

#09-2021
WORK SESSION
May 4, 2021 – 6 p.m.

A virtual work session of the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 6 p.m. for the purpose of updating the public on several matters and reviewing the agenda of the May 19, 2021 Supervisors' meeting. Supervisors Michele Minnick, Kimberly J. Koch, Frederick R. Conner, Jeffrey Campolongo and Joyce Keller were present. Also in attendance were Township Solicitor Michael P. Clarke, Esq., Township Manager Roman M. Pronczak, Assistant Township Manager David J. Mrochko, Township Engineer James E. Blanch, P.E., Police Chief Kenneth Lawson, Director of Code Enforcement Michael McAndrew, Finance Director Christine M. Bauman, Director of Public Works Thomas Farzetta, IT Director Nicole M. Leininger, Human Resources Director Kathleen Yackin, Fire Marshal David M. Camarda, and Parks and Recreation Director Kurt W. Baker. There were nine attendees who joined the meeting.

IT Director Nicole Leininger gave an overview of the process for participants, then turned the meeting over to Chair Michele Minnick who asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Minnick began the work session with a roll call, followed by an announcement of the closure of Jolly Road from May 13th through June 11th.

Chair Minnick introduced Fire Marshal David M. Camarda to present this evening's Mission Moment. Mr. Camarda gave a shout-out to Assistant Township Manager Dave Mrochko and IT Director Nicole Leininger, thanking them for their help in putting this presentation together. This year, the 46th Annual National EMS Week will be celebrated from May 16th to 22nd. The theme for 2021 is "This is EMS: Caring for our Communities", which fits with what has happened over the past year beginning with Covid-19. Second Alarmers Rescue Squad (SARS) has done an awesome job in providing for our community. SARS handles over 13,000 EMS calls annually across all of the communities they serve, with the Whitpain Station responding to 1,630 of them in 2020. The average response time in Whitpain is 5.5 minutes. The Mission Statement of SARS aligns with our Mission Statement, and our partnership has been successful. Chair Minnick read a Proclamation and thanked the members of SARS for all they do.

Chair Minnick introduced Parks and Recreation Director Kurt W. Baker for an update to the Parks and Recreation Comp Plan. Mr. Baker noted that in 2019 the Township contracted with Toole Recreation Planning to do a Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, Trails and Open Space update to our then-existing plan that was developed in 2005. With the acquisition of Mermaid Lake, an additional investigation was made to see how it could fit into our overall plan. He turned the meeting over to Ann Toole of Toole Recreational Planning. Ann is well-known in the industry. Ann's team consists of Tavis Dockwiler and Eric Sylvester of Viridian Landscape Architects, and Ann Hutchinson and Rick Trailes from Natural Lands Trust. Following the presentation, questions will be taken by the team. If all is satisfactory, the final touches will be made, and the Board can consider approval of the plan at the May 19th meeting.

With her team, Ms. Toole listed many accomplishments in the Township since the last plan was introduced in 2003, including an increase of over 100 acres in parkland, planning and development of parks, establishing partnerships with the development of parks, and involving the community with surveys and interviews. Preferred improvements in response to the surveys include open space and natural areas, indoor recreation, and safe sidewalk connections. Recommendations include continuing to implement the Walkability Study, Trail Network Plan, Master Trails Plan and Comprehensive Plan, as well as including environmental/ecological management plans. The programs we currently have are highly rated with more than 15,000 participants, and the surveys indicate that the community would like more fitness and sports camps, as well as special events and indoor recreation. Challenges include traffic, limited remaining open space, increase of park maintenance responsibilities and additional program needs. The vision for 2030 includes thriving programs through sustainable best management practices in support of an extraordinary park and recreation system to meet and exceed citizen expectations.

Vice-Chair Koch asked what was meant about high resident interest in a pool, and what Ms. Toole meant by the timing. Ms. Toole explained that the survey was put out just as Mermaid was acquired. There are certain segments of the population who are very interested in having a pool, though it is not an interest that would apply to the community at large. What the team is recommending is a very serious feasibility study to help make a wise decision, as pools are expensive. The nationwide trend is that pools are closing because of the limited season, the expense, and the need to choose how money will be spent. Supervisor Conner thanked Ms. Toole and her team for a very insightful report. Her 2003 report was a key element in the open space and trail planning in the early 2000s. At the time there was a reference of the value of open space to homes. He asked if this plan references that. Ms. Toole responded that there is a plan in the benefits section, and she and Ms. Hutchinson are working on a return on environment project for the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, highlighting four case studies. Montgomery County is also working on this with them. References will be noted and will be included in the final report. Chair Minnick thanked Ms. Toole and the team for the great presentation.

