

**Towamencin Township**  
**Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**June 10, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Nancy Becker  
Dave Sponseller  
Todd Fisher  
Michon Blake  
Dan Vaitis  
Joe Rumsey  
Robert DeHaven  
Katie Cleary, Township Special Events Co-ordinator  
Laura Smith, Board of Supervisors Liaison to OSPAC

**Not attending:**

Dr. Richard Costlow

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Meehan at 7:03 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 that the Township Finance Director, Adam Szumski, will be leaving the Township for a similar position with Lower Merion Township. Mr. Meehan said this is disappointing to hear as he thought Adam was a great match for what the Township needed in the finance director position. He said he spoke to Adam last week and wished him well. The Township is advertising for a replacement.

Mr. Meehan said he met with Mr. Kraynik, the Township Manager, on June 6th 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.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were public comments made in person.

Ms. Rumsey, a Township resident, said she wanted to thank the committee for all the work that it does.

There were no other public Comments.

**APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES** – Meeting of May 13, 2024

Mr. Meehan asked for comments or corrections, if any, to the draft minutes of the May 13, 2024, meeting, which he sent to the Committee members prior to tonight's meeting. There were no comments on the minutes as distributed. Mr. DeHaven made a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. Ms. Becker seconded the motion. All members voted to approve the minutes.

### **OLD BUSINESS – Updates**

#### **Grist Mill Park Engineering Plans**

Mr. Meehan said he received an e-mail from Peter Simone saying CKS has substantially completed its general engineering and stormwater management work on the park improvements and has forwarded its work to Simone-Collins for preparing the final construction documents and bid documents. Mr. Simone expects to have them ready for Township and DCNR review by the end of June and then, depending on the review comments, complete the plans and specs and go to bid in late July. Construction is expected to be completed in 2024.

The committee discussed some items related to the Grist Mill Park plans just as a refresher on what was included. Items such as the size and location of the pavilion and if the restrooms are going to be available during the winter months. Mr. Meehan said there are no provisions in the plans to heat the restrooms so they will be winterized to prevent freezing and not be available. Perhaps if the weather is warmer, the winterization could be held off to make them available longer.

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

Mr. Meehan noted he sent information on similar connections between residences in other townships for committee members to visit to see how they have been working and see what was done at those locations to address privacy concerns of the adjacent neighbors. Some committee members visited these sites and encountered the neighbors and spoke with them. In general, the neighbors said they had little or no problems with the trail connections and thought they were a benefit to the neighborhood.

At both sites, the trails were defined by rustic post and rail fences along the trails and were narrower than the trail shown to the Spring Valley Road residents in Towamencin. One of the trails had mature plantings along it that blended well with the adjacent neighbor's landscaping. Another had no plantings, just the fence and lawn.

The committee members who visited the sites felt the fencing was important and it clearly showed the "boundary line" of the trail and the neighbor's property. They made it seem as if the connector was barely even there. A similar fence should be proposed for the Towamencin connector.

Mr. Meehan said in his mind the next step will be to prepare a more detailed plan showing a narrower trail, using the photos from the existing trails, as the OSPAC proposed trail. This will then be presented to the adjacent neighbors to get their comments. The committee agreed and felt this contact should initially be on a more personal basis with the immediate neighbors and not a large neighborhood meeting. Mr. Meehan said he will work on a more detailed plan.

Mr. Meehan also said he talked with the North Penn Water Authority about any water lines within the corridor being looked at. The NPWA said their mapping shows nothing in the corridor but before any digging takes place, a “utility one-call” should be made as a precaution.

### **Planting Trees along the Trumbauer-Valley View trail**

As another way to improve the new trail just to the east of the pedestrian bridge over the Towamencin Creek, at its My 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, the BOS approved planting fifteen (15) trees along the trail. They will fill in some gaps along the trail and over time will work to improve the privacy of neighbors along Spring Valley Road whose backyards are closest to the trail. Mr. Meehan said the planting is planned to begin June 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Concept Plan for Pickleball Courts at Butch Clemens Park**

In Mr. Kraynik’s update he said CKS continues to work on a concept plan at this location. He said he understands they have talked to Clemens food Group about access from their property. The concept plan work will be continuing.

