

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
December 13, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Michon Blake

Todd Fisher
Dr. Richard Costlow

Laura Smith, Towamencin Supervisor, BOS Liaison to OSPAC

Absent:

Peter Murphy
Jim Roberts

Nancy Becker
Dave Sponseller

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Meehan led those present in the recitation of the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan welcomed the newly elected Towamencin Township Supervisor, Kristen Warner, who was in attendance. She will take her position on the Board of Supervisors on January 3, 2022. On behalf of the Committee, he congratulated Ms. Warner on her election to this position.

Mr. Meehan noted that on November 8th he met with Mr. Delamater, the Township Manager, who provided an update on items that the Committee has been following as well as items of interest to the committee. Mr. Delamater's updates will be passed on to the Committee as each item is discussed in the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of November 8, 2021.

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments on the minutes of the November 8, 2021, meeting as written and distributed to the Committee. Mr. Costlow said he saw a few misspellings but nothing that changed the substance of the of the discussions at the meeting. Mr. Meehan asked for a motion from the Committee for approval of the minutes of the November meeting. Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes for the November 8th meeting. Ms. Blake seconded the motion. All were in favor of accepting the minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Status of the 2021 “below the line” budget items.

Mr. Meehan updated the Committee regarding the Township Finance Committee's actions on the items the OSPAC had requested be upgraded from "below the line" to a budgeted item for 2021 now that additional revenue has been received in the form of Open Space Impact Fees. Mr. Meehan noted TT Finance Committee met recently and its report as presented to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) at its December 8th meeting recommended the following actions on the OSPAC related items.

- **Supplemental Funding to the Towamencin Swim Team to offset higher Standguard costs.**

The Finance Committee acknowledged this request. The report to the BOS noted the Township Staff was reaching out to Standguard to coordinate a meeting to discuss issues, including the costs Standguard is passing on to the Swim Team. The meeting has not taken place yet, so no action was taken by the finance committee on this request. The OSPAC accepts deferring this request until after the meeting with the swim team, Standguard, and the Township takes place.

- **Shade sails at Fischer's Park tot playground and at the bocce courts.**

The Finance Committee reported a cost quote was obtained by the Township for shade sails over the tot lot playground and also over the bocce courts. At \$129,000 the quote greatly exceeded the budgeted amount of \$41,000. Mr. Meehan said he felt the detail he provided in the request to move the shade sails into the budget was not detailed enough to match his intent for the request and thus was far different from the quotes obtained. The quote for the tot lot was \$54,000 plus delivery with the remainder being the quote for the bocce courts. Mr. Costlow said the "regular" bocce users especially the ladies were requesting some shade over the benches at the courts not over the entire courts which seems to be what the cost quote was based upon. Mr. Meehan said his intent was to provide shade sails only over the player's benches at the ends of the courts not the entire courts. The price quote was for covering the entire court area.

The action taken by the finance committee was to limit the shade sails to the tot lot and to pursue other cost quotes for only this area. The BOS at their December 8th meeting accepted the finance committee recommendation and took no further action at this time. The OSPAC accepts limiting the shade sails to the tot lot only and looks forward to the Township receiving additional cost quotes.

- **Adding twenty-five-foot-high fencing along the foul lines at the Butch Clemens ballfield**

The Towamencin Youth Association (TYA) has \$50,000 allocated for improvements to its facilities which has been requested to be moved above the line into a budgeted item. TYA sees a need for a higher fence along the foul lines at the Butch Clemens baseball field. Foul balls have been going over the existing fence and landing in the adjacent commercial property's parking lots and on the active roadway between the fields and the parking lot.

TYA see this a potential liability and asks that the township install this high fencing which has a cost of about \$48,000 but TYA feels it should be funded by the township with funds other than those allocated to TYA. The finance committee disagreed, and it reported that if TYA wanted to install the fence, it would be taken from the funds budgeted to TYA. The decision to proceed or not using the TYA allocated funds was left to TYA.

Mr. Costlow suggested installing "park at your own risk" signs in the adjacent commercial properties' parking lots rather than spending the money for a fence. Committee members said it was very unlikely the property owners would agree to such signs. He also suggested

approaching the property owners and ask them to share the cost of a fence. This was also not considered likely. Mr. Costlow said you wouldn't know unless you asked.

Ms. Smith said she is a strong advocate for TYA but on this issue, she agreed with the Finance Committee's judgement that this is an item that should be funded from the Township's budget to TYA for 2022.

