

**Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
April 10, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Michon Blake
Dr. Richard Costlow
Robert DeHaven
Dave Sponseller
Dan Vaitis

Absent:

Todd Fischer
Joe Rumsey
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC Committee

Chairperson Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM

All present participated in the pledge of allegiance.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Meehan noted that he records the audio of the meeting for his convenience in preparing the minutes.

Mr. Meehan also noted that he met with Dave Kraynik and Dennis Carney on April 5th, and they provided a verbal update on items the OSPAC has been following. Their update comments will be passed on to the Committee as shown in the minutes as "Mr. Kraynik or Mr. Carney reported" as the individual items are discussed in tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were two residents in attendance tonight. Ms. Nancy DeHaven and a friend (first name Barbara). Mr. Meehan asked if they had any comments to share with the committee. Ms. DeHaven said she enjoys the Township Parks, especially Fischer's. Park. She said she enjoys being in the natural setting, to walk the trails and get away from thoughts of everyday problems. She especially enjoys the quiet, peaceful environment in the parks.

Barbara said she feels the same and came to this meeting to learn more and see if she might be able to help in some way. Tonight, she just wants to listen.

APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES – March 13, 2023, Meeting

Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments or concerns about the minutes of the March 10, 2023, OSPAC meeting as drafted and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted. Mr. Costlow seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes. These approved minutes will now be posted on the Township website. Mr. Costlow asked if all the latest minutes are posted on the Township website. Mr. Meehan said the last several months are not and he will follow up to get them added.

OLD BUSINESS

TA Trail - Valley View Way to Trumbauer Road

Mr. Kraynik reported that the final paving of the path between the new bridge and Valley View Way is expected to be done Thursday of this week. After that, topsoil and miscellaneous work will be done, including a crosswalk at Trumbauer Rd. Then there will be clean up and inspections and turn over to the Township. We expect it to be open by the end of April. People are already using it. Mr. Costlow questioned whether the topsoil being spread will take care of the ponding. Mr. Meehan noted that some areas are wetlands, and they are meant to be wet. He also mentioned that the Township had said that there's a "linear drain" being placed to move the water out of some of these ponded areas. Mr. Costlow said he has not seen anything like this, and he has walked the trail several times recently. Mr. Meehan said that there are other minor items extra work items that also need to be done and maybe public works will do this work because the project budget is tight.

KRT Trail - PECO Powerline Crossing on Kriebel Rd to Green Lane Rd

Mr. Kraynik reported that contract documents were being exchanged between the contractor and the Township and as soon as they are all signed, they expect a preconstruction meeting will be held and a notice to proceed given for the work to begin on the trail running from the PECO Power lines up to Green Lane Rd. This work should be done rather quickly in about 6 weeks to two months. The project is expected to be completed by early summer.

Updates of Budget Items approved for 2023.

Site for a new soccer field

Mr. Kraynik reported that CKS has produced a topographic survey of the field next to the sewer treatment plant and is looking into what size soccer fields would fit at this location. There have been no conclusions at this point and this engineering work will continue.

Mr. Meehan said based on his preliminary look at the topographic plans he estimates a field the size of the field parallel to Allentown Road at Grist Mill Park can fit parallel to Kriebel Road at Green Lane Park. In addition, a second smaller field parallel to the western property line along the tributary of the Towamencin Creek is also possible. He said even with these, he feels pickleball courts will also fit on the property. Mr. Vaitis asked what's the next step? Mr. Meehan said he expects CKS will determine what size soccer field(s) will fit on the property considering the sloping ground and other topographic features at this site. Mr. Meehan asked Mr. Vaitis what size soccer field he thought would meet T.Y. A.'s needs. Mr. Vaitis said he thought TYA needed one field, but he was not sure and would check with them. The action moving forward is with CKS to make an engineering recommendation on field size and orientation.

Drinnon Park Improvements

Mr. Meehan said he adjusted his suggested path alignment connecting the park entrance at Tennis Circle to the Drinnon Way cul-de-sac to maximize the open field play area. This increases the total length of the path slightly. He told Mr. Kraynik he would like to take this path plan to the residents and let them know what is planned. Mr. Kraynik asked if such a meeting is the desire of the OSPAC committee. Mr. Meehan said it had not been discussed as such, but he would get the Committees input about a meeting. A meeting with the neighborhood was discussed and the committee was then asked for their thoughts on having it. Ms. Becker said she always favors letting the residents know what is planned. Others said the same. The Committee voted. They voted unanimously to invite the neighbors to a committee meeting to show them what is planned and get their input. Adding a copy of the proposed plan along with the invitation letter was also discussed and the Committee agreed this is a good idea and should be done. Mr. Meehan said he will include a sketch plan with the invite letters sent by the Township and look at having them attend an OSPAC meeting even as early as May.

Mr. Meehan said he had not yet measured the length of the new trail alignment and he needed to get that information to Mr. Kraynik so the Township could better estimate the costs and better evaluate the addition of changing from a six foot width to a nine foot width and how the additional width would impact the Townships cost estimate and MS4 commitments. He said he will follow up on this information and get it to Mr. Kraynik.

