

**Towamencin Township  
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting  
October 17, 2022  
Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Nancy Becker  
Michon Blake  
Dave Sponseller  
Dan Vaitis  
Todd Fisher  
Laura Smith, Liaison Board of Supervisors

**Absent:**

Dr. Richard Costlow

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

**OPENING COMMENTS**

Mr. Meehan noted he had a phone conversation with Mr. Carney the interim Township Manager earlier this day to get updates on items that would be of interest to the OSPAC. The information provided by Mr. Carney will be included in the items as they are discussed this evening.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Osei of Cambridge Way was only person in attendance. He recounted that as a youngster he tried out for soccer with TYA at Bustard Road Park and walked along Bustard Road to get to the park. There is no sidewalk, and this is not very safe.

He wanted to talk about trails with this Committee. He went to the Township website to learn more about an alternative route to get to Bustard Park and came across the sewer evaluation which distracted him from the trail. He said at some point he applied to join this Committee but was not ever interviewed and he said this is because he feels this committee is the political center of Towamencin.

He continued saying he wanted to offer some political critiques as well as a compromise.

He said the said if he were a committee member, he wouldn't want to align himself so closely with the current supervisors and believes their decision on the sewer evaluation is one of the biggest civic events in this township's history and because of that, they might not be in power in the next few cycles. He said he doesn't have any stake in the November election.

He said NextEra is a terrible bidder for the sewer system. We might have to have this conversation how we fund our parks again in the future and we should partner with Franconia and have an open space referendum and raise the EIT to fund it.

The Committee asked him some questions. One about his comment about the safety of getting to Bustard Road Park. He feels a powerline trail would be the best way for him to get to Bustard Road Park. Mr. Meehan said the Trail plan has trails through that area and pointed him to the Township's Trail plan which is on the Township website.

Another question referred to his comment about using Franconia's sewer bid and raising the EIT to fund parks and opens space and asked what he meant by that. Mr. Osei said we are entitled to have an Open Space referendum for Open Space, and it should be funded through an increase of the EIT or property taxes and not the sewer sale. He was asked again if he was suggesting raising taxes and he responded saying if the Township needs to spend more money it should be done by raising taxes not by selling the sewer system.

The Committee pointed out to him that a portion of the Township's property tax millage is dedicated to parks and recreation and open space. He said he was not aware of this. He asked if this is part of the Township's regular allocation or by referendum. The Committee said it is not by referendum and has been this way for many years. He said it could change with each year's budget and a referendum would lock it in. The Committee said it has been the same for many years and not changed he said that is great to hear.

Mr. Osei said he couldn't stay at the OSPAC meeting any longer tonight and had to leave.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of September 19, 2022**

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the September 19, 2022, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to accept the minutes as drafted. Mr. Vaitis 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. Carney said construction of the new trail is moving along well. The new pedestrian bridge crossing Towamencin Creek is set and grading on both sides of the bridge continues. If everything continues at this pace, the Township is looking at having a ribbon cutting around November 14<sup>th</sup>. The scheduled completion date is December 5<sup>th</sup>, so this project at this point is ahead of schedule.

- **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. Joseph Carlin of Gilmore Associates will be making a presentation to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) asking for a resolution to go out for bids. It is expected construction will begin in early 2023.

- **Grist Mill Park DCED Grant Application**

The DCED responded to the Township's application for a grant in the amount of \$250,000 to fund the improvements at this park. The application was denied. This is very disappointing. The Township will now need to look for a new funding source and this will put the facilities at Grist Mill Park on the back burner until additional funds are found.

Further, Mr. Meehan said regarding Grist Mill Park, as the 2023 budget items were being reviewed, it became apparent that the original estimated costs for the planned work are underestimated and will need to be adjusted up. The largest items were; increasing the size of the proposed pavilion; changing the sand volleyball court to bocce courts; and providing a shade structure over the full bocce courts. These increased costs are pushing the overall costs of improvement at Grist Mill Park into the range of \$700,000 to \$750,000 rather than the original estimate of \$500,000. These additional costs put the improvements even further beyond the Township's funding ability.

- **Bocce Courts**

Mr. Carney said CKS is working on the design and bid documents to solve the drainage problem at the courts. He said the drainage and wall to divert water around the courts have been substantially designed. He expects they will go out for bids in late 2022 or early 2023.

- **Do Not Feed the Ducks Signs**

Mr. Meehan said got a cost quote from Signarama for the “what to feed the ducks” signs to be posted in Fischer’s Park. He passed the sign image and cost quote to the Township staff.

The BOS had a mixed reaction to posting the signs fearing that they would end up as clutter and litter in the park. They agreed about educating the public about what to feed the ducks but also don’t want to impact the park environment. For now, the staff proposed posting the signs in the new kiosk and that is where they are now posted.

