

**Towamencin Township**  
**Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**November 21, 2022**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

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

Joe Rumsey, Candidate for OSPAC Committee  
Tina Rumsey

**Absent:**

Dave Sponseller  
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC Committee

Chairman Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

**OPENING COMMENTS**

Mr. Meehan noted he met with Mr. Carney the interim Township Manager, on Thursday November 17<sup>th</sup>, 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. Joseph Rumsey and his wife attended the meeting. Mr. Rumsey has an interest in the Township Parks and Open Space and applied to join this Committee. He has not yet been appointed to the committee but is attending to observe the Committee business and learn more about the Parks and Open Space. The Committee welcomed them.

Mr. Rumsey was asked to talk about why he is interested in joining the Committee. He said he is interested in maintaining open space and he feels like development is happening all around and he does not like to see things built everywhere. He said his fear is that the Township will be losing its beauty which attracted him and his wife to the Township. He wanted to sit in at some OSPAC meetings to learn more.

Mr. Rumsey asked where the money comes from for Parks and Open Space. The Committee explained and discussed with him how funds came to the Township through developers Impact Fees, the Arneht Trust Funds, Taxes and Grants. It was explained that most grants require a Township "match" of varying percentages so even if the Township gets a grant, it also needs to put up money in order to use the grant.

Ms. Rumsey asked who the Township used to apply for grants. Mr. Meehan said the Township staff prepares some applications and also uses its consultant planner, Simone-Collins (S-C) for the larger grant applications. He noted the Township has had successes obtaining grants when the application was prepared by S-C.

There was a description and discussion about several grant projects that are underway, and others have been recently completed. The conversation touched on where the funds came from, required matches, and the amounts.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Meeting of October 17, 2022**

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the October 17, 2022, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. Mr. Costlow said he was not in favor of the Committee's withdrawal of recommended funding to convert the tennis Court at Heebner Park to a pickleball court. He said he did not attend the last meeting and seeing this in the minutes was his first knowledge of this reversal in the funding recommendation. Mr. Meehan said we can discuss how the decision came about later in the meeting, but now we are looking to approve the minutes as drafted. Ms. Becker made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Fisher 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 very near completion. All the grading and stone subbase work is substantially done, and the bridge is in place. Only the trail asphalt paving and some miscellaneous work remains to be done. The paving is being held up by the unfavorable weather. Mr. Carney said the paving is expected to take only two days. The project's scheduled completion date is December 5, 2022.

#### **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, have been prepared by Gilmore & Associates. Joseph Carlin of Gilmore Associates made a presentation at the BOS meeting of October 26, 2022. At that meeting the BOS authorized advertising for bids for this project. The estimated cost is about \$165,000 and half will come from a Montco40 grant and half will be Township funds. It is expected construction will begin in early 2023. The Township is budgeting \$82,500 in the 2023 budget for this project.

#### **2023 Budget Recommendations**

Mr. Meehan said he made the OSPAC's 2023 Budget request to the BOS at the October 19, 2022, Budget Workshop Meeting. He said at his Meeting with Mr. Carney last week, Mr. Szumski the Township Finance Director was also present. From them, he got an indication of what has been given a thumbs-up for inclusion in the 2023 budget. Following is a summary:

- **Nash School Soccer Field - \$150,000.**

Mr. Carney said CKS is working on this design and administrative work. He said survey has taken place and after preliminary review of the site, they are looking at a plan for a 160 ft. by 120 ft. for soccer use.

They are also looking for information about the large mound of soil that has been on this site for about ten years. They want to find out if this soil mound is "topsoil" or common fill. If it is topsoil it will mean money will not need to be spent to import the large amount of costly topsoil needed before seeding the site. Inquiries about the soil mound are ongoing.

CKS is also confirming the status of an agreement with the North Penn School District (NPSD) for use of its property. The agreement will be between the Township and NPSD, so the Township needs to be involved as a party to this agreement. Mr. Carney said a new manager will be coming

on board in several weeks so he will not get involved with the agreement at this time but will inform the new manager and leave it to him to follow up on.

- **Drinnon Park Path from Tennis Circle to the mid-park Tot Playground - \$20,000**  
For this path there is a minor conflict with a drainage pipe and end wall near Tennis Circle. CKS is looking at options to align the path to avoid the drainage. They are also locating property boundaries as part of looking at the path alignment options. Once an alignment is selected, the Township will construct the path with its forces. This reduced the cost requested by the OSPAC from \$65,000 to \$20,000.

Mr. Costlow asked since the work is budgeted for 2023 and it is to be done by PW, is it on PW's schedule for 2023? Mr. Meehan replied he does not know what is on PW's schedule. Mr. Costlow said this is what happens, a budgeted item gets identified to be done by PW and it then does not get done and the money disappears. Mr. Meehan disagreed. He said when the Township says it has it budgeted for PW to do the work, he trusts that is the case and it will be scheduled.

