

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
April 11, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Michon Blake
Dr. Richard Costlow

Absent:

Peter Murphy
Todd Fisher
Dan Vaitis
Dave Sponseller

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

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan noted for the minutes that a group of six women bocce players were present at tonight's meeting. They had come to provide their input on the conditions of the bocce courts and their desire for improvements to them so they could be made useable during their 2022 bocce group season. Introductions were made by the committee members to the women and the women to the committee.

Mr. Meehan also noted he had met with Mr. Delamater, the Township Manager, on April 8, 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.

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.

OLD BUSINESS

Since the women bocce players were attending tonight's meeting, the discussion of the bocce courts was moved to the first item on the agenda.

Mr. Meehan provided a summary of what had taken place regarding the courts since the last meeting. Since then, the condition of the courts had been brought again to the attention of Mr. Delamater noting that unless something were done soon the courts would not be useable for 2022. Mr. Delamater asked that an on-site meeting be held with the Township Engineer (CKS), the Public Works Director, Mr. Costlow and Mr. Meehan to review the problems and come up with a recommended solution. That meeting took place on March 16th.

At that meeting, the attendees concluded problems with water and fine mud on the surface of the courts seems to stem from two issues; one being the location of the courts being lower than the

surrounding park grassy areas with those surfaces draining toward the courts; and the other being the material used in the courts' surface not being a suitable granular material meant to provide a sound, true surface while also allowing water to drain down to the subsurface piping beneath the courts.

The bigger problem seems to be the surface water draining to the courts. The courts at their east ends are three to four feet lower than the surrounding grassy areas. The consensus of the group was that if this problem is to be solved the water needs to be prevented from getting to the courts by diverting it and a "French drain system" installed around the courts. Both are costly and introduce other problems such as underground utilities and removal of several large (30" + diameter trees). A retaining wall was another alternative, but it also introduces the same problems. It was felt there was not a guarantee that these would solve the problem. Another alternative introduced was to relocate the courts to a location that did not have these water problems. This might be less costly than fighting back the problems at the present site. CKS was going to look at the possibilities and complications of constructing a retaining wall and come back with an analysis and costs of this concept.

Several days after the site meeting, Mr. Delamater reported that the Public Works Committee which met on March 18th, also was briefed on the solutions and it leaned toward relocating the courts to a better location. Mr. Delamater asked the OSPAC to look at other locations and come back with a recommendation. Some criteria set by Mr. Meehan for a new location in addition to the obvious ones for good drainage would be a location close to parking, close to the bathrooms, and shade.

Mr. Meehan said that in the meantime he told Mr. Delamater the Township should not spend any more money having CKS looking at solutions to solving the problems at the existing courts. The committee agreed we should use monies already budgeted in 2022 for the courts to make the courts useable until a new location is chosen, and the courts constructed.

The Committee and the women's bocce group discussed other possible locations. Ms. Sigler suggested placing the courts adjacent to the existing courts but under the existing Stable Pavilion Structure. Mr. Meehan suggested adjacent to the path leading from the core area toward the bridge across the creek. The Committee members were asked to look at any potential sites and be prepared to discuss them at the May meeting. Ms. Becker suggested meeting in May at Fischer's Park and having a firsthand look and discussion of other locations. Mr. Meehan suggested this be done on May 16th rather than the normal 2nd Monday meeting date. All agreed to meet on May 16th at the Meadowview Pavilion and follow up on these discussions.

Mr. Costlow said in the interim we need push P.W. to correct the existing courts as best possible so that they would be useable until new courts at a relocated site are constructed. All agreed that this needs to be part of the plan and this message will be passed on to Mr. Delamater

At this point, the women bocce players left the meeting.

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

Mr. Delamater said this project is moving but slowly. There is no physical on-site construction yet, but geotechnical investigation is ongoing for the bridge foundations. Scheduling work revolves around the bridge. The contractor say he wants to get started but it doesn't make sense for him to begin other work and then have to wait until the bridge design is completed. Once design is completed, fabrication of the bridge is expected to take twelve to fourteen weeks. The contractor wants to mobilize only once when the bridge fits into the schedule. The work and schedule will be monitored going forward.

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

Since the last OSPAC meeting, Montgomery County approved the Township's request for a time extension for the Grant and also approved a reduction in the scope of the trail project to match the available funds.

Mr. Delamater said the Township has also applied to Montgomery County for an additional grant from 2022 Montco 40 Funds to be used to complete the project as originally conceived.

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

Mr. Meehan said that at his meeting with him, Mr. Delamater asked for a detail of what the OSPAC was intending for the shade sails. Mr. Meehan provided a sketch. The Township used this sketch to request another cost quote from the shade sail company. The company provided a quote which was far higher than originally budgeted and they also qualified the quote saying they could not provide the sails in the configuration shown in the sketch for various engineering reasons including the need to cut through the rubberized surface material of the tot lot. Mr. Delamater felt the Township should go back to the original design and install the sails as shown in it.

The OSPAC unanimously disagreed with this approach. The Committee felt it would not be prudent to install something that didn't meet the intent of providing the shade from the sails. The Committee felt the Township should pause this installation and look for more money for the installation or look for another alternative. This will be communicated to Mr. Delamater. MS. Smith said she would follow up on this at a PSATS event and find out whether other vendors might be able provide the what the Township was looking to achieve so that any money spent meets the intent of providing shade on the tot lot equipment that has seats.

- **Kibler Meadow Parking Area**

Mr. Delamater provided a drawing prepared by CKS of the proposed parking area. The Committee made several comments on the drawing about the material being used and it not showing a pipe under the parallel roadway drainage ditch at the entrance and exit drives. Mr. Costlow advocates for using stabilizing grids in the surfacing. Mr. Meehan explained that the material planned for the parking is the millings from the Township's 2022 paving program. When compacted he felt the millings provide a stable parking lot surfacing and adding any grids would add an extra cost and become a hiccup in getting the work done. He said he felt we need to let this work proceed without adding complications. The same applies to the piping. CKS said they could design a pipe for the entrance and exit drives but felt it better if this piping be left to the experience of Mr. Hillmantel.

