

**Towamencin Township**  
**Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**December 9, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:**

Joseph Meehan  
Nancy Becker  
Todd Fisher  
Michon Blake  
Dr. Richard Costlow  
Robert DeHaven  
Dan Vaitis  
Joe Rumsey  
Dave Sponseller  
Katie Cleary, Township Special Events Coordinator  
Laura Smith BOS Liaison to the OSPAC

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Meehan at 7:00 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 said he met with David Kraynik, the Township Manger on December 5<sup>th</sup> and he provided an update on items of interest to the Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee (OSPAC) which Mr. Meehan said he will note as the items are discussed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Township residents, John French, and Matt Cleary were attending. Mr. French being interested in geocaching in the township and Mr. Cleary speaking on behalf the TYA Soccer program.

Mr. French said he is just interested in the work the committee does and came to listen. Mr. Meehan noted the committee will talk briefly about the issue of geocaching later in the meeting, but it is just an update and not meant to discuss the topic in detail.

Mr. Cleary asked about the process TYA would need to follow to seek permission to use temporary trailer-mounted generator flood lights at the Grist Mill Park field in October and November to address the challenge of reduced daylight hours for TYA's practices during these months. He noted that dusk comes at about 7:15PMish and practices often go beyond this time. He said the practices are cut short by darkness which adds to the challenge of limited practice time and overcrowded practice fields. He said at this time of the year it seems practice just seems to begin and then it is time to pack up and leave because it gets to be too difficult for kids in these conditions to clearly see the ball and other players.

If permitted the practices with the lights would end no later than 8:00 PM and the lights would be positioned to avoid disturbance to nearby residential areas. He said TYA would bear all the cost of the renting, setting up and maintaining the generator light sets. He said the lights would remain on site during this period.

The idea was discussed by the committee with Mr. Cleary's input. A key concern was the parks' closure times, which are at dusk, and is particularly problematic for managing the sports program in the fall when sunset occurs earlier. Mr. Cleary emphasized that the proposal is meant to provide a practical solution to this issue by allowing practices to continue safely into the evening.

In general, the committee was supportive of TYA pursuing this proposal but would want a more detailed proposal from TYA. It was noted that a formal proposal from the Towamencin Youth Association as a

whole, rather than just its soccer division, would be needed. Mr. Meehan advised Mr. Cleary to submit a detailed written proposal endorsed by the TYA Board of Directors, outlining all aspects of the plan, including technical specifications and a clear shut-off time to ensure transparency and minimize potential objections.

The discussion also highlighted concerns about setting a precedent for other fields to implement similar lighting solutions. Mr. Meehan referenced historical agreements related to other parks where lighting was prohibited due to community opposition. This served as a cautionary example of the importance of ensuring that the proposal remains limited in scope.

Despite these concerns and not having a full picture of the proposal, several committee members expressed their support for pursuing it. Dr. Costlow encouraged Mr. Cleary to include as much detail as possible in the proposal to avoid confusion or pushback. Pending review of the detailed proposal, Ms. Smith voiced her support and offered to advocate for the proposal when it reached the Board of Supervisors.

In conclusion, Mr. Cleary was tasked with drafting a comprehensive proposal from the TYA board that includes specifics about the lighting equipment, its placement, duration of use, and measures to minimize community impact. Once he completes the proposal, and it is endorsed by the TYA Board of Directors, the petition is to be brought to the OSPAC by the TYA Board Representative member of the OSPAC for its review and further action. Mr. Cleary said he will do this.

#### **APPROVAL OF OSPAC MINUTES** – Meeting of November 11, 2024

Mr. Meehan asked for comments or corrections, if any, to the draft minutes of the November 11, 2024, meeting, which he sent to the Committee members prior to tonight's meeting. There were none. Ms. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted and distributed. Dr. Costlow seconded the motion. All committee members voted in favor of the motion.