The Committee feels the message needs to get to the people who use the fishing pier and the pond. The intent was to have the signs mounted semi-permanently on a tableau style stand near the fishing pond. Unfortunately, when using the “I stand for Ukraine” signs as a model, maybe the BOS was picturing the duck signs on similar “wire” supports which was not the intent. The Committee will follow up and see about getting tableaus made before next spring and appeal to the BOS to reconsider.

- **Native Tree Trail**

Mr. Meehan said at a previous OSPAC meeting Mr. Costlow said he would update the Committee regarding his meetings and conversations with Penn State Extension Service and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Mr. Costlow was not present at this month’s meeting so we should expect he will be giving the update at a future meeting.

Mr. Meehan said he included a budget item for planting native trees and removing stumps along the Kriebel Road trails in the 2023 OSPAC budget request. He said the amount of this request was about \$25,000 for thirty trees and the removal of thirty-six stumps along the trail between Bustard Road and Trumbauer Road. He said five of the trees were intended to be planted along the first base line of the ballfields at Green Lane Park as requested by TYA. He noted that the cost estimate of \$4000. for the stump removal, and chip clean-up is considered a good price.

During discussions with Mr. Carney Mr. Meehan said they developed a list of potential native species to be planted. These species will be vetted with others including PSU and PHS to confirm they are the best for planting in the conditions along the Kriebel trails.

Ms. Becker asked to get a copy of the list and Mr. Meehan said he would pass it on to her.

There was a discussion whether the credit given by developers for not planting trees actually cover the cost to the Township to plant trees. The tree cost estimate used in the budget requests averaged about \$650.- \$700 to purchase, plant and deer protect a tree. The actual cost per tree is dependent on the species. If a developer gives the township at least this amount, this should be an appropriate credit for not planting a tree by the developer.

Mr. Meehan noted that \$252,000 was given by the Core5 developer in lieu of plant tree and that this money will be used for years to come to plant trees throughout the Township. Each year we need to look at areas needing new trees and, in the budget, request that money be used for planting them.

- **Farming on Township Owned Property**

Mr. Carney said he spoke briefly with Drew Bechtel, the farmer using Township Park property for his crop, but the conversation was merely a “getting re-acquainted” conversation. He said Mr. Bechtel is doing trucking work right now and is not at home much to arrange a meeting for a deeper conversation about his farming in Fisher’s Park. Mr. Carney said he will continue to try to arrange a meeting with Mr. Bechtel.

- **Re-line the Tennis Courts at Heebner Park for Pickleball Courts**

Mr. Carney said the BOS has heard about other Township's strong complaints from neighbors near pickleball courts about the constant, irritating sound of the plastic ball being hit back and forth. The BOS don't want to spend money to add pickleball courts in neighborhood setting where this could happen. They want to site the pickleball courts in parks with sufficient distance between the courts and neighboring homes so the noise would not be an annoyance. Mr. Meehan said knowing this, it would not be best to pursue courts at Heebner Park or at the Valley View cul-de-sac. Instead, we need to look for a site that falls in line with what the BOS would entertain. For this reason, the Heebner idea has been dropped from the budget request. In its place is an item for requesting engineering "standards" be developed and provided to the OSPAC so we can use the "standards" to look for new potential sites with the expectation we can determine a site and get some courts constructed in 2023.

- **Drinnon Park Improvements**

In the 2023 budget request, Mr. Meehan said the work for Drinnon Park improvements has been broken in two components. One for the engineering work necessary to prepare a plan that allows the new path from Tennis Circle to skirt the stormwater management basin and the pipe culvert coming into that basin as the path connects the sidewalk at Tennis Circle with the playground in the middle of the park. The second component is the actual construction of the path. Having the first, confirms an alignment of the path, provides better cost information, and allows for more informed decision making. For the 2023 budget request, the first component is given priority, while the second is held in abeyance.

- **Soccer Field at Nash School**

Mr. Carney said CKS has begun work on engineering for this soccer field in front of Nash School. He said survey work is completed and CKS is working with this. He also said the Township is looking to confirm that an agreement with the North Penn School District (NPSD) for establishing this field is in place. Mr. Fisher said talk about this field had taken place probably as long as ten years ago. The conversations at the time were with the NPSD Facilities Director. He said there is precedent for agreements for such use of NPSD property for Township athletic facilities one being the Nor-Gwyn complex on the Pennbrook middle school property. At this point \$150,000 has been requested in the 2023 budget for construction of this field in addition to \$25,000 for the engineering work.

- **Budget Requests for 2023**

Mr. Meehan noted that for his presentation to the BOS at the Budget Workshop Meeting he has broken down the request into three categories.

The first, "Projects that are being Withdrawn". These are projects that were approved in previous year's budgets but were never done and we don't foresee their status changing in the next few years. The funds for these unused projects will be returned to the funding "bucket" and made available for other projects in 2023.

The second, "Scope changes to previously approved projects". The OSPAC wants to keep these previously approved and yet unspent projects but change the scope of work of the project.

The third, "New Items for 2023". These are budget requests for new projects for 2023.

