

**Towamencin Township  
Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting  
September 18, 2023  
Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Nancy Becker  
Dr. Richard Costlow  
Robert DeHaven  
Joe Rumsey  
Michon Blake  
Todd Fischer  
Dan Vaitis

**Not attending**

Dave Sponseller  
Laura Smith, BOS Liaison to OSPAC Committee

Chairperson Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 noted that Mr. Sponseller, the Swim Team/ Pool representative, was not able to attend tonight's meeting and Mr. Justin Strahorn, a swim team parent, was sitting in to provide information regarding the pool and swim team.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were five residents attending tonight's meeting. Justin Klinger, Zac Hess, Lynn Hess, Jamie Fischer, and Katie Cleary. The first four are TYA baseball parents.

They said they would make comments as their items of interest came up on the agenda. Mr. Meehan agreed that was acceptable.

**APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES** – Meeting of August 14, 2023

The minutes of the August meeting had been distributed to the Committee by email prior to tonight's meeting. Mr. Meehan asked if there were any comments on the minutes as written and distributed. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Vaitis seconded the motion. All Committee members voted in favor of the motion, none were opposed, the minutes were approved. Mr. Meehan said he will forward them to the Township staff to be posted on the Township website.

**OLD BUSINESS** – Updates

**Review of OSPAC Requests for 2024 Parks Capital Projects Funding.** Mr. Meehan noted that he will be presenting the OSPAC's recommendations for Budget requests to the BOS at the October 4<sup>th</sup> budget Workshop meeting and tonight will be the last opportunity to comment on any of the requests. He reminded the committee of the requests it had approved.

- Provide funds to match the DCNR Grant of \$250,000. (He added that Mr. Kraynik mentioned the possibility of another Grant opportunity to provide the matching funds. If successful, the grant money would be used as the match and not Township funds)

- Pickleball Courts at Fischer's Park (Request shown as Plan A for six courts or Plan B as four Courts in hope that at least four courts will be constructed in 2024. even though our preference is for six courts. Mr. Meehan mentioned the cost basis used for estimating new courts was the bid prices received by Horsham Township for 4 new courts bid in April/may of 2023.)

Resident Ms. Hess questioned why pickleball is being planned for Fischer's Park. She said she understood Fischer's was deed-restricted or had a prohibition on active use. Mr. Meehan said it is not restricted by ordinance or deed. It has been a longstanding policy of the OSPAC that Fisher's Park remains passive in character and that organized sport activities are not permitted in that park. Ms. Hess asked why pickleball is being allowed now.

The conversation got off the point of discussion of pickleball courts as the resident parents presented their arguments that TYA baseball has for a long time been shortchanged and needs additional fields and Fischer's Park has been out of bounds because it was deemed passive. Now this seems to be changing. Mr. Fischer said he has been asking the OSPAC to add fields in Fisher's Park on the section north of Kriebel road and has not gotten any traction on this. Ms. Becker noted that the Committee is not opposed to additional fields in this part of the park but there are big hurdles which come with it. Mr. Meehan noted that parking in that section and the costs are two hurdles.

Resident Mr. Klinger stated that TYA pays the Township for use of the fields. What does the Township do with that money? He continued that the Township doesn't properly maintain the fields and grass is allowed to grow so high a baseball can't get through the high infield grass. He said TYA has asked for a breakdown of how the money is spent and never got a response. Regarding parking, the parents said none of the township fields have adequate parking. They say more should be done for the kids.

The OSPAC said they hear the parent's concerns, but it also gets similar requests for seniors and other groups for improvements which they could use. The Committee tries to balance them all and do what we can with the limited resources available. At the present time pickleball courts are in high demand and are being recommended.

The parents also suggested connecting Bustard Road Park with Green Lane Park by creating a trail and a bridge across the tributary of the Towamencin Creek. The Committee agreed that this is a good suggestion, and it will keep this in mind going forward.

They also question why the recent decision was to put soccer fields at Green Lane Rd. Park and not baseball fields. They feel this should be a baseball only complex and soccer should go somewhere else. Mr. Meehan noted that a meeting was held just this past Wednesday with all stakeholders present, including TYA soccer representative and TYA baseball representatives. No one mentioned anything about this being looked at as a baseball field site. The understanding was that soccer fields were the highest priority and that is the direction that went to the Township engineer to look at as concept plan.

There were other issues discussed and brought to the attention of the Committee.

- The number of existing soccer fields vs. softball fields vs. baseball fields.
- Insufficient parking at Butch Clemens Field, Green Lane Park Fields
- Putting soccer fields instead on the PSDC property at Sumneytown Pike and Forty Foot Rd.
- Possibly use school district fields for baseball
- Let the Township Manager know their concerns
- Address their concerns with the TYA executive group
- Township's financial status
- Fencing at Bustard Road Park field B2 and B3.
- Signs along the fences at the ballfields
- Contacting the Township Manager with concerns

In summary, the OSPAC said the parents should work through the TYA organization, come up with a "TYA Plan" and have the organization bring the unified plan with its recommendations to the Township.

- The third item on the list of requests for budget consideration in 2024, was the connection of utilities from “the street” to the site in Butch Clemens Park which is being proposed for a restroom facility. The requested budget item for this construction is \$242,800.
- The fourth item being requested is \$100,000 to prepare first phase engineering design drawings based on the Veterans Memorial Park Concept Master Plan which the BOS approved last year.
- The last item is to plant additional trees along the Kriebel Road trails. About 25 trees, guaranteed to survive the first two years after planting. Estimated at \$1000 each including a 2-year maintenance plan. \$25,000.

