

**Towamencin Township**  
**Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**August 12, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Todd Fisher  
Michon Blake  
Dr. Richard Costlow  
Dan Vaitis  
Robert DeHaven  
Laura Smith BOS Liaison to the OSPAC

**Not attending:**

Dave Sponseller  
Joe Rumsey  
Nancy Becker  
Katie Cleary, Township Special Events Coordinator

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Meehan at 7:05 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 said he met with Mr. Kraynik, the Township Manager, on August 8<sup>th</sup> 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**

No Township residents other than the Committee were in attendance and there were no public comments.

**APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES** – Meeting of July 8, 2024

Mr. Meehan asked for comments or corrections, if any, to the draft minutes of the July 8, 2024, meeting, which he sent to the Committee members prior to tonight's meeting. Dr. Costlow made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted. Ms. Blake seconded the motion. The Committee had no questions or comments on the motion. The Committee voted all in favor of the motion to approve the minutes. The minutes of the July 8, 2024 meeting are approved and will now be forwarded to the township staff to be posted on the township website.

**OLD BUSINESS – Updates**

**Bocce Court Scoreboards** – Dr. Costlow gave an update on the construction of scoreboards for the bocce courts. He noted that Tom Levandusky, a bocce player, volunteered to fabricate the scoreboards and had completed them and came and brought the scoreboards to tonight's meeting to hand them over to the township for installation. He also turned over instructions on how connect them to posts and suggestions on how to install the posts. The Public Works Department will install the scoreboards.

The committee thanked him for the work he did fabricating the scoreboards and confirmed he had been reimbursed by the township for all the materials he used.

Ms. Smith suggested that we have the Township staff prepare a nice media post about the scoreboards to bring them to the attention of Township residents.

Dr. Costlow added that he is suggesting that the Township have a "Court Opening Tournament" of some sort that would publicize and encourage the use of the courts and showcase them and the scoreboards and this be done sometime this fall. He will be working with Katie Cleary on a date and organizing this event.

In the meantime, the courts are being used, and the committee feels a recognition of the work to fabricate the scoreboards should be made in the Township media while it is still "fresh" news. Mr. Meehan said he will follow up and contact the Township staff and ask that it be included in the Township media once the scoreboards are installed.

**Moving Bleachers at Grist Mill Park Field #1** – Mr. Meehan said he wanted to confirm with TYA representatives that their organization is OK with the condition the Township has placed on moving bleachers at Grist Mill Field #1 as discussed at our last meeting. The Township has agreed to move the bleachers to the Allentown Road side of Field #1 at Grist Mill Park but says stone needs to be placed beneath the bleachers at the new location. The placement of stone will limit the movement of the stands in the future, and he wanted to confirm that TYA understood this limitation and was OK with it. Mr. Vaitis said TYA is OK with the relocation of the stands and with the placing stone beneath them. He said TYA has already been in contact with Dave Hillmantel about the relocation.

**Grist Mill Park Facility Improvements** – Simone-Collins (S-C) updated the Township and noted that final plans and bid solicitation documents are in their final stages and are expected to be put out for bids very soon. DCNR review is one of the few items remaining and once finished the project could be advertised for bids. Peter Simone (S-C) is indicating that based on his assessment of the bid schedule and the lead time for some of the playground equipment, we are not going to get the park improvements completed until spring of 2025.

S-C prepared an estimate of the costs for the Grist Mill Park Improvements. Mr. Meehan noted these to the committee. The estimates show the final costs being close to the budgeted funds. The bidding documents are prepared with five "add alternates" items to the base bid. The "add alternates" provide flexibility to account for budget shortfalls by allowing the "add-alternate" items to be withdrawn from the bids, in a prescribed order, and not be constructed so that projects cost stay within the amount of Township funds available. The Committee feels that if the bids, including the add alternatives exceed what is currently budgeted, the Township should find funds and increase the available budget, so the project is completed at one time and not broken into pieces with some to be constructed in the future. The committee feels the add alternates are essential elements of the facility plan and should not be deferred.

The current plans include Omega style fencing surrounding the playground.