(Although not distributed at the meeting, attached to these minutes are a copy of the items enumerated in the three categories.)

Mr. Meehan said the budget request list he sent to the Committee for new items in 2023, and we discussed at last month's meeting closely captures the budget request he sent to the Township Finance Director earlier today (October 17, 2022). This information will be the basis of his

presentation to the BOS at their budget workshop meeting on Wednesday October 19,2022. He provided a quick recap of the items requested:

- Pool lane line reels – large enough to accommodate 5 lane lines (\$4500)
- Nash Soccer field (Construction - \$150,000)
- Additional bocce court improvements at Fischer's Park (2 ea. 10'x12' shade structures and miscellaneous items - \$20,000)
- Tree related items in parks and along trails (Plant new trees, remove stumps - \$19,935)
- Engineering only for pickleball courts at a location to be determined (\$15,000)
- Construct two pickleball courts at a location to be determined (\$50,000)
- Engineering only for a bird/butterfly/star observation platform at Kibler Meadow Park (\$5,000)
- Engineering only for Grist Mill Park improvements (\$35,000 to be combined with \$35,000 from DCNR Grant)
- Enlarged pavilion for addition to Grist Mill Plan (\$47,520)
- Change from sand volleyball court to two bocce courts at Grist Mill Plan (\$92,500)
- Add shade structure to bocce courts into Grist Mill Plan (\$276,000)
- Matching funds to be able to use DCNR Grant (\$250,000)

He expanded on the item for Engineering for the Grist Mill Park Plan. He said Peter Simone of S-C said by email that up to 20% of a total project cost could come from a DCNR Grant for engineering for a project. For the Grist Mill Park improvements that would mean up to \$100,000 could be used for engineering. The estimated cost for developing full engineering plans from the Grist Mill Concept plan are about \$70,000. We would be allowed to take half of this from the grant and match it with Township funds and get the engineering plans completed and be prepared for construction when other funds fall into place to match the remainder of the DCNR grant. Having plans would give the Township a more accurate cost breakdown, a plan that could be used for decision making and a shovel ready plan for construction. For these reasons, the budget request is made that \$35,000 be set aside for this.

- **Township Pool Repairs**

For the Committee's information, Ms. Smith provided an update on the investigation and repairs to the Township's "H". She said PW has detected a leak near the flange in the piping near the drain. They contacted Sewer Specialties to ascertain if the portion of the piping could be repaired with fiberglass lining. They are completing the lining will test for leaks in the upcoming days. They also plan to have ground penetrating radar company on site this week to check for voids beneath the pool. If no void is detected and the fiberglass pipe lining holds, the Township won't have to excavate beneath the pool. This is very good news. Keep you fingers crossed all works out well.

- **Potential Turf Soccer Field**

Mr. Vaitis said there is a group of investors led by a gentleman who very much likes the TYA soccer program because he feels like TYA has a real community-based program that does things right and keep it about the kids. In the past, they have helped out with kids who cannot afford to play in the program by paying for their uniforms and paying their fees. Mr. Vaitis said he talked to the gentleman recently and he said he is interested in putting up money to install a turf soccer field for use by Towamencin soccer players. He said they were talking about investing \$225,000 to \$250,000 on a turf field. He also said the investor has about \$60,000 they are looking to spend this year.

Mr. Vaitis said he doesn't know the full financial details and at this point is just exploring if there is any interest. The Committee's conversation focused on Grist Mill Park as the best suited location for such a field, but other locations were not discounted. Adding a turf field to the Grist Mill complex with its full range of recreational activities, and its good location would further enhance what the Committee sees as a developing gem in the Township's Park system.

Mr. Vaitis said he is going to meet with someone who plans and install such turf fields to get an idea of what installing such a field at Grist Mill might cost. He said if the cost turns out to be well beyond what the investors have in mind, then the proposal would go no further.

The Committee had a lengthy conversation about how a turf field would fit in at Grist Mill Park, whether on the right side of the parking or on the left side closer to Forty Foot Road; the engineering of this turf field in the overall plan for engineering Grist Mill Park; and how it might fit with the work proposed when application was made for the DCED grant.

There was also a discussion about the financial side of the proposal. Is it a donation, is it a loan, would the investors be looking to recoup their investment somehow such as charging for field usage? The answers to these questions are not known right now but Mr. Vaitis said they had mentioned having a field manager for scheduling hinting that at times TYA was not using the field, it would be available for others.

The consensus from the Committee seems to be that a turf soccer field would be a wonderful addition to the Townships recreation facilities, but we would want to know more about the proposal. Further, the Committee said such a proposal needs to be taken to the BOS level before going forward any further with the OSPAC. The Committee recommended Mr. Vaitis talk to Supervisor Marino first and get his feedback before approaching the entire board.

#### **New Business**

Ms. Blake mentioned that she noticed a new sign at the entrance to the Bustard Road Park. Mr. Meehan said this sign was placed on the other side of the entrance drive when that property owner gave the OK to place it there.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on November 21, 2022**