#### **OLD BUSINESS** – Updates and Recap of 2024

##### **Bocce Courts**

First, the bocce courts are discussed, with committee members praising the successful completion of the enhancements and their community impact. Dr. Costlow mentioned groups playing there more frequently and even the number of spectators who watch. He said the courts are in great shape, mentioning how local players and volunteers have maintained the courts and equipment diligently. He noted most recently the posting of a sign providing information about the game rules to users of the courts who are unfamiliar with the game. Mr. Meehan acknowledges Costlow's persistence and sustained efforts in driving the project forward, thanking him and others involved for ensuring the continued success of bocce as a recreation activity for township residents.

##### **Grist Mill Park Improvements**

Mr. Meehan reports that contracts for the park's upgrades have been awarded, and although signatures from contractors are still pending, everything is on track for construction to begin. He noted that the Gristmill Park improvements are highlighted as a major achievement of 2024, and we look forward to having the dedication in 2025. He reflected on the years of planning and funding challenges leading up to the project, noting the Township Supervisor's commitment to fund this project which because of the higher than estimated bid prices created a funding challenge. The new facilities at this park will go a long way toward making this a "diamond" of a park for use by all age groups. He noted that this is just the first phase of this park's improvements, and the Committee needs to continue to pursue grants for future improvements including another basketball court, and a perimeter walking trail.

##### **Green Lane Road Soccer Fields- Request for Funds to establish a durable turf playing surface at the proposed Green Lane Road Park Soccer Field**

Mr. Meehan provided an update on the Green Lane Road Park soccer fields. Plans to regrade are slated to begin in early 2025. Following the rough regrading, the "topsoil" will be placed using a blend of soils

conducive to a durable playing surface for soccer. This work on the playing surface is of special concern to the OSPAC in view of the complaints from the youth soccer program about some of the soccer fields where attention was not paid to the playing field surfaces during construction and they cannot stand up to the wear and tear of their constant use. They require heavy maintenance and need to be taken out of service on a rotating basis to “recover”.

With this in mind, the committee’s discussion shifted to ensuring there is experienced turf management oversight to ensure the fields are constructed to withstand heavy use and remain durable over time. Meehan noted that it has been discussed with CKS who has experts such as from Penn State Extension and other agencies to recommend appropriate soil amendments and grass types. In addition, the Committee will pay close attention to this phase of the construction and ask some of the soccer program volunteers with turf management experience to also help.

### **Engineering for Pickleball Courts at Butch Clemens Park**

Mr. Meehan noted that the draft budget contains \$55,000 for engineering to establish pickleball courts at Butch Clemens Park.

He said Mr. Kraynik noted that first, the entrance from the rear parking lot access perimeter road behind Freddy’s Burgers needs to be formalized with the Clemens Food Group (CFG). CFG in preliminary discussions indicated a willingness to allow this access but this needs to be formalized. Mr. Meehan outlined the next steps, beginning with securing a formal agreement, surveying, and beginning work developing engineering drawings.

Mr. Vaitis asked how the Township knows it is getting a fair price for engineering work done on projects such as this? Is there perhaps another firm that would be interested in doing the work at a lower cost? Committee members discussed recommending the Township use a competitive process to select the engineer who prepares the engineering plans to ensure it gets a fair price for the engineering work. The consensus was that CKS provides cost breakdowns for their proposed work. Further, institutional” knowledge of the specific project as well as the Township’s processes would be compromised if others performed the work. The committee felt it best, for continuity and efficiency, to rely on the Township’s current engineers, CKS, for the pickleball courts.

The committee also discussed the challenges managing engineering estimate projections, as past discrepancies between estimates and actual costs have raised concerns. Mr. DeHaven and Dr. Costlow emphasized the need for transparency and accountability to avoid public misperceptions about the committee’s role in budgetary overruns. Others agreed.

Mr. Meehan noted that the estimate previously given by CKS for the pickleball court construction is based on the concept plan and as the engineering plans are developed, we should have a better estimate of the scope of the work involved and be able to predict the cost more accurately. The estimated cost we are using at this point might be too low or it might be too high. The current economic conditions and instability of material and construction costs make estimating future construction costs more difficult for everyone. As a first step, we need engineering plans to refine the scope of work which will enable us to better determine the costs. Further, he said hopefully construction costs will stabilize soon. In the meantime, we will closely monitor construction cost estimates as we move forward.