Mr. Fisher said that a fence along the first base line is the most needed and perhaps only that one be installed, but that means funds allocated for other TYA projects would need to go toward this instead. He said in his opinion, TYA considered the other projects a higher priority at this time and it would likely not add a higher fence at this time.

- **TYA requested a change to the Nash School field grading**

At the Finance Committee meeting, it was mentioned that there is \$25,000 set aside to prepare a field on the Nash School property for use as a softball field. TYA requested that this field now be prepared as a soccer field instead of a softball field and the funds set aside be used for this. The Finance Committee agreed with this change. However, the preparation of the field will cost more than the set aside funds and the Finance Committee said this item will be placed "below the line" for 2022 and held there until additional funds become available.

b. 2022 Budgeted Items

Mr. Meehan referred the committee to the sheet of the 2022 budget showing the items budgeted for 2022. (A copy is attached to these minutes)

He noted that the 2021 below the line items approved in the budget are shown on this sheet under the heading Public Works and are prefaced by the number 6 in the first column. The items are:

- Shade sails at the tot playground and bocce courts
- A playground at Morgan Way
- A parking area at Kibler Meadows
- Infrastructure improvements at Butch Clemens field

Regarding the last item, he said this is the first step toward constructing a rest room facility at the Butch Clemens fields. It is intended for installing water, electric and sewer from the street to a location designated for a future rest room. The \$50,000 is not designated for any specific utility in the budget. It is to be used to install which ever utility could be installed for the money. He said the first step needs to be the planning and designation of where the rest room facility would be located.

Mr. Meehan also referred the Committee to the Parks and Open Space items for 2022 as shown on the budget summary. These are show as being funded with Park Capital funds. The Committee has discussed these previously when the budget request for 2022 was being prepared. He pointed out the last item, which is the construction of a trail connecting Grist Mill Drive to Grist mill park. This is an item proposed by Supervisor Wilson at the budget workshop in October, and the OSPAC agrees this would provide a paved trail connection for the Grist Mill neighborhood to the park.

Mr. Meehan said he spoke to Mr. Delamater about how the connection could be made. Mr. Delamater said the connection could not be placed in the Texas Eastern pipeline easement area,

so it needed to run through the Township owned park areas separating the neighborhood properties. He said the Township engineer will provide a recommendation on the trail layout. Years ago, the residents objected strongly to the overall Grist Mill Park Master Plan which included linear trails through the parkland between the residences. The committee feels this need to again be presented to the residents to see how they feel about this new connection. It seems there are at least some who are now in favor of it. Mr. Fisher who lives in this neighborhood said he will talk to his neighbors and see if he can “take the temperature” of feelings about it. He said he felt this proposal for a trail is different from what had been objectionable years ago.

Ms. Smith said the Supervisors should be the ones who talk with the neighborhood residents about this, much like they did when there was an issue with improvements along Weikel Road.

c. Updates on other Park items

Mr. Meehan also noted another item which does not show on the budget list but had also been discussed at the October budget workshop session. That was for the installation of lighting in the core area of Fischer’s Park so that as people leaving concerts and movies in the park in the evening would have light as they walked to their vehicles in the parking areas. Mr. Meehan said He said he had been in Fischer’s Park earlier today and the lights on the pavilions were already being installed. Being that this work is in Fischer’s Park, this work can be funded from the Arneith endowment funds.

Construction of a loop trail north of the new pedestrian bridge in Fischer’s Park is now also substantially complete with the exception of the viewing/seating areas. Kudos go out to Dave Hillmantel and the Public Works crew which constructed this trail. It is a wonderful extension of trails in Fischer’s Park and opens up a new area of the park for walking.

Mr. Meehan noted that Tim Gallagher who attended the November OSPAC as a potential candidate to volunteer for this committee has withdrawn his intention to join. He said Tim is still willing to help with hands-on projects as a Friend of Fischer’s Park (FOFP) but at this time choose not to get any more involved. Mr. Meehan said he is disappointed in his decision but understands and thanked him by e-mail for his offer to continue to help as a Friends of Fischer’s volunteer.

