

Towamencin Township
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting
May 13, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Attending:

Joseph Meehan
Nancy Becker
Robert DeHaven
Michon Blake

Todd Fisher
Dr. Richard Costlow
Dan Vaitis
Joe Rumsey
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison

Not attending:

Dave Sponseller
Katie Cleary, Special Events Coordinator

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Meehan at 7:04 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. He also noted he met with Mr. Kraynik, the Township Manager, on May 9th, to get an update on items of interest to the Committee. Mr. Meehan said he will note the update comments to the Committee as the individual items are discussed in tonight's meeting. Also attending that meeting was the Township Finance Director and Joseph Carlin of Gilmore Associates, to talk about the costs associated with the TA Trail and KRII Trail.

In a comment Mr. Meehan said Towamencin Day held on May 11 had, in his opinion, the highest turnout ever for this event. Speaking on behalf of the Committee he asked that thanks and congratulations be passed on to Katie Cleary, the event coordinator, for her work in making it a success.

He mentioned that the success overwhelmed the available parking. He said at one-point, mid-afternoon, he took photos of the full parking area and made a quick, rough count of the cars on the grass ballfield area. He said he counted 14 rows with 30 cars per row. Along with the ballfield parking, cars were being parked, out of necessity, in numerous other small grassy areas of the park not normally used for parking. In total he said he estimated more than 600 vehicles parked in the park. With the parking areas full, cars were queuing on Bustard Road in both directions waiting to enter.

Ms. Smith said the Supervisors observed the parking problem and already started talking about possibly having remote parking with shuttle buses for next year. The Committee commented that this had been tried in the past and did not work as planned because the congestion of people trying to get into the park also prevented the shuttles from running their circuits. That use of shuttles, however, was prior to having the pedestrian bridge entrance from Kriebel Road. Having a secondary drop-off/pickup point at the Kriebel Road bridge might be a solution and this committee should look into this further with Katie Cleary.

Ms. Blake noted that she used the Kriebel Road entrance to the park on Towamencin day and was surprised at the number of people who on their own just parked across Kriebel Road from the Arneith House on any flat area and walked into the park across the bridge.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were public comments made in person.

Mr. Bailey, a resident said it appears some of the previously planted young trees along Kriebel Road are being hit by weedwhackers along their trunks which can eventually kill a tree. He suggested bringing this to the attention of the public works crews and they take measures to prevent this damage. Ms. Smith said she will bring it forward to her Public Works meeting next week. Mr. Meehan noted that the new trees planted last fall all have a protective guard around them but some of the older trees do not. They will be checked.

While talking about Public Works, Mr. Costlow asked that the crews be thanked for their work in dressing up the bocce courts on a regular basis. Well done.

Mr. Rumsey also pointed out that “dog waste bags stations” have been added in more parks and along trails. He complimented PW on this addition.

There were no other public Comments.

APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES – Meeting of April 8, 2024

Mr. Meehan asked for comments or corrections, if any, to the draft minutes of the April 8, 2024, meeting which he sent to the Committee members prior to tonight’s meeting. There were no comments on the minutes as distributed. Dr. Costlow made a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. Mr. Vaitis seconded the motion. All members voted to approve the minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

Grist Mill Park Engineering Plans

Mr. Meehan noted there have been new developments regarding the plans and the funding of this project. He said just prior to his presenting the option recommended by this committee at our March OSPAC meeting (that CKS/Simone-Collins move forward with preparing engineering for the entire plan, and after the plans were completed they look at the costs and drop items from the plan as it goes to bid because there is not enough money to fund everything) he received a copy of an email from the Finance Director sent to the Board of Supervisors that with recent developments on several budget items, money is now available for funding the “robust” (include all the planned elements) Grist Mill Plan. With this news, Mr. Meehan said he made the recommendation to the Supervisors at the April 24, 2024, meeting that approval be given to have CKS /Simone-Collins prepare the plans and bid documents for the entire package including fencing the playground. The BOS approved this recommendation, and the engineers are now working to get these plans and bid documents completed, so this project can be completed in 2024.

Connector Path from Spring Valley Rd. to the Valley View -Trumbauer Rd. (VV-T) Trail.

Public Works has located and marked the property corner pins of the two properties bordering the township owned corridor connecting Spring Valley Road with the Kriebel Road Trail (TA

Trail). Using these markers, Mr. Meehan said he and Dr. Costlow and Dennis Carney of the Township staff visited the site and determined some locations for trees to be planted to help allay the property owner's concerns about the loss of privacy resulting from removal of trees to construct the trail. It was observed that in addition to the trees taken away by the trail construction there were others that appeared to have been cut or fallen on properties adjacent to the trail.

With trees being planned to be planted this spring along the trail, we agreed this would be a suitable location to plant them and enhance the trail and at the same time increase the privacy for the residents. We reviewed the site and marked on the ground about 15 trees (6 Norway spruce, 3 holly and 6 leatherleaf viburnum) at appropriate locations.

The Committee agreed with the descriptions of the locations and species of trees and that we should move forward with planting them before the spring planting season ends. Mr. Meehan said he will seek authorization from the BOS to purchase and plant these trees, noting that these are not trees along the connector path but are along the trail. Connector path trees will be considered at a future time.

The committee discussed the next step in moving forward with consideration of the connector path from Spring Valley Road and agreed it would be helpful in future conversations with the residents if we had examples of similar paths constructed elsewhere. Mr. Meehan said he would contact Peter Simone and get some locations where paths have been constructed and then the committee could visit them and take some photos which could be used to show residents what other paths look like.