### **Trails Updates**

- TA trail – Complete just waiting on final cost report.
- KR11 Trail – Substantially complete, PW has installed a post and rail fence with a mesh facing between the trail and the Creek at the trail narrow point near Green Lane Road. The tree removal debris has also been removed. This project is complete.

**Green Lane Park Soccer Field** – A meeting was held on September 13<sup>th</sup> with all the stakeholders attending. (Dave Kranick, Dennis Carney, Mary Stover, Kristen Warner, Doug, Kylie, Todd Fisher, Dan Vaitis, Jeff Baer, Joe Meehan)

A soccer field at the site was discussed looking at options for several fields of different sizes based on TYA expected needs. The TYA reps said the size needed was a 110-yard by 65-yard field and a smaller, 120 feet by 165 feet field. The consensus was that tiered fields would work well and are preferred. There was discussion about other aspects of the fields as well including stormwater management and parking.

A suggestion was presented by Mr. Vaitis representing TYA, that a linear parking area be established running the length of the site, parallel to Kriebel road as a solution to providing more parking, and also provide a buffer between the fields and Kriebel Rd. regarding the stormwater management, the site is likely not large enough to accommodate a stormwater basin so underground storage might be needed. If this is the case, it would increase the cost of the fields significantly. A comparison to the underground storage for the proposed salt storage site in Bustard Park was made. Making any new parking area a pervious surface was also an option that the OSPAC prefers. It would however need to be ADA compatible surfacing, not large sized stone.

The outcome of the meeting was for CKS to review the topography, and other constraints and come back with a preliminary plan showing what would fit and give an orientation of the fields which would then be reviewed by all.

There was a discussion with the TYA reps on the Committee about the numbers of kids signed up for each of the TYA programs, baseball, softball, and soccer and whether the number of fields for each use were proportional to the number of registrants for each sport. The general feeling expressed was that soccer has the greatest number of participants and continues to grow.

**Bocce Courts at Fischer’s Park** - Mr. Meehan passed on to the Committee Mr. Kraynik’s comments that the bocci court rehabilitation work is now underway. The township PW department is in the process of construction of the small retaining walls along the side of the courts where runoff from the adjacent higher areas has been flowing onto the courts. The work looks good and will continue until the PW portion is finished. The Top-a-court surfacing however is not expected to be completed this year and will be done in the spring.

Mr. Meehan noted that at the last BOS meeting a bocce court user addressed the BOS and noted the progress on the courts which she applauded. She added that shade and a fence are needed at the courts and asked that they be considered. The BOS told her this request would be passed on to the OSPAC committee. The Committee discussed both these requests which have also surfaced in the past. For now, the shade will be tabled until the courts are completed and then be reviewed. The fence might be more easily addressed by PW which has installed similar fences at other sites in the past. This will also be considered again once the courts are completed. The immediate focus and goal were to get the courts back in service.

**Drinnon Park Path** – Mr. Meehan said he made a presentation to the BOS asking that they approve a path in Drinnon Park to provide ADA compliant access to the playground in the center of the path. The width of the path needed to be decided. The OSPAC recommended a six-foot-wide path, and the Public Works Department said its paver was not able to pave a path that narrow and recommended a ten-foot-wide path. The supervisors discussed the pros and cons of each and agreed that a compromise width of eight feet would be acceptable. They voted to approve the installation of an eight-foot-wide path along the curving alignment recommended by the OSPAC. Construction will occur as soon as the PW work schedule allows with it hopefully being yet this year.

**Grist Mill Park Grant** – Mr. Meehan reported that Mr. Kraynick indicated there is another possibility for a grant to match the \$250,000 grant from DCNR. The Township will be applying for that grant, but the Township will also be considering setting funds in the 2024 budget to cover the DCNR grant match in case the new grant is not received. The Township must use the DCNR grant by December 2025 or lose it so funding the match is important.

**Tree Trail** – Dr. Costlow completed the tree plan with the recommended species shown directly on the plan. At the suggestion of supervisor Marino, Mr. Meehan sent the proposed plan to Peter Simone and asked him for his informal input on the plan. Having his thumbs-up would be helpful when presenting the plan to the BOS. Mr. Meehan said he had not heard back from Mr. Simone, and this is understandable since we are asking for his free opinion on something which is likely not a high priority for him. Mr. Meehan said he will follow up and contact him again.

Dr. Costlow emphasized he has spent a lot of time developing this plan and he doesn't want the Township to substitute other trees into this plan because of cost or convenience. Planting the recommended species of native trees is important. The Committee agreed with him.

**Pool Update** – Mr. Strahorn, sitting in for Mr. Sponseller said the swim team had a successful year with the exception they did not win "the big one". He said his daughter is a lifeguard there and everyone seemed to enjoy the summer at the pool.

**Farming on Township property** – Mr. Kraynik said nothing has changed on this item. He has not heard back from Drew Bechtel, the farmer. Some Committee members were of the opinion he should just be told to vacate the property, but they were reminded the farmer currently has a lease with the township to use the property.

The Committee discussed the issue again talking about the use of chemicals and the loss of habitat and the possibility of creating ballfields there. At the present time the issue will remain unchanged.

**NEW BUSINESS** - Mr. Meehan asked the Committee if anyone had any new business. There was none.

With there being no additional business the meeting on a motion by Ms. Becker, seconded by Dr. Costlow with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on October 9, 2023**