

**Towamencin Township  
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 14, 2022  
Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Nancy Becker  
Michon Blake  
Dr. Richard Costlow  
Todd Fisher  
Dan Vaitis  
Dave Sponseller

**Absent:**

Peter Murphy

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

**OPENING COMMENTS**

Mr. Meehan noted that Ms. Smith the Township Supervisor Liaison to the Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee (OSPAC) was traveling and unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Mr. Meehan also noted he had a phone conversation with Mr. Delamater, the Township Manager, on March 11, 2022. Mr. Delamater provided him with updates on items that would be of interest to the OSPAC, and his update information will be included in the items as they are discussed this evening. Mr. Delamater also informed him of the resignation of two Township employees, Ms. Brooke Neve, Towamencin's Finance Director and Ms. Cortney Marengo, the Township's Special Events coordinator. The BOS has begun a search for a new Finance Director. A key assistant to Ms. Marengo has been "promoted" to the Special Events Coordinator position. Ms. Katie Cleary will now hold the lead position as Events Coordinator. Mr. Delamater said with these resignations his workload will be heavier until they both get up to speed in their new positions. He asked that that be kept in mind by all Township Committees.

An Eagle Scout candidate, Jack Ely, is present to make a presentation,

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of February 14, 2022**

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the February 14, 2022, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Blake seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

## **EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT PRESENTATION**

Mr. Meehan introduced Jack Ely, an Eagle Scout candidate who is here to make a presentation requesting OSPAC's endorsement of a project to construct a message board kiosk in Fischer's Park.

Jack began his presentation stating he was a Life scout with Troop 51 in Hatfield. He had contacted Mr. Delamater regarding any potential projects he might consider in Township Parks that he could work on toward his Eagle Scout badge. Mr. Delamater suggested a kiosk was being considered and referred him to this committee.

He said he has taken courses in and has experience with 3D modeling and using software for modeling. His presentation was prepared using these experiences. (A digital copy of his presentation is attached to these minutes)

He showed details of the of his proposed kiosk showing among other things its height, its width, and three locations he has considered for its placement in Fischer's Park. Of these, his preferred location is at the intersection of trails leading into the park and near the SW corner of Beck's pavilion. He prefers this location because it gives good sightlines into the park and is likely to catch the attention of people heading out on those main trails into the park. The orientation was discussed with the committee. Jack asked if the committee had a preferred location. The Committee had other suggestions on location of the kiosk but told Jack this was his project, and he should choose the location he thought was best and be prepared to explain and stand behind his choice as he moved forward with developing the presentation for approval by the board of supervisors. Ms. Blake added that photos of the proposed location would be helpful.

He spoke of a rough estimate of the costs involved. He said he will be seeking donations for the project from material suppliers and also hoped that the Township might help with the costs.

The committee discussed the durability of his proposed materials and methods for accessing and locking the message board so it would be tamper-proof. The committee told him the primary purpose of the message board was to provide information to park users about upcoming park event such as movies and concerts as well as information about the park. Mr. Costlow suggested a "flyer" box attachment would be a good addition.

The committee mentioned that a similar message board had been located in the core area years ago but after not being maintained it was not being used and fell into disrepair and was removed.

Mr. Meehan asked Jack about the timeline for his project. Jack said he would be turning eighteen in early October but is targeting July 1<sup>st</sup> for completing the project because after that, new merit badge requirements kick in and he would like to be finished under the current requirements. He said he would like to begin construction in late spring to meet the July 1 timeline goal.

Mr. Meehan said he appears to be in good shape with meeting that goal. He now needs to refine his concept by preparing a narrative addressing the items discussed tonight and then submitting it to Mr. Delamater. Once he reviews it with public works and staff, and accepts it, it can be added to an agenda for presentation to the BOS. For that presentation, Jack should be prepared to explain to the BOS why this kiosk would be a benefit to the park, that it is safe, durable and a worthwhile enhancement to the park. Ultimately, the BOS has the final say on deciding to go forward with his project.