### **Connector Paths**

Mr. Meehan provided updates on plans to connect Spring Valley Road to Valley View and Trumbauer Trail, as well as a path from Gristmill Drive to Gristmill Park. These projects, approved for engineering work in the 2025 budget, require surveys due to the complexity of terrain and topographic features, including steep slopes and nearby property boundaries. CKS has already gathered some survey data as part of their work on stormwater management for the detention basin in Grist mill Park, which will streamline parts of the process. The engineering work will begin as we get into 2025. Once engineering plans are completed, they will be used to determine the scope of the work involved and whether the scope is within the capability of the Public Works department for construction.

## **Tree Planting**

Mr. Meehan noted the success of tree planting initiatives in 2024, which included both spring and fall plantings. For the fall planting 20 trees were planted beginning November 18<sup>th</sup> along the Kriebel Road Trail east of Trumbauer Road. In addition to the 2024 budgeted funds and a PECO Green Region Grant, The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) contributed funds to add two extra trees.

Looking ahead to 2025, Mr. Meehan highlights additional funding allocated for tree planting. He referred to ongoing suburban reforestation efforts along Forty Foot Road led by Dr. Costlow. Dr. Costlow suggested creating a detailed visual plan for reforestation projects to help with community engagement and grant applications.

He also advocated for forming a tree-tenders group to qualify for discounted tree prices through the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Mr. Meehan agrees and committed to taking a tree-tenders course beginning in January while encouraging other committee members, including public works staff, to also participate.

## **Veterans Park Engineering**

Mr. Meehan moved on to an update on Veterans Park development where \$100,000 has been allocated for engineering of the site in 2025. However, before engineering can begin an unresolved issue with accessing the site via property owned by Philadelphia Suburban Development Corporation (PSDC) needs to be resolved. This issue has not been solved. Based on what he has been told, Mr. Meehan reports that negotiations have been contentious, but he remains optimistic that progress can be made on resolving this issue in the new year. The committee acknowledges the critical role of resolving access before meaningful engineering work can begin.

## **Geocaching**

Mr. Meehan then spoke about the topic of geocaching. He said Mr. French submitted a proposal as requested at the November OSPAC meeting. Mr. Meehan said he will distribute this proposal to the Committee by email in a day or so for the Committees review and input. Meehan asks members to review the document and submit comments back to him as soon as possible so they can be collated before the next Committee discussion on this topic. Dr. Costlow said having these comments in advance will streamline the discussions at our meetings. The next Committee discussion at an OSPAC meeting will depend on the timing of the comments received.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Future Grant Opportunities**

Mr. Meehan opened the topic of potential grant opportunities for 2025. He underscored the importance of identifying and tracking grant timelines, as many opportunities require early preparation. The committee was reminded of previous applications, such as the PECO Growing Greener Grant, and the Grant for construction of the improvements in Grist Mill Park which contributed to successes in 2024.

Mr. Meehan said there are potential grant opportunities out there, urging the committee to stay proactive in identifying funding sources. He mentioned that he thinks there is a need to create a comprehensive calendar of grant deadlines to ensure timely applications. Several grants are mentioned, including those from the U.S. Forest Service, local organizations, and commercial entities like Giant Supermarkets. Mr. DeHaven and Dr. Costlow said they would explore grant application opportunities and then report back.

### **National Celebrations**

Mr. Meehan brought up the topic of upcoming national celebrations and how Towamencin might participate. Although this is not something that would fall under the OSPAC 's role, he thinks the committee can contribute to getting conversations about some celebrations related to these events started. He feels our conversations about it might encourage the Township to create a "centennial committee" to get working on something. Ms. Cleary, as the Township Special Events Coordinator, said she has already been thinking about it.

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

Mr. Meehan thanked the committee for their dedication throughout the year. He encouraged members to stay engaged and be prepared for the upcoming January meeting, which will include discussions on engineering updates, and preliminary plans for 2025 initiatives and possibly geocaching. The meeting adjourned with well-wishes for the holidays and optimism for the year ahead.

Ms. Becker made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Rumsey seconded the motion. All voted in favor.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:25PM

Respectfully Submitted

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

**The next OSPAC meeting is on January 20, 2025**