select the chairperson and Vice Chairperson for the committee for 2021. Ms. Smith was not able to attend the meeting, and in her absence, Mr. Meehan, last year's Committee Chairperson, led the Committee in selection of this year's Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.

Mr. Meehan asked for nominations for Chairperson. Ms. Becker nominated Mr. Meehan. Mr. Murphy seconded the nomination. Mr. Meehan asked for a vote on the nomination. All Committee members voted in favor of Mr. Meehan to be the Chairperson for 2021.

Mr. Meehan asked for nominations for Vice Chairperson for 2021. Mr. Meehan nominated Ms. Becker. Mr. Sponseller seconded the nomination. Mr. Meehan asked for a vote on the nomination. All committee members voted in favor of Ms. Becker to be the Vice Chairperson in 2021.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan noted that he spoke with Mr. Rob Ford, the Township Manger, on Friday January 8th. Mr. Ford updated him about recent developments regarding Park projects and other items of interest to the Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee (OSPAC). When items noted below are shown as Mr. Ford's input, they are items being passed to the committee by Mr. Meehan from this meeting.

Mr. Meehan asked the Committee for its concurrence on dates for the OSPAC Meetings in 2021. The Committee accepted that the meetings be held on the second Monday of each month. A list of the actual dates is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Meehan passed around a list of current Committee members and asked that each member verify their contact numbers (Phone, and email).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There being no members of the public in attendance, there were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 9, 2020 Meeting (No meeting was held in December 2020)

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes to the November 9, 2020 as drafted and distributed. There were none. Mr. Murphy made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Ms. Becker seconded the motion. All committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

TOWNSHIP PARKS PROJECTS UPDATES

- a. **Grant Updates.** Mr. Meehan provided the Committee with the following updates regarding Grants for Parks and Trails. The updates were provided to him at Fridays meeting with Mr. Ford.
- ***Kriebel Road Trail II (Montco 40 Grant) - PECO Powerlines to Fischer Park*** – Mr. Ford will ask Gilmore and Associates for a proposal for the preparation of design and bid documents based on the conceptual design submitted in the grant application for this trail. He expects this to be available for OSPAC review at its February or March meeting.
 - ***Kriebel Road Trail I (TA Grant) Valley View Park to Trumbauer Road*** – Mr. Ford said he was told by Gilmore that the schedule has slipped. They submitted the constructability review to PennDOT, and it was returned with some comments which need to be addressed and then resubmitted. Action on this grant remains with Gilmore Associates and DVRPC in completion of the bid documents.
 - ***Kriebel Road Trail II (DCED Grant) - PECO Powerlines to Fischer Park*** – Mr. Ford contacted PA DCED and asked when the announcements of awards could be expected. They said they are doing the final review of applications and it tentatively looks like March for award announcements. There is no change on this grant. A grant application has been submitted to DCED and the Township does not expect to hear until late in 2020.
 - ***Veteran's Park DCNR Master Plan Grant*** – At their September 23, 2020 meeting the BOS put the Simone-Collins preparation of the Park Master Plan on hold until the Township hears whether or not the Township will be awarded other grants for which it has applied. No change on this since the last meeting. Mr. Ford says the Township would like to get the planning for Veteran's Park underway soon.
 - ***Veteran's Park DCED Master Plan Grant*** – Awards were expected to be announced near the end of 2020. Now DCED says they will not be making awards until spring.
 - ***Veteran's Park PECO Green Region Grant*** - \$10,000 – Grant application was submitted seeking \$10,000 toward the development of a Veteran's Park Master Plan. Mr. Ford contacted representatives of the group helping PECO make the awards and they said they only recently completed scoring and ranking the applications and they are on track for making the awards in early spring.
- b. **Fischer's Park Pedestrian Bridge.** Mr. Meehan noted that the new pedestrian bridge across the Towamencin creek, was erected in late November and all the approach work was then completed. The bridge was a great new feature in the park and added much needed access to the park on the north side of the creek. Unfortunately, the heavy rains and flooding that occurred on the evening of December 24, caused some washout, and lifted up the asphalt paving on the north approach to the bridge. The bridge is currently closed until the Township engineer can access the damage and propose a repair. The evaluation is currently underway.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Mr. Meehan passed on information on several items that would be of interest to the Committee.

- Pool replacement tiles will be installed this spring. The tiles were purchase under 2020 budget. Installation will be completed by Memorial Day.
- The Core5 development, a large source of Open Space impact fees, is moving forward but is considering making some changes related to electric vehicles.
- Mr. Ford will be contacting local farmers to confirm whether or not they are interested in continuing to farm on Township properties (Kibler Meadow, Veteran's Park)

OLD BUSINESS

- a. **2021 Budget Items** - Mr. Meehan noted the items approved by the BOS for inclusion in the Townships 2021 budget. They were:
- Replace the tiles around the competition pool in advance of the 2021 season. (Installation only, the tiles were purchased under a 2020 budget item) (\$35,084)
 - Engineering costs for preparing bid documents for the TA KRI Trail, (Trumbauer Rd. to Valley View Way.) (\$61,435)
 - Contingency contribution of Township funds toward preparation of a Veteran's Park Master plan. (\$50,000)
 - Address shade at the tot playground at Fischer's Park. (\$3,500)