Mr. Meehan provided Jack with a draft of the "process" the Committee is reviewing for addressing how a scout can seek permission for installations in Township Parks. He also informed Jack that in response to his question if a permit was required, that the Township staff said he would need to fill out a form to register the structure installation. There would be no fee for the registration. He was also told before any digging begins, the work would need to be coordinated with the Township to have all underground utilities identified. (PA one-call)

The committee thanked Jack for proposing this contribution to the park and congratulated him on his presentation.

## **OLD BUSINESS- Updates**

Below are updates provided by Mr. Delamater during the March 11, 2022, phone conversation which Mr. Meehan now passes on to the committee.

- **Kibler Meadow Parking Area**

Construction of this parking area is in the hands of Public Works. Mr. Hillmantel has it scheduled for later this year but will do it as soon as he can if an opportunity presents itself.

- **Kriebel Road Trail – Valley View Road to Trumbauer Road (TA Trail Grant)**

Mr. Delamater said this project is moving but slowly. An inspection site trailer has been set at the entrance to Green Lane Park along Kriebel Road because utility connections were not available at its original proposed location at the cul-de-sac at Valley View Way. Behind the scenes work continues but no actual construction yet.

- **Kriebel Road Trail II PECO Power lines westward along Kriebel Road toward Fischer's Park.**

Since the last OSPAC meeting, the Township approached Montgomery County asking for a time extension for completing this trail beyond the present required completion date of June 2022. The Township also requested a reduction of the scope of the trail to match the funds available for its construction.

Montgomery County responded favorably to both requests. A one-year time extension was granted, and the County will permit the scope to be reduced to match available funds. In addition, the County suggested Towamencin apply for a 2022 Montco 40 grant for use on closing the funding gap and completing this trail. Mr. Delamater said the Township will be applying for a 2022 grant as suggested.

- **Grist Mill Park**

Earlier this year, Towamencin was awarded a DCNR Grant in the amount of \$250,000. to add recreation facilities at this park. It did not receive a matching grant in the same amount from DCED. This leaves a funding gap for the improvements. Mr. Delamater said he had a discussion with Peter Simone about applying again to DCED and Mr. Simone suggested other sources rather than going back again to DCED. Mr. Delamater said he has not had the opportunity to talk to Peter again and look to pursuing those sources.

- **Shade Sails at Fischer's Park Tot Lot**

Mr. Delamater said the shade sails are currently on hold at the township finance committee's recommendation. The last price quote for the sails ((\$59,000) exceeds the budgeted amount (\$41,000).

Mr. Meehan said he spoke to Mr. Delamater about the Committees frustration at not being able to move projects like this forward. He suggested if the budget is holding up advancing the entire project. He asked what if its scope were reduced from three shade sails to two to match the budget so that by this summer there would be some shade in the tot lot playground? As another alternative, there should be money in the budget for items which we expect will not be started in 2022 (for example the connector trail from Grist Mill Park to Grist Mill Drive at \$35,000 or the engineering analysis of the Fischer's Park Pedestrian Connection Trail at \$25,000.)

Mr. Delamater said the Township does not want to have to reduce the number of shade sails and he will look to moving some funds already in the budget.

- **Bocce Courts Improvements**

Mr. Delamater said he has asked CKS engineers to investigate the water problems impacting play on the bocce courts and propose a solution. Mr. Meehan noted that as a result of CKS's involvement, plans of the original court construction have come to light and will be very useful in knowing what drainage was installed originally. Immediately after the meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup> in which he said this, Mr. Delamater sent an email to CKS and the others with knowledge of the problem and its history telling them to meet and review the problems, so everyone is on the same page. He is asking CKS, Mr. Hillmantel, Mr. Meehan, and Mr. Costlow to determine the source of the problem, and what is

needed to correct the water problem so that plans can be prepared and get out to bid, if necessary. Such a meeting is being coordinated for some time during the week beginning March 14<sup>th</sup>.

