

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
November 8, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Dave Sponseller

Michon Blake
Todd Fisher
Dr. Richard Costlow

Absent:

Peter Murphy
Jim Roberts
Laura Smith, Towamencin Supervisor, BOS Liaison to OSPAC

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 members of the public who were attending, and the Committee introduced themselves.

Mr. Meehan noted that on November 5th 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.

Mr. Meehan noted he had invited Tim Gallagher to attend as a Friends of Fischer's Park volunteer. Mr. Meehan also welcomed residents Kristin Warner, and Carol Clauss, to the meeting. Also attending was a boy scout Joshua Weist of Troop 141 in Hatfield and his mother,

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The scout, Joshua, said he was attending in order to participate in a community meeting and qualify for Community Citizenship Merit Badge. He also said he had been in contact with Mr. Meehan regarding an Eagle Scout project. Mr. Meehan acknowledged his communication with Joshua about a project in a Towamencin park and said we would be discussing this later in the meeting but said Joshua's timeline for completing a project before his 18th birthday was very tight considering the approvals needed and winter weather. Mr. Meehan said because of this he wouldn't want to see Joshua dependent on an Eagle scout project in a Towamencin Park and suggested he also look for projects elsewhere.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of October 11, 2021

Mr. Meehan asked for a motion from the Committee for approval of the minutes of the October 11, 2021. Mr. Costlow asked that the minutes be changed in the item concerning the 2021 bocce court budget item which is now being resubmitted in the 2022 budget. He felt using the word “misunderstood” to say that the information provided concerning the bocce court budget item originally submitted in 2021 and recently reviewed and rejected by the finance committee did not describe the reason for its rejection by the Finance Committee. After a discussion it was agreed the minutes would be changed to state “an estimate was provided in the 2021 Budget Request but the finance committee requested more detail”.

Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes for the October 11, 2021, meeting with that change. Mr. Costlow seconded the motion, and all were in favor of approving the minutes with that change.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Status of recommendations made to staff on “Review of 2021 Below the Line budget item.

Mr. Meehan updated the Committee regarding its recommendations made to the Township staff for raising the below the line items originally held “below the line” in the 2021 budget. Additional impact fee funds from the Wambold Road warehouse development have now upgraded those items and added them into the 2021 budget. Mr. Meehan noted the BOS had approved the Finance Committee’s recommendations at its October 13, 2021 meeting, moving the items into the 2021 budget.

Mr. Meehan noted the items thus approved:

- *Shade sails at Fischer’s Park tot playground and at the bocce courts.*
- *Add a playground at Morgan Way Park.*
- *Create a parking area at Kibler Meadow Park.*
- *Remove dead trees along trails and at edge of park woodlands*
- *Begin utility infrastructure installations at Butch Clemens Field.*

At the October 20, 2021, Budget Workshop meeting, Mr. Meehan said the Township staff told him that because these approvals were received so late in the year and winter weather coming, it is likely these items will not be completed in 2021 but will carry over into 2022 with the funds now being committed in that year for these projects but coming from the 2021 budget funds.

b. Budget Requests made at the October 20, 2021, Budget Workshop with the BOS

Mr. Meehan summarized the 2022 budget requests he made to the BOS at the October 20, 2021 Budget Workshop meeting.

Requests were made for the following:

- Funds to match the Montco 40 Grant for the Kriebel Road Trail between the PECO powerline crossing and Fischer’s Park. \$140,000.
- Construct a pavilion at Grist Mill Park. \$71,200.
- Construct two pickleball courts at Grist Mill Park. \$34,320.
- Engineering analysis of Fischer’s Park Pedestrian Connection Trail. \$25,000.

- Remove dead trees in Township parks that overhang trails, private property, and roadways. \$35,000.
- Improvements to bocce courts at Fischer's Park. \$41,000.
- Improvements at Drinnon Way Park. \$64,706
- Re-line tennis courts at Heebner way Park for pickleball use. \$11,000.
- Survey two cemeteries with Ground penetrating Radar (GPR) \$12,000.
- Install a perimeter fence at the ME Cemetery. \$2,000.
- Install an outdoor message center (Kiosk) at Fischer's Park. \$4,000.
- Purchase new lane line reels for the pool. \$3,668.

Mr. Meehan said this was the same as the spreadsheet describing each item, the scope of work and an estimate of costs as sent to the OSPAC committee on October 15, 2021. (A copy of this along with photos and a short narrative used at the Budget Workshop meeting are attached.) The BOS and Finance Committee will now review the requests and decide which items, if any, they have funds to go forward with in 2022.