### **Green Lane Soccer Fields**

CKS continues with the engineering for the soccer fields at Green Lane Park. They received a response dated June 3<sup>rd</sup>, from Montgomery County Soil Conservation District regarding their submission for a NPDES Permit Application. The response requested changes and additional information to the submission. CKS will be addressing the comments from the MCSD and resubmit.

Additionally, the agreement with the Towamencin Municipal Authority for the regrading of the fields is being reviewed by the Township.

### **Review of TA Trail Costs**

Mr. Meehan said a review of the TA trail costs was presented by Mr. Szumski. One item he pointed out was that the original grant amount was supplemented by an additional grant of \$100,000.

He presented the six (6) change orders for construction with an explanation of each. Four were related to unforeseen conditions encountered during construction, one was for additional topsoil to dress up the areas adjacent to the trail and one, the largest was for the final quantity balance. Mr. Meehan noted how the process works. At the time of design, the contract shows estimated quantities. At completion of the project, the inspection staff measures the actual quantities constructed to complete the design and those quantities are the quantities paid at completion. As a result, some quantities are greater than estimated and some lower. The final quantity balance is a net of the plusses and minuses. For the TA trail project this balance was \$76,246. In addition, there were increases in the engineering associated with both trail projects.

Overall, the increases are supported by the project documentation presented by Gilmore and Associates to the Township.

### **New Tree Planting Opportunity**

Mr. Meehan said a member of the Environmental Advisory Committee brought a possible Tree Grant Opportunity to his attention. GIANT Company is offering grants, under 2024 Healing Planet and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful programs for tree planting with a maximum grant of \$4000. He asked the Committee if there was any interest in pursuing this grant opportunity.

He said he reviewed the application requirements and felt that they were simple and suggested that the committee discuss seeking a grant from them. The attractive part of these grants is that there is no funding match required but a match using volunteer participation is encouraged. He said he feels there is enough interest in tree planting that we could get enough volunteers to take part in this.

He continued that TYA has asked that additional trees be planted at the ballfields at Green Lane Park to provide some shade for the spectators watching the ballgames. He felt this would be an opportunity to combine the addition of trees with the participation of TYA in the planting and care of trees at "their" park.

Mr. Fisher said he would check to see if the TYA governing board would be interested in participating but also noted that getting volunteers for anything is challenging. He said he would check and get back to us.

Ms. Smith said that there seems to be enough interest in such efforts whether it comes from TYA or other Township residents, that we should apply for a grant, and we will be able to get enough volunteers.

Mr. Meehan said he will continue to look into the GIANT grants in case we decide to apply.

### **Lease to Farm in Township Parks**

For the Committee's information, Mr. Meehan noted that the BOS at their May 22<sup>nd</sup> approved a new farming license agreement. The Township Solicitor has reviewed the existing farming license agreement and has made modifications to this agreement affecting Township farmer Drew Bechtel. The updated agreement provides additional provisions including: a revised description of farming use and limitations (grass/hay only), no herbicide or pesticide use, updated insurance requirements and indemnification language for the Township. It also provided provisions for termination of the lease agreement with notice. Mr. Bechtel has reviewed the agreement.

### **Fischer's Park Walking Path Rehab**

Mr. Meehan also noted for the Committee's information rehabilitation work on the walking path running close and parallel to the Towamencin Creek which has been flooded frequently. Over time, a portion of the path has sunk and is unusable even after moderate rain event. The PW department is removing the path pavers, will elevate the path base material and then replace the pavers. This work is ongoing currently.

### **Rain Garden in Fischer's Park Review**

Mr. Meehan noted that he invited the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy to visit the raingarden in Fischer's Park and provide some advice on what needs to be done to make it perform as

intended and suggestions for regular maintenance. Jessie Kemper came and met with Mr. Meehan and Nate Pfister of the Township Public Works Department and Mr. McCreary of the EAC.

She noted that the rain garden doesn't seem to be as wet as it should be, perhaps because of the turf grass "blockage" at to pipe bring water into the garden. She suggested the grass be removed without disturbing the perennial plants nearby. She provided suggestions on what should remain and what we should remove, most notably canadian thistle which is an invasive and can quickly overwhelm the nice perennial plants that are there. She also suggested that a decision be made on whether or not we wanted larger trees in the rain garden and remove either some selectively or all so that the perennials are not shaded out.