Summarizing the discussions regarding the shade sails and the bocce court projects, Mr. Delamater said he will focus on moving these projects forward.

- **Pool and Swim Team**

Mr. Sponseller summarized the meeting held January 26, 2022, involving representatives of the Township, StandGuard and the swim team. He participated as a representative of the swim team. He said this was a great meeting where problems of the last few years were discussed, and some agreement reached. Among the items was having StandGuard lifeguards on duty during practice time. StandGuard agreed there is not the need for its lifeguards to be present during these times. This results in a cost saving to the swim team of about five to six thousand dollars. He said details of what snacks can and cannot be sold by the swim team was also resolved. He said the right people were involved in the meeting and this meeting was a great step going forward.

Mr. Sponseller also asked about the status of the purchase of new lane lines and storage reels. Mr. Meehan said he was under the impression the lane lines were already received. He did not know the status of the reels. He said he would contact Mr. Delamater and check.

- **Status of 2021-2022 Approved Budget Items**

The Committee discussed the items budgeted for 2021 and 2022 which are stalled for one reason or another. The Committee feels the process of moving projects forward from budget approval to implementation and completion is broken. The Committee's desire is to move forward with as many projects as possible in a given year and is looking for ways to streamline and improve the process.

The OSPAC acknowledges the Township is trying to implement the projects at the lowest cost. The Committee has the same goal to get the most for the limited park capital funds. This approach favors PW performing the work which is in most cases lower than bidding out the work. The Committee also knows the PW crews are being overwhelmed because their availability is limited so projects get put off. The Committee also thinks its pushing for multiple projects all at once often adds to the overwhelming workload of PW but also feels the budget was approved with multiple projects for the year and our target should be to accomplish as many as possible. In recent discussions with Mr. Delamater, he said the OSPAC has "too many irons in the fire" and it should concentrate on a few and get them done before pushing for others. He suggested keeping some on a priority list in the background and they could be drawn into the mix as other of higher priority get done. The OSPAC is mindful of this and will work with the Township in this manner going forward but at the same time it also wants to work on improvements in the process.

The Committee discussed at length the inflexibility of the approved budget numbers. The OSPAC budget items request to the BOS in October 2021 were based on estimates of the costs for the work based on costs found on the internet. They were estimates. Actual cost quotes for the work were exceeding the approved budgeted amounts. This puts the item of work in limbo. The Committee feels that if the actual cost quotes are the reasonable value of the work to be performed the Finance Committee and or the Township staff should have flexibility to move monies within individual projects as long as the total does not exceed the approved budget totals for Park Capital budget amounts. The Committee feels this would greatly help move projects forward.

- **Towamencin Day 2022 May 21, 2022**

Mr. Meehan mentioned that Towamencin Day 2022 on May 21, 2022, was approaching and the OSPAC committee would be sharing a table with the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC). The OSPAC members will be in attendance. We will discuss times when individuals are available as we get closer to the event date.

- **Friends of Fischer's Park**

Mr. Meehan said he met in Fischer's Park with Mr. Tim Gallagher who has volunteered as a Friend of Fischer's Park (FOFP) and has many years of groundskeeping experience. They walked through the park and noted items that could possibly be done by the FOFP if given permission by the Township. A list of potential projects was created. Also included were some items that would necessitate weekend help from the PW crews assisting with Township equipment. Some items also asked for consideration of rented equipment operated by the volunteers. Mr. Delamater said it is difficult to get the PW crews to work weekends beyond what is already expected for Towamencin Day and other special events. He said volunteers operating rental equipment in the park would not be permitted for liability reasons.

Mr. Meehan sent the list of potential projects for FOFP to the Township on March 11th asking for their comments. A copy of the list was provided to the OSPAC Members at the meeting and is included at the end of these minutes.

- **Memorials in Township Parks**

Mr. Meehan noted that the Township received a request to install a Little Free Library in Fischer's Park as a memorial to an individual who was part of a group which frequented the park.