After discussion, the Committee agrees the parking area should go forward as shown in the CKS drawing

- **Friends of Fischer's Park**

Mr. Meehan noted that he has not done much since the last meeting regarding start-up work for Friends of Fischer's Park. Mr. Meehan said he has been busy recently with other work and after not getting a response from Mr. Hillmantel, he found out he had been away from work for about 10 days. Mr. Meehan said over the next several weeks he himself will be traveling and when he returns, he will renew efforts with the Friends of Fischer's Park.

- **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). We will discuss times when individuals are available at our next meeting on May 16th.

- **Pool and Swim Team**

At last month's meeting, Mr. Sponseller also asked about the status of the purchase of new lane lines and storage reels. Mr. Meehan checked, and Mr. Delamater replied that the lane lines were ordered but not the lane line reels because their cost exceeded the budgeted amount. The OSPAC's budget request for 2022 was for two lane line reels similar to the ones being used at the pool for years. It turns out the reels being requested were powder coated and not stainless steel and would be more susceptible to corrosion with the chlorine at the pool. The stainless reels were more expensive. It was agreed that the Township get one stainless reel this year and stay within the 2022 budgeted

amount and then get another in 2023. This recommendation was passed to Mr. Delamater who then placed an order for one new reel for 2022.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Do Not Feed the Ducks Signs**

Mr. Delamater received an email from a concerned resident about park users in Fischer's feeding the ducks bread and other non-duck friendly foods from the fishing platform. The resident proposed a banner at the site telling people not to feed the ducks. Mr. Delamater passed the issue to the OSPAC for review and comment.

A cursory check of websites by OSPAC members, found mixed opinions on harmful effects resulting from feeding the ducks but in general it was seen as not a good practice especially feeding bread. The Committee was in favor of posting an advisory message but not in favor of the large banner proposed by the resident. Mr. Costlow had done some preliminary research into an appropriate sign and said he would look further and come up with a recommendation on wording for the OSPAC Committee to review at its next meeting. We could then ask the Township to make the sign/s and post them near the fishing platform.

It was also noted that Canadian geese take advantage of the "free bread" at the platform area and are making a mess leaving their residue all over the ground where the kids are walking and playing. Mr. Meehan mentioned the Township uses "The Goose Patrol" to keep some Township Parks free of Canadian geese. He will check with the Township about using this same service at Fischer's at the fishing platform and throughout the park in view of large events such as the music and movie events at the Arne Center and Towamencin Day.

- **TYA Request for some shade trees at Green Lane Ballfields**

Mr. Delamater got a request from TYA to plant shade trees along the right field lines of the two ballfields at Green Lane Park. The OSPAC is in favor of this request and endorses planting them at the next recommended time of year planting time. For 2022 we might be past the tree planting season, and they might need to wait until spring of 2023. This will be checked with Mr. Hillmantel. TYA needs to recognize that these new trees will not provide shade for many years after planting. It was also suggested TYA take ownership of initially nursing the plantings along, until they are well established.

- **Quarterly Budget Reforecasts**

At their meeting, Mr. Meehan at the recommendation of the OSPAC, suggested to Mr. Delamater that in view of rising costs and supply chain issues, the Township review budgeted items on a quarterly basis during the budget year and then reforecast budget items based on the finding. Mr. Delamater said he thinks the Township would be receptive to this but not in 2022. With recent personnel changes the finance department is overwhelmed and this would add to the workload. He suggested that going into next year a better first step would be to make the original budget forecasts more comprehensive and complete by anticipating increases in cost of labor, increased overhead costs, transportation costs etc. Also making the budget requests more conservative in view of unexpected factors that seem to come into play when it is time to execute the purchases. This would make estimates more accurate for when the items are purchased / constructed. Committee members said that in their business experience, this smooths the way for purchasing products and services. Mr. Meehan said the OSPAC will keep this in mind when preparing budget requests for 2023.

- **Sidewalk/Tree Banks in lieu of deferred work**

At last month's meeting Ms. Becker mentioned that the planning Commission was suggesting that instead of a developer putting sidewalks in a deferred status because they are required by code, but are not appropriate at a specific location, they be placed in a sidewalk "bank account" to allow the Township to install sidewalk at a location along other Township roads that have not had adjacent development. These locations leave gaps in sidewalks throughout the Township and the Planning

Commission wants to see continuous sidewalks. Mr. Meehan noted that this was going to be discussed and considered at the BOS meeting on Wednesday evening April 13th.

The Committee recalled that this same idea had been used for trees which for one reason or another could not be planted on a developer's site and the unplanted trees or monies equivalent to the cost of unplanted trees be placed in a "tree bank". Committee members had recollections that this idea had been used by the Township years ago to add some trees to Butch Clemens Park. The recollection was that the trees were an excess of "unplanted" of trees from a WB Homes Development. Ms. Smith said she would check with Supervisor Wilson to see if he had any recollection of such an arrangement.

While discussing trees, Mr. Costlow brought up an item from a previous meeting where there was a discussion of a "trail of native trees" created along Township trails. Development of this idea was not given a high priority because of direction needed from an arborist regarding the types of trees, spacing etc. Mr. Costlow said he would check with Penn State Ag Services to see if they could provide an arborist's help.

Ms. Smith noted that the Township Environmental Advisory Council in conjunction with the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, organized and held a successful Towamencin Creek cleanup in Fischer's Park on Saturday April 2nd.

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on May 16, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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