When asked how she rated the rain garden in its present condition, she gave it a rating of eight (8) saying it had many nice plants but needs some maintenance. Mr. Meehan suggested a coordinated effort with the EAC to develop a maintenance plan. In the meantime, we will take her suggestions and work on implementing them.

### **Comprehensive Plan Presentation to the BOS**

Peter Simone and Todd Poole presented a comprehensive plan update regarding "market and real estate analysis" to the BOS at their May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Following it, Mr. Meehan sent an e-mail to the OSPAC committee members suggesting they view the presentation for some background on the Comprehensive Plan being developed for the Township. In particular, the high importance residents assigned to "quality-of-life" issues shown in the survey results wherein three of the top five were issues related to parks and open space.

The committee discussed the Simone/Poole presentation without getting too much into the details but with varied general opinions about what the OSPAC could do to address and/or influence the "quality-of-life" issues given high importance by residents. There were no definitive answers. It was suggested that those who had not seen the presentation view it when they get a chance.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Dr. Costlow was unable to attend in person tonight, but he worked on providing input on the Goals and Objective for tonight and he dropped off copies of his thoughts on the matter.

In addition, he provided an e-mail prior to the meeting. Following is his input provided by e-mail:

*On the Goals and Objectives:*

*I feel we need to re-order or re-prioritize and bullet point our objectives.*

*For example, old Goal 1 says pursue new open space. Well, that's not going to happen because there is effectively no new space left so it becomes a lower priority.*

*I also feel making goals primary and secondary avoids the tyranny of a numeric priority list. We all have multiple goals for our projects and my thinking is that the top two are what we've been doing for the last 3 years, so we keep doing it as I laid it out.*

*I'm not ignoring the others, just saying they are not primary goals, and we'll continue to coordinate like we did for the connectivity concept and bike paths.*

*The text in the existing goals document needs some work to integrate with these bullets, and I commit to do some of that if we agree that's what's needed.*

Dr. Costlow's handout given to the Committee is attached to these minutes. He suggests we reprioritize and bullet our objectives and create Primary and Secondary Goals.

As the Committee discussed the outline structure of the Goals and Objective, it concluded that Dr. Costlow's suggestion was a better way of presenting the Committee's Goals and objectives.

The Committee began by reviewing the previous goals and objectives and working towards presenting what we thought works for the Committee in Dr. Costlow's suggested Primary and Secondary Format.

Following is a summary of the Committee's discussions:

(Referenced to the Goals and Objectives from the Park, Recreation and Open Space Preservation Plan Update of 2005)

Goal #1 Actively pursue new open space opportunities in the Township.

Although not a lot remaining, we cannot dismiss this because history has shown us that unexpected opportunities come up and we should be prepared to consider them either by purchase or by working with a developer to have portions of a property dedicated to open space. If the developer agrees, the Township needs to be firm in its position and make the open space happen.

Discussing further the objectives under Goal 1. (Is this objective appropriate to the goal? - Comment)

Objective A. We do not understand what this means - confusing

Objective B. Is not appropriate under this goal

Objective C. Accept this one

Objective D. Move this to be an objective of Goal 2

Objective E. Give this the highest priority under Goal #1

Ms. Blake referred to how Dr. Costlow suggested we organize the goals. Mr. Meehan said he agrees with Dr. Costlow's suggestion, and we should work toward that format.

Ms. Blake questioned whether some of these objectives are realistic for the Committee or is pursuing new open space beyond our control? Our primary goals are focused on existing parks. New acquisitions should be a goal, but not a primary one. We focus our time and efforts really on our existing parks so she feels that this should be the primary goal of the Committee.

Goal 2

These are more appropriately Secondary Goals like Dr. Costlow suggests.

Objective a. Accept

Objective b. Accept

Objective c. Accept (example: Pickleball site review)

Objective d. Accept (example; (Pickleball site review)

Objective e. Accept (Example: (YMCA use of parks, Green Tweed trail))

Objective f. Accept (Example: TYA, Morgan Log House, Swim team)

Objective g. Accept (Example: veterans Park, Connectivity study)

These now need to be incorporated by priority into the format suggested by Dr. Costlow for primary and secondary goals.

Mr. Meehan said we will continue with these discussions at our next meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Ms. Becker made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fisher seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM

Respectfully Submitted

Joseph F. Meehan

Chairperson, Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee

**The next OSPAC meeting is on July 8, 2024**