Mr. Meehan, for the committees information also noted that he had been notified the Township had received an inquiry from a Township resident, a special needs child's mom, who questioned the selection of the equipment that we were going to be placing in the playground saying that she thought this was to be an inclusive playground and if this is inclusive playground why is

there some equipment that is not considered inclusive. Peter Simone (S-C) was also copied on this question and he responded noting that three of the six pieces are listed by the manufacturer as inclusive and that the large play booster which contains a handful of different elements is not in total, fully inclusive but contains individual elements that are inclusive, so in other words it's not designated as inclusive but it has it's multiple elements in it that are inclusive. The meaning of inclusive is to include children of all abilities, not that everything is going to be totally inclusive. if everything is totally inclusive you might exclude the others, and the idea is to have a mix of things in the playground that meets everybody's needs. This means that the intent is to make the area challenging and engaging for children across the broad ranges of abilities. If every piece of equipment was inclusive that might not interest some other children who will also frequent the playground. Mr. Meehan said he wanted the committee to be aware of Peter's response to this in case they are asked this same question and were not clear on the intent.

**Connector Path from Spring Valley Road to the TA Trail.** - Mr. Meehan said there are no new developments to report on the connector path at this time. Other OSPAC items have been given a higher priority.

**Concept Plan for Pickleball at Butch Clemens Park** - Mr. Meehan noted that there was a meeting on July 23rd with a Clemens Food Group (CFG) representative at the site of the proposed Pickleball Courts at Butch Clemens Field. Dave Kraynik and Mary Stover (CKS Engineers) met with him and had a conversation about a possible entrance from CFG property into the northeast corner of Butch Clemens Park where we are looking at the possibility of locating pickleball courts. The Township's (OSPAC) thought was to enter from the CFG main entrance driveway, which is a private drive going west from Route 63. The CFG rep said this is a busy driveway throughout the day and is not an option. He offered that coming from the service roadway which runs parallel to Forty Foot Road, behind the parking lots of the commercial properties might be a possibility. Mr. Meehan said these commercial properties and the parking behind them was thought by the Committee to be owned by someone else, but it came out at this meeting that it is owned by CFG under a different name, Towamencin Retail Development, LLC. An entrance to the potential pickleball location from this drive has good potential.

Dave Kraynik asked CKS to consider an entrance from this location and prepare a concept plan for pickleball courts with a parking area in Butch Clemens Park. He said when CKS completes the conceptual plan he will forward it to the OSPAC for its review.

**Green Lane Road Park Soccer Field – Good news on two items.** **First**, CKS has gotten the permit from Montgomery County Soil Conservation District for the grading work needed at the Green Lane Park field to regrade the portion of the park near Kriebel Road for a soccer field. **Secondly**, the agreement with the Towamencin Municipal Authority for the use of their property as a soccer field is prepared and is to be put on the BOS agenda for the August 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. it's expected at this point that CKS will finalize the grading plan, and the Township will have the Public Works Department put the grading work on its schedule. Depending on the weather, the earthmoving and grading might be able to get underway this winter.

**Giant Food Company Grant to Plant trees at Green Lane Road Ballfields-** A grant application was submitted on June 30<sup>th</sup> by the Township requesting \$3595 for trees The trees would be planted in coordination with TYA in the outfield areas of Green Lane Park to provide shade for spectators at the baseball games. Nothing has been heard from Giant Food Company

yet, but it is still early. They said an announcement of successful applications would be made in August 2024.

**PECO Grant for Tree Planting** – Towamencin Township was awarded a \$6,500 grant to plant about 20 trees along the Kriebel Road Trail in 2024. Mr. Meehan said they will be planted during the fall planting season focusing on the area just east of Trumbauer Road along the TA trail. He said he is arranging with Dennis Carney to walk this area and choose sites for the new trees specifying which species to put in each chosen location. He asked for committee members who are available to join them. Dr. Costlow and Mr. DeHaven volunteered. Mr. Meehan said he will reach out to Mr. Carney and choose a date and time for the walk that accommodates everyone.

The committee's conversation turned to the trees planted in the fall of 2023 along the TA trail west of Trumbauer Road. Some of those trees are struggling and might end up being replaced under the 9-month extended warranty the Township purchased. The heat and dry conditions during 2024 have made it tough for newly planted trees to survive. Of those planted, some are not looking good while others are looking happy.

**OSPAC Goals and Objectives** – This item was tabled for this meeting and not discussed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Coordination with Upper Gwynedd Township** – Peter Simone(S-C) who is working for Towamencin on its Comprehensive Plan is also Working on an update of Upper Gwynedd Townships Park and Recreation Plan. He compared the needs of each Township and noted that Towamencin has facilities that Upper Gwynedd needs, and Upper Gwynedd has recreation programs that Towamencin might like to have. He suggested a telephone conference call to have a conversation between both Townships to see if there was any interest in sharing resources.