Ms. Blake suggested a schematic plan so we had something on paper that we could show the residents to get a conversation started.

Dr. Costlow noted the need for a plan that managed silt runoff and channel flow. The Committee will consider who would be able to prepare such a plan, mentioning perhaps Dave Hillmantel could help.

Concept Plan for Pickleball at Butch Clemens Park

Mr. Meehan passed on to the Committee that CKS Engineers is working on a concept plan, but no details of their work are available yet.

Green Lane Road Park Soccer Fields

Mr. Kraynik reported that the Township discussed with the Towamencin Municipal Authority (TMA) the work planned for new soccer fields at this location adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant. He said the TMA is ok with the plan and a written agreement for the plan is drafted. Currently the Township solicitor is reviewing the agreement, and it has not yet been executed.

CKS is waiting for approval of a permit from Montgomery County Soil Conservation Service. A report on the status of the permit is expected to be included in the Public Works committee report later this week.

Both the signed agreement and the permit are being worked on concurrently and are the next steps before grading can begin.

Tree Planting – Spring 2024

Mr. Meehan noted he has spoken with Mr. Carney of the township staff about planting trees in 2024, some in the spring and some in the fall. Trees along the Kriebel Road Trail east of the ped bridge being one area that could benefit from some evergreens and will be a priority this spring. This is the same area as mentioned above in the section about the connector path from the trail to Spring Valley Road. Discussions and planning with him for the tree locations and species will be continuing.

Dr. Costlow reported that he got information about assistance the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) might have for planting along streets. He said their assistance would have to come through their tree tender programs. For example, they have “blueprints” for planting such as how much sidewalk to cut, how deep to dig and what materials to backfill with. They make this information available to property owners and give the property owners the option to have a tree planted in front of their property. With that thinking, it is an opportunity for residents to participate and if enough residents are willing you would at some point have a tree lined street. This can be done without heavy equipment, with “bare root,” inexpensive trees and with a small crew.

The Committee discussed some of the great opportunities for tree grants and the idea of leveraging the Township’s monies dedicated to tree planting. The Committee very much likes the idea of planting more trees and creating tree-lined streets, if possible, especially along roads like Forty Foot Rd. and Sumneytown Pike in the center of Kulpsville and see the DCNR Urban and Community Forestry Funding, and the PHS as a potential way to leverage the Township’s funds. The prep work needed to decide if applying for such funding for what we envision is worthwhile is enormous. Ms. Blake questioned if we had the resources to take this on and where did we see it as a priority.

Mr. Meehan said he saw this as something we keep as a long-range goal, and we ease into it expecting to apply for 2026 funding. In the meantime, we can get some mapping of the area we propose for planting, inventory existing trees and site conditions and get more feedback from the Township on this proposal. We can then use the collected data and feedback to decide if it is worthwhile and if it is a priority.

Mr. Bailey, a resident, said he participated in a Penn State Tree Tender Course just to learn more about trees, and he said it included discussions of such planting grants and programs. He said the volunteer planning work as well as the actual planting was greater than he thinks we imagine. He said it takes a lot of manpower and property owner participation and did not think it would work given the businesses along the main roads in Kulpsville.

Mr. Meehan said he appreciated his comments and asked if he had a suggestion where such a planting plan would benefit the township in the same way and be more workable. He said he would think about this.

Mr. Meehan said we will keep this planting idea on future agendas but will not devote a lot of time to it for now.

Review of TA & KR II Trail Costs

Mr. Meehan reported that a meeting with Township staff and Gilmore & Associates took place on May 9th to review the costs of the two Kriebel Road trail Projects constructed in 2022 and 2023. Mr. Kraynik and Mr. Szumski of the Township staff attended along with Mr. Carlin of Gilmore associates and Mr. Meehan of the OSPAC.

The Change Order costs were reviewed for the TA trail project and all but one change order, the final quantity balance, were attributable to unforeseen conditions encountered during construction. The largest change order being the final quantity balance for the contract items. The final quantities were based on the actual quantities of work performed as reported by the inspection staff.

Similarly on the KR II trail, poor existing subgrade material was encountered, and extra depth undercut, and stone backfill was necessary to stabilize the trail base. Also, some additional trees larger than what was indicated in the clearing specification were encountered and needed to be removed.

The total grant revenue received by the township for the TA Trail was greater than the original grant award and Mr. Szumski was not clear as to whether that was reimbursement for the change orders. He said he will check and report back.

Mr. Carlin also noted that the environmental permit for the TA trail project has not yet been closed out. He said he is working with Bursich Associates Inc. who prepared the original design for the sewer main replacement corridor and applied for the permit used in both the sewer main work and the TA trail, to finalize the permit closeout.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Meehan noted he sent a summary of Goals and Objectives dating from 2005 to the Committee for review. He asked that the committee look at them and provide their thought on what we would like these Goals and Objectives to be today. The 2005 version can be the trigger for a 2024 version.

He read the six (6) goals, and the committee briefly gave comments to each. Mr. Meehan said what he plans to do is to review two (2) of the goals in detail at our upcoming meetings and try to complete them all by the end of 2024. He asked the Committee to review the goals, edit, modify, and update them, and also provide any new goals or objectives that might not be already included. This is the committee homework assignment.

Mr. Meehan asked if there was any other new business. There was none.

Dr. Costlow made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Becker seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM

Respectfully Submitted

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

The next OSPAC meeting is on June 10, 2024