Butch Clemens Field - Engineering for Pavilions/restroom

Mr. Meehan reported he again this month has not gotten feedback from TYA regarding their preferred location of a restroom/pavilion facility. He said he had again requested the information several times but understands this is a very busy time for TYA as they get their baseball season organized and underway.

He said Mr. Carney had given him an old plan of Clemens field and it showed a "playground" near the left field foul pole, and Mr. Meehan sees this as a likely best spot for the restroom/ pavilion facility. Determining a location within the park best for TYA use and connection to the utilities will continue.

Bocce Courts Repair and Improvement

Mr. Meehan noted that the Township received bids for repairs and improvements to the bocce courts and received only one bid which far exceeded the budgeted amount. After review, the Board rejected the bid and sought alternatives. As an alternative CKS contacted Top-a-court CKS and asked them to provide a cost for the work that was bid. Top-a-court's response provided only a price for a slot drain in the courts

and a price to remove 2 inches of the existing material and replace it with a Har-Tru surfacing. The cost for this work alone was \$25,000.

During this time Public Works department looked at the courts and provided a variation on the original bid proposal including a plan to construct the walls and replace the court material. PW estimated their cost to do the work was less than \$20,000. Mr. Meehan went through the breakdown of the PW estimate for the committee but did not have a printed copy for each member. (A copy is attached). He said he was not positive that the labor costs were not included but suspected based on the cost breakdown that they were not. Mr. Meehan said the PW plan with two walls, a planting area and walkway partially around the courts was a good plan with a very good cost. His only concern was that two trees might need to be removed but these could be replaced with new trees placed to provide some shade.

The Committee discussed the courts, the problems, causes and solutions. Mr. Meehan told the Committee the Township is looking for a recommendation and would like to have the recommendation for the BOS review and action at its April 12th meeting. Mr. Meehan said he asked Mr. Kraynik to defer this until the next BOS meeting to give the OSPAC a chance to finalize a recommendation at this meeting. Mr. Kraynik said he would do this.

Mr. Costlow said he wanted to know more about the PW plan and wanted it to include some items PW had promised in the past such as a scoreboard and ball racks. He said he felt that we don't always get what PW says they will do and approving this plan might have the same results. Mr. Meehan noted that Mr. Kraynik and Mr. Carney said they have full confidence in PW's ability to provide what they show in their plan and Mr. Carney will be on board to provide his experience in oversight to see the plan is done as planned.

Mr. DeHaven remembered that at the last meeting the lady's bocce group said they had used the courts without problems up until about three years ago. He wondered if a major rehabilitation was needed every five years or so. Mr. Costlow said from his experience the courts need regular minor maintenance during the playing season and major annual maintenance. He also said a fence around the courts and signs asking people to respect the courts would be very helpful in preventing unintentional "damage" to the courts by young children and animals. He said if provided with the correct tools, the bocce players could dress up the courts after each use.

Mr. Meehan made a motion to "recommend the PW proposed plan be the OSPAC's recommendation to the BOS and be implemented for the bocce court work." Ms. Becker seconded the motion. Four other Committee members voted in favor. Mr. Costlow abstained. The motion was approved six to zero. Mr. Meehan said he would pass this recommendation to Mr. Kraynik.

Mr. Meehan noted that the work would not be done until late summer or fall. Mr. Vaitis mentioned that during the intervening time, the details could be discussed with the Township to work out any problems as work progresses so we can have confidence in the final outcome.

Tree Planting for 2023

Mr. Meehan presented a copy of a plan he requested from Gilmore & Associates (Joe Carlin) to the Committee. He requested this plan to serve as a base layer for a tree planting plan along the Kriebel Road II trail and the TA trail because it showed the underground utilities and other features. The intention is to create a "Trail of Native Trees" along the pedestrian trail.

The committee discussed a "tree plan including potential species, planting in different years to have varied types and sizes of trees, and planning for trees considering clear zone requirements and other factors Mr. Costlow had learned from Penn State Urban Forestry Department and the Horticultural Society.

Using the base plan, Mr. Costlow was asked to prepare a draft plan that could be used as a starting point to seek approval from the Board of Supervisors for planting with the intention of planting trees along these trails in the fall of 2023. Mr. Costlow was given the copy of the base plan.

Potential Pickleball Court Site

Mr. Costlow led the Committee through a review and analysis of the surveys completed by most members of the OSPAC. The surveys asked for the respondent to consider certain aspects at each potential pickleball court location then send the completed survey to Mr. Costlow for inclusion in an analysis of the results. He did not get responses from all Committee members and in his presentation showed only what he had received.

Mr. Costlow projected the data onto the meeting room screen. He explained the slides describing the graph colors and his inclusion of a bar he designated as the "unicorn" representing a perfect choice for a site. He said the analysis did not give the kind of answers expected i.e., no clear indication of comparisons of one site over the others.

He said committee members in some instances did not have a clear understanding what areas of some parks were being considered and others rated the different needs at the parks differently and without everyone making a comparison of the same sites, using the same criteria, an accurate result would not be easily concluded.