Mr. Meehan said he was invited to participate along with Mr. Kraynik. The conference call took place on August 7<sup>th</sup>. During which each Township noted the resources it has and what it might be interested in adding. Towamencin has many more facilities (parks) at which recreation programs could be held but doesn't have the programs. By contrast Upper Gwynedd has many programs but not the facilities to accommodate them.

Mr. Meehan said that he mentioned that Towamencin has TYA which heavily uses the Township's sport fields and that other parks have restrictions on active use, so we need to keep that in mind. Upper Gwynedd summarized some of its programs which are well attended and cover the cost of Township staff that organize and run them.

Mr. Meehan said it was an informative conference call and said one Upper Gwynedd program for teens, caught his attention. They call this "Teen Trip Camp." They hold it for 80 kids a week, once each month in June, July and August. Each day of the camp, the teens and staff get on a bus at the U.G. Township pool parking lot and travel to a different location to have a fun-filled day. (for example, a Phillies game, Hershey Park, Point Pleasant Beach etc.). Upper Gwynedd says they sell out this camp within hours after it is open for registration.

The OSPAC discussed this program and acknowledges that provides great activities for an age group where other activities are lacking. They liked this program and others that Upper Gwynedd has to offer and knows that such programs are well beyond the Townships present

staffing. The consensus of the committee was that at this point, it is worth inclusion as “conversations to explore the possibilities” in long range planning. And then maybe begin small with a pilot program on some activities to see how it goes.

Mr. Meehan summarized by saying that at this point, the idea of township coordination is just in its earliest stage to explore whether there is even any interest in it. At the conclusion of the conference call, Mr. Kraynik suggested coordination with Upper Gwynedd be discussed by the OSPAC to get the committee’s feedback. Mr. Meehan said he will pass the committee’s consensus of tonight’s discussions on to Mr. Kraynik.

**Removal of Unhealthy Trees along Trails** – Mr. Meehan informed the committee that when he spoke with Mr. Kraynik prior to this meeting, he mentioned that there are unhealthy looking trees along the TA trail which should be looked at by an arborist and removed if necessary. Mr. Kraynik asked that the OSPAC provide a list and location of the trees it thought warranted an arborist opinion. Mr. Meehan asked the Committee to provide input on trees which need this attention.

**Fischer’s Park Restroom Ventilation** – On the hot days recently, complaints have been received about the need for greater ventilation in the Fischer’s Park restrooms. After discussion, the Committee agrees and suggests something be done about the ventilation. This also led to a discussion about how dark the restrooms are on bright sunny days. The combination of both is not welcoming and had some committee members saying they hesitate to use the restrooms because of these conditions. The Committee recommends the Township look at improving conditions in the restrooms by adding additional fans and brightening up the interiors by painting the walls and ceiling a white color or adding roof windows (skylights).

Fall Newsletter Article – Dr. Costlow is working on a newsletter article aimed at educating residents about invasive species in the township and getting a broader participation by residents in helping to remove them. His draft asked for the public’s help by showing photos of the invasives and asking the public to pull them if they see them as they walk in the township parks and on trails. His thought is that if we can get more people involved beyond just the invasive species removal events held only a few times a year, we could make a greater dent in the number of invasives proliferating throughout the township.

Dr. Costlow said he got feedback on his draft regarding advocating for individuals pulling invasives on township property without proper training and in the case of “lesser celandine,” that pulling it, is not best way to eradicate it.

The Committee discussed the draft article which had been circulated for their comments. It discussed the species chosen to be included, where the removal should be recommended to be done, liability, disposal of the removed invasives and other aspects of the suggestion being made in the article. The committee agrees with the intent of the article but feels some changes need to be made to it.

Dr. Costlow said he will rewrite the draft and address the comments in his revised draft.

**WIFI in Fischer’s Park** – Mr. Meehan said he was asked if WIFI could be installed in Fischer’s Park. Mr. Meehan reviewed his archives and found that this was considered in January of 2021 and reviewed with the township IT staff.

Fischer's Park is a large area and establishing WIFI would be a challenge and not include all areas of the park and at that time 5G technology was spreading and overtaking WIFI. It was felt that money could be better spent on other park items than WIFI.

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

Dr. Costlow made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeHaven seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM

Respectfully Submitted

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on September 16, 2024**