In discussions, there was a thought that maybe large groups willing to donate to a memorial could focus their donations for example on a single pavilion or such and have the donations acknowledged in some manner at the pavilion. After discussion, the Committee's consensus was that there are already Township guidelines in place for park memorials and that we should not deviate from them. To reaffirm this Ms. Becker made a motion: *For memorials in Township parks, Little Free Libraries are not permitted. There are only two options allowed, a memorial tree or a memorial bench.* The motion was seconded by Mr. Vaitis. All committee members were in favor, none opposed. This motion affirming the Committee's consensus will be forwarded to Mr. Delamater.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Becker presented information regarding sidewalks that came out of the Planning Commission of which she is also a member. She said in the past under certain circumstances where installations of sidewalks are not reasonable, the Planning Commission has "deferred" installation of sidewalks meaning the Township might come back in the future and tell the property owner to then install them. Time passes and the "deferred" installation are never requested to be installed. With this scenario, the sidewalk is not installed, and the developer makes no contribution in pedestrian connectivity in the Township.

Instead, the Planning Commission is recommending creating a "sidewalk/trail fund" and having a developer who is seeking to defer sidewalk installation, donate money into the fund that can then be used elsewhere in the Township for trails and sidewalks. Trails and sidewalks that improve connections of neighborhoods to for example schools or parks or shopping. Money from such a fund could help fill the funding gap for trails such as the Kriebel Road II trail connecting neighborhoods to Fischer's Park.

The OSPAC Committee said this is a great idea and would like to see it implemented.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM

**The next OSPAC meeting is on April 11, 2022**

Respectfully submitted,

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

## **Potential Projects Friends of Fisher's Park**

### **1. Perform Maintenance on existing facilities**

- Refurbish signs
- Power wash pavilions
- Paint posts and gable trim of Creekside Pavilion and Carriage House Pavilion
- Clean out the debris and leaves in the rain garden, remove invasives, cut back native plants
- Prune old/dead canes from the redbud bushes in the core area
- Seed bare areas throughout the core area
- Trim bushes around /behind the Entertainment Center.
- Fix/remove paver path edging stick up above the path edge
- Edge around the mulch circles with mechanized edger
- Clean up flood debris between path and Towamencin Creek along tree line at edge of wooded area

### **2. Add some enhancements**

- Wayfinding signs (Potential scout project)
- Kiosk (Being undertaken by a Scout)
- Bat houses (Potential Scout project)
- Bicycle rack at Arneith Loop trail (Potential Scout project)
- Add a wildflower area between Bustard Road and the tot lot playground (or other appropriate area)
- Add a birdhouse garden
- Add ornamental plantings around back and sides of Arneith Entertainment area structure

### **3. Items noticed that should be looked at by PW**

- Numerous bottoms of wooden support columns at Carriage Pavilion are split, rotted or in questionable condition.
- A small section at the top of the retaining wall behind the playground area has fallen off. Reset the block/s.

### **What we are considering.**

One or two “blitz” events on Saturdays in March or April where FoF are asked to come and work on the items above.

We would like Township equipment (Loader, dump truck,) to be available and work with the FOF on these Saturdays if work such as the removal of flood debris is undertaken. This would greatly help get the most from the volunteers. We would also need some Township PW staff to operate the equipment.

**Would an expenditure for this labor and equipment be considered?**

We feel dressing up the edges of the mulch circles would go a long way to improving the appearance of the park core area. Does the Township have a gas-powered edging machine? If not, could one be rented by the Township. (Georges Tool Rental in Hatfield has one in their inventory renting for \$171. Plus tax, plus delivery) The production for this machine is advertised at 100 ft of edging per minute.

**Would an expenditure for this be considered?**

For cleanup of pavilions, the Township would provide their pressure washers.

For painting of the pavilions, the township would provide the paint, brushes, rollers, and small tools.

For gardening/landscaping the Township would provide garden tools like rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows. The Township would also provide, seed, plants etc. for the gardening projects.

**OSPAC would plan this effort with Friends of Fischer's volunteers and coordinate the events with the Township staff.**