At the budget work session, the BOS noted they thought the size of the pavilion requested at Grist Mill Park was small. In response, Mr. Meehan said Simone-Collins recommended this size in its Park Evaluation Report of 2020 and this was the size they included in their DCNR and DCED grant applications. He said he will look into what led to this size recommendation. (Bustard Rd. pavilion is 912 SF; Becks Pavilion at Fischer's is 1408 SF and Meadow View at Fischer's is 1188SF)

Mr. Meehan said the BOS mentioned some items not included in this list which they would like the committee to consider. They were:

- A trail connecting Grist Mill Park and Grist Mill Drive allowing youngsters in the development to walk to the park
- Appropriate lighting in Fischer's Park that could be used during events (movies, concerts) that are held there after dusk to help attendees see better as they walk back to their vehicles. Determining what type of lighting, where it should be mounted and what electrical services are available needs to be coordinated with Dave Hillmantel.

Mr. Meehan added that during this discussion, he mentioned that although not requested in the 2022 budget, he OSPAC felt the entrance signs at the Township Park entrances should be simplified, enlarged and upgraded. He noted the possibility of incorporating items like the grist mill wheel that the Township owns be used in the entrance signing at Grist Mill Park. The supervisors said they didn't want to get into a long debate about what the entrance signs design, as was the case about ten years ago when the present signs were installed. Mr. Meehan said the thought was that the signs be simple with only the name of the park and Towamencin Township on them.

c. Friends of Fischer's Park

Mr. Meehan said to date about ten individuals have volunteered to be Friends of Fischer's park (FofFP). Mr. Costlow asked if we had identified projects for them. Mr. Meehan said we have some that have been discussed with Dave. Hillmantel including painting pavilions, especially the Creekside Pavilion which needs it badly, and constructing some birdhouses/bat houses. Others were pressure washing pavilions and others related to landscaping and gardening. Ms. Becker

mentioned that the first two seemed like good Eagle scout projects and maybe Joshua could do one of them. Mr. Meehan agreed that they might be good scout projects but others had also asked and he thought it only fair that the projects be offered to the scouts in the order they asked. He said Joshua's timeframe is so tight that even if he had presented a project for OSPAC review tonight it would the need to go to the BOS for approval at their December 8th meeting, leaving only January and February for completion of the work. Mr. Meehan said he would get a list of projects and then let the scouts decide if they wanted to do them.

The discussion turned back to discussion of coordinating the volunteers and the projects for FofFP. Mr. Costlow had said previously he was interested in developing a Friends group but not with the intent that the group be involved in landscaping and painting etc. He saw it as a non-profit entity able to raise funds for caring for the park as well as performing the work. He said he was not enamored with being the coordinator of the volunteers and the work only. He felt someone with more experience park maintenance would be a more suitable coordinator. Perhaps Tim Gallagher.

Since the last OSPAC meeting, some Friends of Fischer's Park pressured washed the stable pavilion, including the picnic tables, pavement surface and the understory of the roof. The group was made up of members of the "regulars" of the bocce payers and Tim Gallagher. They did a great job! Mr. Gallagher was asked to attend tonight's meeting since he seemed interested in joining the Committee. His experience would make him a very welcome member. He was asked if he would consider becoming a member of the OSPAC, and he said he would consider it since he retired recently. Mr. Meehan also asked if he would consider coordinating the work of the Friends of Fischer's Volunteers. He said he would consider that also.

With winter weather coming there are no activities planned for the Friends of Fischer's Park at the present time. Ms. Blake suggested setting some activities with a date in the spring and then announcing them asking for volunteers on that specific day. The Committee agreed this was a good idea. This will be discussed further at future OSPAC meetings.

d. A pedestrian trail crossing Kriebel Road to connect the north and south portions of Fischer's Park

This connection was mentioned in a recent Public Works Committee report as something under consideration.

