

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
January 10, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Michon Blake
Dr. Richard Costlow
Peter Murphy
Laura Smith, Towamencin Supervisor, BOS Liaison to OSPAC

Absent:

Todd Fisher
Dave Sponseller

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the assemblage in Pledge of Allegiance.

REORGANIZATION FOR 2022

Ms. Smith led the committee in reorganizing for 2022. She asked for nominations for Chairperson for the Committee for 2022. Ms. Becker nominated Mr. Meehan. Ms. Blake seconded the nomination. With there being no other nominations, the Committee voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Meehan will continue as the Chairperson in 2022.

Ms. Smith asked for nominations for the Vice-Chairperson for 2022. Mr. Meehan nominated Ms. Becker. Mr. Murphy seconded the nomination. With there being no further nominations, the Committee voted in favor of the motion. Ms. Becker will continue as the Vice-chairperson in 2022.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan informed the Committee that he received an email from Jim Roberts informing him that Jim was stepping down from the Committee. Mr. Meehan said he responded to the email thanking him for his work with the Committee and in the future, if he ever had thoughts or ideas related to the parks, please forward them to the committee as we will consider them as coming from a valued source.

Mr. Meehan noted he met with Mr. Delamater, the Township Manager, on January 7th. Mr. Delamater provided updates on items that would be of interest to the OSPAC, and his update will be included in the items as they are discussed this evening.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of May 10, 2021

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the December 13, 2021, meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Blake seconded the motion. Mr. Murphy said he had not attended the meeting so he will abstain from voting on them. All remaining Committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Lighting in the “core area” of Fischer’s Park

Mr. Meehan passed on information provided by Mr. Delamater that lights mounted on the pavilion structures have been installed and will illuminate the areas behind the Arneith entertainment Center leading to the parking areas. It is not certain that all the work is completed but it will be done before the spring use of the entertainment center. The lights can be controlled individually and will be used when there are events at the entertainment center that end near or after dusk and at special events during the winter months.

b. A trail connecting Grist Mill Park and the Grist Mill neighborhood at Grist Mill Drive

Mr. Meehan said the trail proposed to connect the park with the neighborhood has run into some questions about how the connection could be made. There were two options being looked at. One was along the Texas Eastern pipeline easement across Township property and the other through the Township parkland behind the Grist Mill residential properties. At the prior meeting with him, Mr. Delamater said it is questionable whether a trail could be placed within the Texas eastern easement and the second route runs through a stormwater management detention basin. Both have obstacles in choosing it for the trail.

Mr. Costlow asked if the property lines of the residences are surveyed and located in this area. Having this information would be very helpful in making decisions about the trail location. To date, it is thought they have not been surveyed and established.

It was pointed out that unlike the opposition to such trails years about 20 years ago, this trail connection was something that at least some of the Grist Mill neighborhood were in favor of.

Mr. Meehan told the Committee the Township staff and Township Engineer are looking at working within the constraints for both the issues to see if a trail connection is possible. More on this will be coming in the next few weeks.

c. Friends of Fischer's Park (FOFP)

Mr. Meehan said he is looking for potential spring projects in Fischer's Park that the FOFP could take on in the spring. He said we should be looking beyond just projects that are those that public works doesn't have the resources to perform and should have projects that are enhancements to the appeal of the park. He mentioned some that have been discussed in the past, including sprucing up the pavilions, a message kiosk, bird house and bat houses, and ornamental plantings.

He mentioned several ideas that he had thought of that might spark other's ideas. They were "wayfinding signs on posts" similar to street signs that would point to the different features in the park. He also mentioned "trail mosaics" installed in the trails that would add interest to the gravel trails. He asked for other ideas. Mr. Costlow brought up bicycle racks which a scout had brought up in the past, but the committee never endorsed because of the timing and proposed location. Now however with the new loop trail on the north side of the pedestrian bridge it might be worth revisiting.

A question came up about the projects similar to the Eliza Talal Memorial Butterfly Garden and whether there was a written policy on what could or could not be placed in the parks. The Committee feels that the Butterfly Garden was a very unique and emotional circumstance and was an exception. Requests like this are better handled on a one-by-one basis and not by having a general policy trying to cover all requests. Ms. Smith pointed out that there is a Township policy regarding memorial benches and memorial trees. Mr. Meehan noted that the Committee recommendations made several years ago encourages trees in lieu of benches not only in Fischer's Park but also other Township Parks.

Mr. Meehan said he had reached out to Dave Hillmantel in December asking to meet with him and tour Fischer's looking for potential spring projects. Mr. Hillmantel said a meeting would have to wait until after the holidays. Mr. Meehan said he would contact him again now that the holiday work in the parks is done.

d. Eagle Scout projects Process

Mr. Meehan said he has been in contact with a scout looking for a project in Fischer's Park. Mr. Meehan mentioned the possibility for a message kiosk. The scout said he would like to pursue this as his Eagle Scout project and will be doing so.

Mr. Meehan pointed out the need for a process that would be used by the OSPAC, the Township and the Scout to when a scout is looking for a potential project. He said he is drafting such a process and will pass the draft to Mr. Delamater and scout leaders to review.

Mr. Costlow mention that an observation platform at Kibler Meadow might be a good eagle scout project. Although it might be a challenge for a scout, the Committee will keep this in mind as a possibility.

e. **Unhealthy tree removals**

Mr. Meehan noted that the unhealthy trees marked for removal along Kriebel Road have been removed. The Committee suggests the Township come up with a plan for planting new trees in this area. Mr. Meehan suggested planting them in a line along the roadway or existing trail rather than in the random locations of the removed trees which had grown as part of the original wooded area. A plan needs to be developed for such new trees. Mr. Meehan said he will talk with Mr. Hillmantel about this.

