

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
August 8, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Michon Blake
Dr. Richard Costlow
Todd Fisher
Laura Smith, Liaison Board of Supervisors

Absent:

Dave Sponseller
Peter Murphy
Dan Vaitis

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan noted he had met with Mr. Delamater, the Township Manager, on August 5th. 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

Other than the Committee members shown above, there were no others in attendance. There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of July 18, 2022

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the July 18, 2022, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Costlow seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Meehan passed the following information about the status of ongoing projects that are of interest to the Committee.

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

Mr. Delamater said work on the trail construction is underway. The sub-structure for the bridge crossing the creek is anticipated to be done by the end of September and the new bridge structure set in early October. In the meantime, other trail work is underway. A contract extension was requested by Doli Construction and recommended for approval by Gilmore & Associates. It was then approved by the BOS at its July 27, 2022, meeting. PennDOT now has to approve the extension. The request makes the completion date December 5, 2022, and all work is expected to be completed by then.

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

Bid documents for this trail from the end of the current Kriebel road Trail near the PECO power line crossing westward to a terminus at Green Lane Road, are being prepared by Gilmore & Associates. Mr. Delamater said the Township is hoping to advertise this portion of the trail for bids in the fall of 2022 with construction in the spring of 2023.

- **Grist Mill Park DCED Grant Application**

The Township is waiting to hear from DCED about its \$250,000 grant application for facility improvements at Grist Mill Park. Announcements of the grants are usually made in the fall of each year, so this wait is not unusual.

- **Kibler Meadows Park Parking Area**

Mr. Meehan passed on information from Mr. Delamater who said the milling associated with the 2022 paving program will begin tomorrow August 9th so the millings for the surfacing of the Kibler Meadow parking area will be placed as they become available later this week. Placement and compaction of the millings will complete this parking area project.

Mr. Delamater also said the Township has not acted on neighbor's petition to not build this parking area for the Meadow. The neighbors do not want hunters to have easily available parking while hunting in nearby Evansburg State Park. The Township plans no immediate enforcement signing placement unless there are complaints.

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

The Committee discussed the cost proposal of \$51,096 from General Recreation, Inc. (Larry McCullough, sales rep) to provide shade sails over the slide area and see-saw for the tot lot at Fischer's Park.

Mr. Meehan informed the Committee that last week he took the proposal to the tot lot site and laid it out "on the ground" the best he could, using measuring tapes. The site layout showed that the triangular sail over the slide equipment would provide shade cover over only about half of the slide. The cantilever eighteen feet by eighteen feet proposed for the see-saw would barely cover any of it. The proposal did not include any shade structure over the swings. The proposal does not provide the shade we are seeking.

He also presented to the Committee, sketches of his field layout and also sketches he prepared based on his interpretation of 'no encroachment zones' required by playground safety standards and guidelines. (Attached). He noted that when these are considered there is little opportunity to place shade support structures within the tot lot playground without putting supports in the no encroachment zones.

The Committee discussed other options such as a roofed structure, larger trees, etc. but the code guidelines for playgrounds for placement of supports inside the play area made those options not practical. A roofed structure would need to be at least sixty feet by seventy feet to provide shade over the entire tot lot. Even this would need supports within the tot lot. Such a structure would come at a high cost.

Given all the restrictions and concerns with providing shade structures, the Committee concluded not to accept General Recreation's proposal for shade sails at the tot lot and reluctantly, going forward, to also not pursue shade sails for the tot lot any further in the immediate future.

The Committee concluded that the most practical way to provide shade was to totally reconfigure the tot lot by spreading out the equipment to allow supports between the equipment 'no encroachment zones' required by the codes. With this, sail structures or even trees within the tot lot would be workable. The Committee realized this recommendation will be costly and is not an immediate shade solution, but it would be better holding off rather than trying to make something work that is not going to satisfactorily meet the goals we are intending. Ms. Smith added that she believes there are a sizable number of grants available for playgrounds and we should consider them as we look to an expanded tot lot in the future.

The Committee by unanimous vote recommended "to shelf shade sails for the tot lot, until a more practical solution can be found."

Mr. Meehan said he would pass this information regarding this decision and the Committee's recommendation along to the Township staff.

- **Bocce Courts**

Mr. Meehan noted that a Public Works Committee report was presented by Supervisor Marino at the last BOS meeting. The report included an update on drainage work at the Fischer's Park bocce courts. The report noted that development of new bocce courts at Grist Mill are on hold pending the DCED's decision on the Township's grant application for major improvements at the park. Until those new courts are completed there, the Township will make improvements to the courts at Fischer's Park to address the drainage problems that make the courts unplayable. The PW report said CKS had surveyors visit the site and gather topography data. After reviewing it, they feel the problem is not what was originally thought, and now their intent is to create a berm that channels surface water around the courts rather than building a wall which necessitated grading and removing several large trees. Mr. Zarko of CKS added at the BOS meeting that creating a berm as the solution should be simple and should expedite preparing an RFP for implementing the corrective work.

Mr. Meehan said with this latest news, he felt we are getting to a solution.

Mr. Costlow disagreed. The committee discussed the scope of the work asked of CKS. Most agreed that it was to solve the drainage issues and make the bocce courts useable. Mr. Costlow said it should also include providing shade for the players and he was told by Ms. Stover of CKS that it would include drainage tied to the existing system.