The Committee discussed spring activities for the (FOFP)volunteers. Ms. Blake had suggested previously that specific projects on specific dates be a way of getting volunteers started on some projects. Some projects which had come up at past meetings were again discussed such as rehabilitation of the greenhouse in Fischer’s. Rehabbing it has attracted some interest from volunteer gardeners, but questions remain as to who would use the green house if it were repaired and how the Township and public Works felt about spending money and effort on something for uses not necessarily benefiting the Township. Mr. Costlow said rehabbing the greenhouse is a sizeable undertaking project and purchasing landscape plantings commercially is going to be less than the cost of a rehab. The Committee agree that work on the greenhouse should not be pursued at this time. Mr. Costlow asked if he should pass this on the volunteer/s who are interested in rehabbing it. He was told to tell her/them we will not be rehabbing the greenhouse at this time.

The Committee discussed projects that could be offered to FOFP volunteers as spring 2022 prospects. There are potential projects such as a message kiosk, painting the pavilions, and landscaping but none are detailed at this time. Mr. Meehan said he had contacted Mr. Hillmantel in mid-December about meeting and discussing what needs to be done. Mr. Hillmantel said this would have to wait until after the holidays when he has more time. Mr. Meehan also said he will meet with Tim Gallagher who worked as a facilities manager his whole career before retiring. He will also walk with him in the park and get his thoughts on what was needed or could be done to enhance the park. Once we have some definite specific projects, we will match the projects with dates and then schedule them with the FOFP volunteers.

Mr. Meehan said he has talked to Mr. Delamater about preparing a “process” to be used when the Township is approached by a boy scout looking for doing an Eagle Scout project in the Township Parks. The formalized process could then be sent out by the Assistant to the Township Manager (Colleen) to a scout interested in a park project. He agreed that this is a good idea. Mr. Meehan said he received a request from a scout about a parks project a few days ago, and he responded to him with what will become the basis of the process used for all future scout inquiries. Mr. Meehan said in his response he mentioned the kiosk message board as a possibility and told him if he was interested to let him know.

Further regarding the process, Mr. Costlow mentioned that Mr. Delamater has worked closely with Mr. Skozen a scout troop leader and suggested they be involved in developing the process. Mr. Meehan said he would include them as well as Mr. Costlow who also has experience with scouting. Another item mentioned previously that might interest a scout was constructing a post and rail fence around the ME cemetery. Mr. Delamater advise that we should steer clear of this for now and wait until the Township owns the Cemetery.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Meehan updated the committee regarding several items including the removal of diseased trees in the Township. He said crews removed many of the marked trees along the wooded edge of Kriebel Road. The remaining diseased trees will be removed in the near future.

He also briefed the Committee on the very successful Christmas Holiday lights event in Fischer’s Park. He said the evening was crisp and clear which likely contributed to the large attendance which was said to be the highest ever for this event, The parking lot was filled to capacity and because many people were staying for a long while, it was difficult for subsequent arrivals to get into the park. All in all, it was a lot of people in the holiday spirit having fun especially the kids. The Committee sends congratulations to Cortney Marengo, the special Events Coordinator, the Special Events Committee and all the volunteers who helped. It was a great event!

TOWNSHIP PARKS GRANTS UPDATES

a. Regarding the TA Trail from Valley View to Trumbauer Road. The construction work is underway but at the present time only “behind the scenes” work is being performed. Work such as

planning the work, paperwork and design work for the bridge across the Towamencin creek along the trail route are underway.

b. The DCED Grant Application to provide matching funds to the Montco 40 Grant for the Kriebel Road Trail from the PECO Powerline crossing to the Hanks house site in Fischer's Park was not awarded to the Township. The Township will now need to reduce the scope of work to match the available funds. The project had already been broken into two segments but now the scope might need to be reduced further. Construction is expected to get underway in spring 2022.

c. The Township was also not awarded the DCED Grant for improvements to Grist Mill Park. The Township plans to apply again for a 2022 DCED Grant for this work. The awards for the DCNR Grant for Grist Mill Park have not yet been announced.

d. Simone-Collins, the Master Plan design consultant for Veteran's Memorial Park has prepared three preliminary concept plans for the park. Mr. Meehan showed the committee copies of the concepts which now will continued to be refined. Each of the concepts reflect the predominant theme favored by the resident's survey results indicating a desire for the park to be a peaceful, tranquil, natural park setting.

S-C is still working on one of the most difficult issues which is determining where an entrance into the park for vehicles could be made since the park is almost totally surrounded by other private properties.

A meeting to present the concept plans to the public is scheduled for January 18, 2022.

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on January 10, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph F. Meehan
Chairman, Open Space Advisory Committee