- **Butch Clemens Field Restrooms and Pavilion - \$28,000**  
Mr. Meehan noted this was an item for which OSPAC was requesting a change in scope to do only engineering for this in 2023 in the amount of \$20,000. TYA had also included this item on its budget request. Preliminary information from Mr. Szumski was that the two requests were combined, and work will be authorized to design and engineer a location for a pavilion and restrooms along with all required associated infrastructure, water sewer and electric to the new facilities.
- **Bocce Courts at Fischer's Park - \$35,500**  
In the draft 2023 Township budget the Township is setting \$35,000 for improvements at the bocce courts. Mr. Meehan said this did not include any shade structures. Mr. Carney said the Township will be authorizing advertising for bids to have drainage installed and a wall built to prevent surface water getting to the courts and also improve the drainage at the courts. In addition to this work, PW will be replacing the court surfacing material to provide better drainage.

Mr. Costlow asked if the OSPAC will get to review the plans before bidding. Mr. Meehan said he did not know. Mr. Costlow said the request for this work came from the OSPAC and we should review the details of the engineering solution. He asked if the plans will be put on the Township website. He said he does not have confidence that CKS knows how to handle this problem given that they asked him if he could recommend someone with knowledge of bocce court construction. He said the money being spent on the courts is OSPAC money and we should be able to review the engineer's plans. He continued saying if the work does not include refurbishment of the court material the entire effort will be a waste of money because it will not bring people back to the bocce courts. He said the court material needs to be removed down to the pad underlayment and replaced. He said in the past he gave information to PW on what needed to be done with the surface material and PW only put powdered limestone on top of what was already there, so based on experience he is not convinced they are doing what needs to be done. Mr. Meehan said the task to determine what needs to be done was given to CKS and he is told they are working to provide a solution.

He continued saying that he got a price of \$41,000 to repair the courts as they stand without the retaining wall so why is the 2023 budget estimating the entire repair for \$35,500 with a wall. To him, this would be an indication they are not including everything.

Mr. Meehan said at the present time the authorization to bid, is only an authorization. He said he will reach out to Mr. Carney and the new Township Manager and arrange a meeting as soon as the Township Manager comes on board and have a conversation about what work is being proposed by CKS and the Township. Mr. Costlow could then direct his concerns directly to the Township.

- **Lane Line Reel - \$4000.**

Mr. Carney said the lane lines reel is budgeted and will be provided to the Township pool for 2023.

- **Native Tree Trail - \$20,000**

For 2023 \$20,000 is budgeted for tree planting. The money sought for tree stump removal was not budgeted because PW has already removed many of the stumps along Kriebel Road. Money was budgeted for about twenty five trees. Five new trees are intended to be planted at Green Lane Park at TYA's request to help provide shade for spectators and players. The locations will be coordinated with TYA. Mr. Carney recommends planting river birch which are hardy, fast growing and provide nice shade.

Twenty or more trees will be planted along the Kriebel Road Trail both the new section and the old. The species of trees and locations for planting will be coordinated with PW and through contacts with Penn State Extension service and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Both Mr. Carney and Penn State recommend looking into hybrid chestnut trees for use here.

Mr. Meehan said he missed sending the list of suggested trees he mentioned at the last meeting to the committee members. He said he will send them within the next few days. He just forgot after the last meeting.

Mr. Costlow mentioned there is a Tree Tenders Course being offered on-line in January and February (two hours each day for four days) for anyone interested. If interested, you can look the course up online. The cost is \$40. If enough people sign on to being tree tenders, a local group can be formed, and he offered to coordinate that group.

- **Repairs to Township "H" pool - \$50,000**

\$50,000 has been budget toward repairing the township "H" pool. Repairs to the leak near the drain and the leak in the slide water feed pipe have already been repaired. Their cost was less than the \$50,000 originally budgeted because the leaks were able to be repaired without excavating beneath the pool. Also, ground penetrating radar found no voids beneath the pool as originally suspected. The remainder of the budgeted amount will be held in reserve in case other pool problems occur in 2023.

- **Trail connecting Grist Mill Park with Grist Mill Drive**

Mr. Meehan noted as a point of interest to the Committee that this proposed trail is being looked at by the township engineers to see how a trail could be aligned in the corridor. Actual work which will be done by the PW is not intended to be done in 2023 but in a subsequent year after an alignment is selected and discussed with the Grist Mill neighborhood.

These were the major budget items of interest to OSPAC.

- **Potential Turf Soccer Field at Grist Mill Park**

Mr. Vaitis has been following a lead with some serious investor who are interested in constructing a turf soccer field in Towamencin, more specifically Grist Mill Park. He mentioned this at previous OSPAC Meetings and at that time Supervisor Smith suggested he get some feedback from Supervisor Marino who is more familiar with financing and construction of such facilities.

Mr. Vaitis provided an update. He said he spoke with Mr. Marino whom Mr. Vaitis said was generally very supportive. Mr. Vaitis said the way this would work would be that the investors would construct the turf field on township property at a cost of between \$1 and \$1.25 million. Then over a period of years, say ten or 15 years, the investors would be repaid using the proceeds from rental of the field. A key item is that in order to generate the needed revenue the field would need to be lit so its full usage potential could be realized.