Mr. Meehan said we do not know what exactly CKS was recommending as their solution. He said, CKS, as the Township Engineers, was charged with correcting the drainage and we should let them now do what they decide will work.

Ms. Smith noted that we should see how CKS's solution works since these improvements are considered temporary until new courts at Grist Mill can be funded and constructed. Mr. Costlow stated he feels all the issues with the existing courts should be addressed now.

Mr. Meehan said we are close to seeing progress on making the courts useable and we should continue to move forward with CKS' recommendation. He asked for the Committee's consensus. Ms. Becker made a motion that *"we move forward with what CKS recommends and not complicate the issue with other things and try the berm out and proceed with a berm rather than a wall to alleviate the flooding and preserve the trees."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Blake.

In discussion after the motion and second, Mr. Costlow said he feels doing this will not bring back to the park, people who used the courts before, unless we also addressed shade. Mr. Meehan noted the committee previously discussed shade at the courts as a project to be included in the 2023 budget and what we are acting on now is a 2022 budgeted item.

Mr. Meehan said the motion had been made, seconded, and discussed further. He asked for the committee's vote. Mr. Fisher, Ms. Blake, Ms. Becker, and Mr. Meehan were in favor of the motion. Mr. Costlow abstained. The motion carried.

- **Do Not Feed the Ducks Signs**

Mr. Meehan informed the committee that last week he took the proposed 'duck sign' prepared by Mr. Costlow and accepted by the committee as containing the message we want to convey to Signarama (Signa) in Lansdale to get some ideas of cost and final graphics options. Signa can make five single sided signs on corrugated plastic material twenty-four inches by thirty-six inches for about \$18 each. Signa recommended this as the most economical since a single sign would cost more than \$55. because of setup etc. The signs would be the same size and materials as the 'I stand for Ukraine' signs seen throughout the area except they would be printed on one side only. He also inquired

about changing the layout and artwork. They said it would depend on the software used in the graphic design and their ability to make changes is limited.

The Committee also discussed ordering in a larger quantity and storing them for future use but decided it was better to plan to get the five and not have the hassle of storing and retrieving others for future use. The Committee will continue to pursue getting and installing the signs.

- **Native Tree Trails**

There was nothing new to report this month. Mr. Costlow said he spoke to the Penn State Extension and found out the person he was to contact was on vacation. He will follow up and bring information to the next meeting. The Committee discussed where to place trees along the TA Trail, and this will be reviewed again in detail at a future meeting.

- **Farmers farming in Township Parks**

The Committee recommendation from the last meeting that the farmer terminate farming in Fischer's Park and Veterans Park was passed on to the Township Staff. Mr. Delamater said they reached out to the farmer Mr. Bechtel to get his input, but he has not responded yet.

Ms. Smith said the Township has had a good business relationship with Mr. Bechtel for many years and we need to do some homework before deciding about something that might impact his livelihood. It is common courtesy and good business to include him in this decision-making process. The Committee agreed he should be included.

Ms. Smith said if the herbicides being used are a concern there might be other options. Mr. Meehan said the herbicides were included in the conversations the Committee had about this but that the recommendation was not based on them. He noted, the recommendation was made on the basis that farming of any kind at this location spoils the health of a unique part and wildlife habitat in a Township Park.

The Committee agreed that Mr. Bechtel be given the opportunity to be part of the discussions and will wait for his response to the Township's request for his input.

- **Reline the Tennis Courts at Heebner to Pickleball**

Mr. Delamater checked with PW on this project's status. PW has recently contacted the company which in the past has surfaced the tennis court and painted lines. The company, Top-a-court, said they would come and meet with the Township on site and give their evaluation and a cost quote for the conversion to pickleball.

Mr. Meehan noted that he visited the tennis courts at Lansdale Memorial Park which have been converted the same way we propose. The labels on the conversion nets there said they were installed by Top-a-court.

At last check, PW has not gotten a date to meet with the Top-a-court representative. Mr. Meehan said he asked to be included in the meeting when it is set up.

Drinnon Park Improvements

Improvements at Drinnon Park cannot proceed until engineering is done to prepare a plan that accounts for the drainpipe and headwall at the park entrance off of Tennis Circle. These plans need to be prepared by the Township Engineer, CKS. Initiating plan preparation by the engineer will be pursued with Township staff.

Eagle Scout message Board

Mr. Meehan noted that Eagle Scout Candidate Jack Ely has built the message board (kiosk) he has proposed for Fischer's Park as his Eagle Scout project. He will be installing it in the park before the end of August.

- **Budget Items for 2023**

Mr. Meehan asked the Committee to set priorities on the items it had discussed at last month's meeting that would be included in the Committee's budget request for 2023. The Committee reviewed the items and set the following priorities:

1. 2021 and 2022 Budgeted Items already approved
2. Construct new soccer field at Nash School
3. Shade structures at Fischer's Park bocce courts
4. Convert other basketball/tennis courts to pickleball courts
5. New Soccer Field at Bustard Park near powerlines
6. Pavilion at Grist Mill (conditionally)

New Business

- **Meeting with the new Township Finance Director**

Mr. Meehan said he will be meeting with Adam Szumski, the new Township Finance Director sometime during the next few weeks to discuss procedures and options leading up to the 2023 OSPAC Budget requests.

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on September 19, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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