- Install electric connection from Arneith entertainment center to new pedestrian bridge. (\$20,000)
- Complete the trail approached to the bridge. (\$20,000)
- Purchase additional recycling cans and picnic tables for Fischer's Park. (\$28,775)
- Park operating cost for all parks. (\$184,140)
- Park capital debt service, includes pool (\$190,000)

b. Parks Master Plan Review by Simone-Collins (S-C) S-C presented the final Parks Report to the BOS via Zoom at their October 14, 2020 meeting but the BOS deferred passing a resolution on accepting the report until they had a chance to review the report in more detail. Mr. Ford said he is preparing a resolution that will be presented to the Board at its January 27th meeting. Mr. Simone thanked the Board for their comments and the Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee members for their feedback and the direction provided through the process.

c. Use of the meadow part of Fischer's Park north of Kriebel Road - Mr. Meehan noted that with the coming completion of the pedestrian bridge in Fischer's Park, the committee should consider some low cost, easily implemented improvements to the meadow area on the north side of Kriebel Road which now becomes accessible via the bridge. The idea being to encourage residents to become familiar with this previously unused part of the park. The Committee had nothing to contribute beyond its thoughts presented at last month's meeting.

However, there was a discussion regarding pedestrians crossing Kriebel at the point where there is an "s"-bend in the road making it difficult to see oncoming vehicular traffic in both directions. It was noted that the new trail plan included a pedestrian crossing flashing light. Ms. Becker suggested eliminating the "s" now that the Hanks house has been demolished. Instead of spending money on flashing warning lights or other measures to improve the crossing, why not eliminate the problem. The Township should strongly consider eliminating the reverse curve that necessitated Kriebel Road weaving between the Hanks house and the Arneith house. Now that the Hanks house has been removed, Kriebel Road could be re-aligned and straightened, greatly increasing the sight distance in both directions, and making the crossing far better for pedestrians crossing. This could be a project PW seems to have the capability to do to keep the costs down. In addition, the portion of Kriebel Road pavement that is in the reverse curve and would be abandoned with a re-alignment, could be used as an already paved parking area. The Committee agreed this would be a great solution, Mr. Meehan said he would pass this suggestion along to the Township staff.

a. Long range individual park priorities based on the S-C park review. – Mr. Meehan passed on to the Committee an announcement of an upcoming grant opportunity. Applications are being taken until April 15th by the PA DCNR with a maximum amount of \$200,000. Mr. Ford asked the Committee for suggestions on for park improvements the Township might pursue using these grant funds. Ms. Blake said Grist Mill Park is the Committee's top priority and we should look at applying for a grant to make improvements there. Mr. Sponseller added that with this park's location along busy Allentown Road, the park is highly visible and provided a good "visual" for the Township's park system if there were more activities there. The Committee agreed this would be a good opportunity to pursue for a grant. Mr. Meehan said he would pass this along to the Township staff.

NEW BUSINESS

a. WIFI in Fischer's Park – Mr. Meehan said the Township had received an inquiry from a Township resident who asked if WIFI could be added in Fischer's Park. WIFI had been addressed by this Committee years ago and rejected because of the cost for its infrastructure. The costs have likely come down since then. As the Committee discussed this further although some members initially considered this not a bad idea, after discussion the consensus was not to provide it. The thoughts for the consensus against it were the following:

- the cost (although because of new technology likely less than the 2012 estimated costs of about \$20,000), the money would be better spent on "park" items

- the direction that technology is heading it seems that with 5G just around the corner, technology is outrunning the need for, and use of WIFI
- if established, there would be ongoing monthly costs associated with it
- it would be unlikely that coverage would work everywhere in the park being that the park is so large
- and in general, this is a park and do we really need WIFI in this setting.

It was discussed that a more appropriate place for having WIFI was at the pool. At one time there was pool access there but when the Y took over it was no longer available. It is likely Standguard already has an internet connection there and they might want to make WIFI available to pool members. It could be an additional selling point for pool membership.

- b. **Placing a “Little Free Library” in Fischer’s Park** Mr. Ford said he had received a request from an individual asking about placing a Little Free Library in Fisher’s Park near the playground areas. He asked for the Committee’s thoughts on this.

Committee members have seen these libraries in neighborhoods set up on an individual’s front lawn and in these locations they felt they were nice. In a Township Park setting the Committee felt they could be a problem. The thinking on this, included discussions on the following:

- most people seen reading in the park are reading their cellphones and not books
- who would be responsible for the library (physical upkeep; monitoring the books; and liability related to having something in the park, not controlled by the Township)?
- concerns about inappropriate books being placed there and the Township being caught in “free speech” controversies
- COVID rules currently restrict such circulation of materials
- there are other places both public and private that books available for exchange (Kulpsville Post office, and private residences in the Township.
- the possibility of this turning into another “geo-caching incident” where one incident turns a good idea into a bad idea.
- and that Fischer’s is a park, and we do not feel that a “library” would be appropriate there.

As an option, Mr. Murphy suggested that the Bookmobile be asked to add Fisher’s Park to its route and stop there on a regular basis.

The consensus of the Committee was not to allow placement of a “Little Free Library “ or similar library in Township Parks.

The next OSPAC meeting is on February 8, 2021

With there being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

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