Mr. Meehan passed on Mr. Delamater's thought that the Township doesn't want to spend money to advance a plan for a crossing since the Township doesn't have the funds to construct one right now.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Loop trail at Fischer's Park

The Township Public Works crew has begun constructing a loop trail on the north side of the pedestrian bridge over the Towamencin creek. The trail connects to the bridge trail and follows an alignment around the perimeter of the open area behind the Arneth house. It is a gravel trail and

when completely finished will have several seating areas with benches and views of the creek. PW has said they expect the main trail will be completed before Thanksgiving.

b. Tree Planting

Mr. Meehan noted that the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy planted 100 trees on the Township owned “tree farm” at the corner of Kriebel Road and Pheasant Hill Road on October 23rd. This was part of their effort to plant trees near waterways in the Perkiomen watershed.

c. Parking at Kibler Meadow Park

A resident at the budget work session, Carol Clauss , who was also present this evening, expressed strong concern about creating a parking area at Kibler Meadows Park. She said she has observed heavy flooding on Kerr Road and feels parking there will aggravate the flooding. She also sees a parking area there as an invitation to more hunters who now come and park along the side roads, to use this parking. She suggested that people wanted to spend time at Kibler Meadow could park at Fischer’s Park and walk to Kibler along the same route as the turkey trot event. She suggests a simple gap in the split rail fence would be more welcoming. She said the swales along Kerr Road have been filled with stone which makes the flooding worse. She would like to see more “birders” use this park. She questions what value will be added by installing parking at this location. She said she represents others with similar concerns.

The Committee noted that parking along Kerr Road, which is a narrow road, is not safe for anyone who might want to visit the park and people who walk do not like to walk along a narrow road. Ms. Blake noted that from a park perspective, we want people to be able to use the park and to use it, there needs to be a way to safely get to it.

Mr. Meehan said he had talked to Dave Hillmantel, the public works director, who said he is looking into the drainage issue along Kerr Road and is talking to the township engineer about remedies. He said even with stone in the swales a parking area can be accommodated by placing a pipe beneath the parking area access. He expects the engineer will provide a solution.

Mr. Meehan noted that the OSPAC takes all input into consideration on such issues and thanked Ms. Clauss for presenting her concerns.

d. Indigenous Peoples possible burial sites

At last month’s meeting Mr. Costlow noted that perhaps the ground penetration radar proposed to be used at the ME cemetery and the Tennis-Lukens cemetery, could be used at Indigenous Peoples burial sites also. He said he had not gotten to fully looking into further information about such sites but had contacted Tim Betz, the curator of the historic Morgan Log House. Mr. Betz told him there was a research project looking into Indigenous People communities in the area. Mr. Costlow has not found out anything more at this point. He will continue to pursue Indigenous Peoples burial sites in Towamencin Township.

Mr. Meehan noted that the GPR was being sought for the two cemeteries, because they are on Township properties (or in the case of the ME cemetery, a property in process of being acquired). Only if an Indigenous People burial site were thought to be on township property, would the GPR be considered. Ms. Becker said that investigating potential sites was the job of Mr. Betz and not in the scope of work of the OSPAC. Ms. Blake echoed this message.

TOWNSHIP PARKS GRANTS UPDATES

- a. Regarding the TA Trail from Valley View to Trumbauer Road. The preconstruction meeting has been held and a Notice To Proceed (NTP) was given for November 9, 2021, with completion in the fall of 2022. Mr. Meehan said we could possibly see some work such as tree removal beginning soon.
- b. The design of the Montco 40 trail along Kriebel Rd from the end of the existing trail to the Hanks house site in Fischer's Park is complete. A general permit request has been submitted to DEP and Highway occupancy Permit for a crossing of Bustard Rd. has been submitted to PennDot and is in process with an approval expected near the end of January 2022. The project has been broken into two segments pending approval of a DCED grant to provide funds to match the Montco 40 grant. Construction is expected to get underway in spring 2022.
- c. Simone-Collins, the Master Plan design consultant for Veteran's Memorial Park has a resident's survey on the Township website. The results so far have been encouraging with about sixty-six responses to date. The responses include comments that show an interest in the master plan. Everyone was reminded to fill out the survey if they haven't already done so.

NEW ITEMS OF INTEREST

- The Christmas lighting in Fischer's Park will be installed beginning November 22nd. The lighting will include new lights at the pedestrian bridge across the creek. This was made possible by public work's installation of an underground electric line from the Armeth entertainment center to the bridge.
- Mr. Meehan mentioned that recently he has observed many photographers following well-dressed families in Fischer's. He assumes they are taking family photos for Christmas cards. The Park at this time of the year has spectacular color which makes great backgrounds for the photos. Just another great use of the park.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM

The next OSPAC meeting is on December 13, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph F. Meehan
Chairman, Open Space Advisory Committee