Mr. Costlow sees this as an opportunity to create a “trail of trees” starting at Valley View Way all the way to Fischer’s Park lined with native trees and smaller plantings each with educational information about the tree, much like what is in Fischer’s Park. For such a trail we might be able to get the support of organizations like the Arbor foundation. This “Trail of Trees” or a “Tree Garden” could be made a feature of the trails and park. The Committee felt this was great idea and the kind of visionary thinking we want to encourage.

NEW BUSINESS

a. **Morgan way Playground**

The addition of a playground at Morgan Way Park was approved in the 2022 budget but it has run into several problems. There is a large, corrugated metal pipe (60-inch diameter) that is beneath the area being considered for the playground and the pipe is in need of replacement. There is no money for its replacement at this time and the Township doesn’t want to install any playground here until the pipe is replaced. Additionally, the Township’s risk advisor (insurance company) feels this is not a good location for a playground given how close to the street the playground would be. The OSPAC feels the second concern could be addressed by installing appropriate fence around the playground but agrees that the pipe must be addressed before moving forward with a playground. With the pipe not being an item expected to be done in 2022, the Committee is recommending that we hold off on the playground and move the budgeted money to another item for 2022. Ms. Blake suggested we go back to our original list of recommended budget items and select a substitution for the budgeted amount.

b. **Shade sails at the tot lot, Fischer’s Park**

Mr. Meehan said he received an email from Mr. Delamater showing the information provide by a vendor when the Township was estimating the cost of shade sails at the tot lot. While reviewing the information, Mr. Meehan noticed that the shade sail locations in the vendor’s information were not covering the areas (the swings and see-saw) which had seats which were meant to be shaded. He sent an email noting this to Mr. Delamater and asked that this be modified so the primary intent of the shade sails is met. Mr. Delamater responded that he would pass this information along.

c. **Parking area at Kibler Meadow Park**

While meeting with Mr. Delamater prior to this OSPAC meeting, Mr. Meehan said he was shown a sketch of the proposed parking are at Kibler meadow being proposed at 100 feet by 300 feet. Mr. Meehan presented a scale sketch of this proposed parking to the Committee. The Committee unanimously felt this was too large and not what was intended when it made its recommendation for a parking lot there.

The intent was a small parking lot that would enable Township residents to stop and enjoy the park and be safe getting in and out of their cars. The intent was for a permeable lot to accommodate a maximum of eight to ten cars which would also have a minimum footprint on the park. Also included would be sufficient space to turn around and safely exit the lot. The recommendation that the Township’s proposed parking area be reduced will be passed on to Mr. Delamater by Mr. Meehan.

TOWNSHIP PARKS GRANT UPDATES

Grant Updates. Mr. Meehan provided the Committee with the following updates regarding Grants for Parks and Trails.

- ***Kriebel Road Trail II (Montco 40 Grant) - PECO Powerlines to Fischer Park*** – Grant awarded. It needs addition Township funding to be implemented. It was hoped a DCED grant application the Township Submitted in May 2021 would be approved. Since the last OSPAC meeting, the Township received word DCED did not approve the grant application. With the DCED grant not being approved, the full funding of this trail is not in place.

The awarded Montco 40 grant needs to be completed within 24 months from the date the applicant is sent a funding contract...that completion date currently is 6/30/22. Mr. Delamater said that since the Township cannot come up with matching funds, Gilmore and Associates is looking at reducing the scope to match the funds available. They are looking to possibly reduce the width or shorten the length. The Township and Gilmore will be meeting with the County to explore all the options.

- ***Kriebel Road Trail I (TA Grant) Valley View Park to Trumbauer Road*** - Mr. Delamater said the contractor is eager to get started on construction of the trail. A meeting was held on January 7th to discuss the design of the pedestrian bridge crossing the Towamencin Creek and it is expected that clearing for the trail will begin soon. In the meantime, behind the scenes administrative work is being done by the contractor and the inspection firm.
- ***Kriebel Road Trail II (DCED Grant, 2021 round) - PECO Powerlines to Fischer Park*** – This grant was the match for the Montco 40 trail grant. See above.
- ***Veteran’s Park DCNR Master Plan Grant and Veteran’s Park DCED Master Plan Grant*** – Using the combined Grants, Simone-Collins continues work on this Master Plan. S-C has prepared letters to go out to “key individuals” to get their thoughts on what their vision of this park should be. Mr. Meehan said a second public meeting will be held on January 18th where S-C will present their three concepts of a Master Plan to date. Mr. Meehan asked everyone to use their social media connections to advertise this meeting. He said attendance at the first public meeting was disappointing.
- ***Grist Mill Park Improvements DCNR and DCED*** – An application requesting a grant of \$250,000 from DCNR was submitted on April 15, 2021. On December 30th, 2021, the Township was notified it was awarded this grant. This is good news, but the Township still falls short of being able to implement the plans shown in Phase I of the Grist Mill Improvements by another \$250,000. The Township was not awarded the matching grant from DCED for that amount. The Township will re-apply to DCED in the 2022 grant cycle. In the meantime, because there are no matching funds available for the improvements, they will have to wait.

In view of the not being able to match the grant monies the Township has been granted, Mr. Costlow suggested increasing the Park millage tax and dedicating the monies for use to match grant monies received.

With there being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM

The next OSPAC meeting is on February 14, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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