He continues saying getting approval of lights could pose a problem with the field being close to Forty Foot Road and also the Jacobs Wood development. That being said, he also noted the latest downlighting technology has been shown to solve this concern might be workable here. However, if there was feedback from that Township that this or any other issue was a hurdle that could not be overcome, then the turf field idea is a non-starter and would be dropped.

He said there was also a concern about stormwater drainage of the field and where it would need to drain to. Mr. Vaitis said there are many questions that that need to be looked into and discussed but from his perspective having such a turf field at Grist Mill Park combined with the new facilities planned there, would make it a crown jewel in the township park system. Other OSPAC members agreed. Mr. Vaitis' presentation continued getting into details such as; this is not a gift to the township but more a lease of the land with the improvements, which would become the property of the township at the end of the lease; who would be responsible for the lease; who would manage the schedule and operation of the field; grants that might be available to help, cover some of the cost similar to what was obtained by Horsham; potential problems with parking and solutions to those problems, and more.

The next step is to talk again to supervisor Marino and have him and a representative of the investors come to a future OSPAC meeting to give a more detail presentation and have the Committee ask their questions directly. Mr. Vaitis said he will continue to pursue this opportunity and attempt to get answers to all the questions the Committee has posed.

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

Mr. Meehan said this item was not on the agenda for tonight, but Mr. Costlow brought it up earlier in the meeting. The Committee, based on feedback coming from the BOS through Mr. Carney that the BOS did not want and would not entertain pickleball courts in neighborhood parks such as Heebner. The Supervisors made this judgement based on feedback coming from other townships who placed pickleball courts in neighborhood parks only to get large numbers of complaints from those living close to the courts about the annoying, persistent noise of the plastic ball being hit. Based on the feedback from the Supervisors through the Township manager, the Committee decided to withdraw its recommendation to convert the tennis court at Heebner Park to a pickleball court.

Mr. Costlow was not at that meeting and was not involved or aware of the discussions until he read about them in the minutes. Mr. Costlow now wanted to say that this conversion has been in the works for several years and never progressed. He said we are letting the six houses or so that surround the Heebner court control access to that sport for the entire township, and he does not think that is fair because it becomes a "not in my backyard" issue. He said this has been going along now for years and here we are now saying it will not happen. Mr. Meehan said he shares the frustration, but this does not mean there will not be pickleball courts, they will just be placed elsewhere that fit what the Supervisors set as a criterion. We now have to look for and suggest those locations. It is not productive to push for something that we know has little chance of getting the supervisor endorsement.

The discussion turned to what engineering if any would be needed to construct a few pickleball courts. Mr. Costlow said not much is needed, a flat piece of ground, some surfacing asphalt, and some fencing. He said if you need to get dimensions and details go to Palmer Park in Skippack and measure the courts there.

Mr. Meehan said we will be open suggestions on other locations that would be appropriate for two or more pickleball courts and the Committee should keep this in mind as it travels through the township. He said Mr. Carney suggested Bustard Park as a potential location. A new salt storage building will be built there in the near future and putting courts there might be suitable location, far away from any residential area.

- **Farming on Township Property**

Mr. Carney said that since there is going to be a new Township Manager in a few weeks, he has withdrawn from contacting the farmer, Mr. Bechtel. He feels anything he did at this point would cloud the communication between the farmer and the new manager. The OSPAC agrees with his action.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Park Improvement Capital Planning**

Mr. Meehan asked the committee to start thinking about future planning for park capital improvement and major maintenance items. He said he feels the Committee needs a structure to organize our planning. We started with such a structure back in 2019 /2020 but then Covid came along, and this effort fell apart. He mentioned that Mr. Szumski has also started something similar, and we should ask to combine our thinking with his financial plan and avoid conflicting paths and priorities. Mr. Meehan asked the Committee what park “needs” it feels are top priority? He said think about this for next meeting.

- **Connectivity Trail Study**

Mr. Meehan reminded the committee that Simone-Collins is conducting a “Path/Trail Connectivity Study” for the Township. Trails fall under the umbrella of Parks, so Committee members should go to the Township website under “Community Connection” for links to the Survey and WikiMap sites. He suggests members provide their input to these sites.

- **PSDC Purchase of property adjacent to Veterans Park.**

Mark Nicoletti attended the BOS Meeting of October 26, 2022. He talked about the status of his Town Square Shopping Center at Allentown Road and Forty Foot Road. He also announced that PSDC (Nicoletti Family Trust) has purchased the 15-acre property behind the SKF building along Tomlinson Road, from Country View Family Farms (Clemens Food Group). This is of interest to the OSPAC since the proposed entrance to Veterans Park traverses this property.

Mr. Nicoletti mentioned he is in favor of Veterans Park and looks forward to helping move it forward. Mr. Nicoletti also said he will be asking for changes from the township in his “age restricted housing development” next to the SKF building because of the recent significant changes in the commercial real estate market as a result of Covid.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on January ???, 2023**