The Committee discussed which of the criteria were most important to the Committee. Mr. Sponseller said some of the criteria are more factual, for example utility locations, and these should not be on the survey. Mr. Meehan said he had recently talked with Peter Simone about another topic and asked what criteria he thought was important for a pickleball site. Mr. Simone mentioned the number of courts, which he said is a choice made on the Township's preference and the impact of noise on the surroundings. Regarding the number of courts, because of this sports growing popularity if we were considering four courts, we might want to rethink and plan more. He said from his experience with pickleball court placement, noise complaints beginning early in the morning and continuing all day, inevitably come up and this should be considered as a top factor. Like Mr. Simone, the Committee also favored having more courts because the sports popularity continues to grow.

The Committee discussed noise at the potential locations and successes and failures of existing court locations because of the noise they created. The committee also discussed spreading the courts to several locations or keeping them together at a single site. Keeping them together was the preference.

The Committee began looking at the sites using noise impact to the surrounding area as the primary factor. The proximity of homes to the Green Lane Park site and the Fischer's Park overflow parking area and changing the layout of the Grist Mill Park concept plan configuration to move the plans pickleball courts further away from the Jacobs Woods residences were discussed.. The Committee began comparing noise levels at various sites where noise would be considered a problem but then moved toward selecting a court site where noise impacts would not be considered a problem.

Mr. Vaitis proposed that we are narrowing down the site selection criteria and are at a point where we feel only three or four criteria factor heavily into the question. He suggested a simple summary of each committee member's top three picks and we then work from only these.

Mr. Meehan chose his three choices: Butch Clemens Park, Fischer's Park overflow parking area; Green Lane Park.

Ms. Blake chose Butch Clemens, Fischer's Park overflow parking area, and Bustard Road Park.

Mr. Costlow chose Fischer's Park overflow Parking area, Green Lane Park and Butch Clemens or Bustard Park.

Ms. Becker chose Green Lane Park, Fischer's Park, Butch Clemens Park.

Mr. DeHaven chose Butch Clemens Park, Green Lane Park, and Bustard Park near Nash School.

Mr. Sponseller chose Butch Clemens and Green Lane (with conditions).

Mr. Vaitis chose Butch Clemens and Grist Mill closer to Allentown Road.

The Committee continued discussing the choices with Fischer's Park and Butch Clemens Park seeming to be favored. Mr. Meehan noted that in his discussions with Mr. Kraynik and Mr. Carney they indicated they are also looking to solve the parking problem for major Township events by creating a parking area on the grass overflow parking area in Fischer's Park and maybe with a pavilion and even pickleball courts. The Committee agrees that this would be a good possibility, but courts here would significantly change the character of Fischer's Park, which currently is the most used park by walkers and those who

go there to enjoy its quiet and tranquil setting. It also discussed that these courts would likely be sought out for league or organized play which has by tradition been restricted at Fischer's.

Mr. Meehan said he liked Butch Clemens Field because it is in a completely different, more "active", setting than Fischer's. It is in an active park, in an area with no residential areas close by, and is on the edge of commercial activities where noise would not be a problem. It would work for league play, He suggested perhaps because there are already lit areas at the adjacent Clemens Food gate entrance, Wawa and the Freddy's Burger place, the courts could be lit to allow some evening play. It would need some parking and we currently are working toward a pavilion/restroom facility at the park.

He showed a property plat of Clemens Park to the Committee members. The Committee agreed that this could be a good site and after all the discussions it seems to be the site that is rising to being the top choice. Going forward the Committee members agreed that it should start looking at Butch Clemens Field as the preferred site and the Committee should begin now looking at any concerns why it wouldn't be the best choice rather than why it might be the best choice.

Insect Hotel

Mr. Meehan said PW indicated the mounting for the insect hotel is completed and the hotel will be installed next week.

Pool

Mr. Kraynik reported that everything is on target for the 2023 summer season and that the new lane line reel has been delivered and is on site.

Arneith House Tour

Mr. Kraynik reported that the requested cost quote for the demolition of the Arneith House should not be seen as an indication that demolition is imminent. It was requested for the Township to be able to make a comparison between demolishing the house and making all the necessary repairs to save it. He said if the Committee wants to look inside the house there is still the opportunity to do so.

The Committee members said they would like to take a tour of the house interior just to see what it looks like and its condition. Mr. Meehan said he will arrange this with PW as the weather warms up and the days get longer.

Towamencin Day

Mr. Meehan noted Towamencin Day will be held on May 13th and the OSPAC will have a presence at a table. He said he will ask for commitments from Committee members to be present for some time that afternoon. He will get availability information from members at the next OSPAC meeting in May.

Grist Mill Park Engineering Plans

Mr. Meehan said Simone-Collins (S-C) has been asked by the Township to submit a proposal to prepare engineering plans for the bidding of the Grist Mill Park Phase I improvements.

Since the first grant application years ago, some of the concepts of the park have been rethought and changes proposed. Mr. Meehan said he wants S-C to consider this when preparing the engineering plans and wants to consider inviting Peter Simone to meet with the Committee and discuss them. Maybe the May meeting if possible. We would also try to have Mr. Kraynik or Mr. Carney attend.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on May 8, 2023,