Mr. Baker noted that the next part of the process is to have this presentation reviewed by the Park & Open Space Board and the Planning Committee that was involved in this project for their last review. Mr. Pronczak added that after these two groups have their last review, the final draft will be added to the website.

Mr. Baker offered a brief update on the Inclusive Playground project at Centre Square Park. As progress slowed because of the pandemic, it became evident that the forest area is not the best for this project. Five trees have uprooted after the storms of 2020, and many invasive species plants have appeared. Chair Minnick and Supervisor Conner visited the site with Mr. Baker, and all agree that the site is no longer considered the best for the safety of children and patrons. Many trees twisted during the storm, and many trees (80 to 90) have to be removed. Mr. Baker is recommending that with the Board's

approval, the location be moved. This will first be reviewed with the Inclusive Playground Committee, and Park & Open Space Board, the Shade Tree Commission and the Mermaid Committee. He would like the ability to move forward and investigate another location. In talking with DCNR about editing an approved project that they funded, Mr. Baker was informed that with Board approval, DCNR will stand behind us and help us move forward. We will look at what is already invested and review the safety factors, along with experience for the children. Supervisor Conner said that Steuer Woods is worth restoring, though it will cost more than expected, and it should be a long-term goal by the Township to make it sustainable. Mr. Baker said we can start to put a plan together as part of the five-year plan. Supervisor Keller asked if the playground would be moved to another pod within Centre Square Park or to a new location. It was confirmed that a new location is the best plan because of the storm damage at and near the proposed location in Centre Square Park. Chair Minnick thanked Mr. Baker for making the Board aware of the situation. Safety is a number one priority, and with unpredictable weather patterns, the same type of damage could continue to occur. Supervisor Campolongo asked if we know what costs are to date. Mr. Baker said most of the costs are consultant fees, and for design and construction documents that are being prepared. Mr. Pronczak added that what has been done so far is not a complete loss because it has been spent on concepts which can be used at any location. The only losses are site specific such as the survey and identifying tree removal. As pointed out, the risks of having the playground there are too high. Supervisor Campolongo asked if it is possible the invasive species could impact our other parks. Mr. Baker said it is the sustainability that Ms. Toole referenced, and we could establish a program to have volunteers trained by staff to clear areas of invasive species that are overgrown. This will be discussed with the Mermaid Committee and the various correlating committees.

Chair Minnick then turned the meeting over to Township Manager Roman Pronczak to review the draft agenda for the May 19, 2021 business meeting. Prior to the agenda review, Mr. Pronczak referred to the announcement at the beginning of the meeting, noting that a month's closure seems like a long time, though the benefits are what should be considered. He also noted that Morris Road will be reopened by then, so there will be an alternate route for travel. He also noted that the official detour route for the Jolly Road closure has motorists traveling over Wentz Road, though cut-through traffic is anticipated and will be closely monitored.

The May 19th agenda includes a Mission Moment to recognize two Eagle Scouts for projects at the Mattie Dixon Food Cupboard and Wings Field.

The Consent Agenda includes approval of the meeting minutes of April 20th and May 4th, the April Voucher List, March Treasurer's Report, Resolutions #1449 through #1452 (emergency declarations), and four items related to the transfer of property at the end of Wentz and Jolly Roads between the Turnpike Commission and the Township. This has been in the works for many years, and with the help of our Solicitor, it will finally be settled. The transfer will include a subdivision of the property at the northeast corner of Wentz and Jolly Roads where the Turnpike will turn over a portion of the land

to the Township and retain the remainder. We will receive a payment from the Turnpike Commission for the value of the land. The Consent Agenda also includes a confirming motion for a supplemental soil investigation at Mermaid, authorization to advertise proposed Ordinance No. 389 related to new traffic signals, two waiver requests, award of the 2021 Road Resurfacing Contracts, award of the 2021 ADA Accessible Curb Ramps contracts, Resolution No. 1453 (traffic signal maintenance), approve an Alternate Sewer Connection Permit Agreement for 1950 Skippack Pike, approve an agreement accepting sanitary sewage from 129 W. Township Line Road (East Norriton side) into our system, confirming release of escrow funds, Resolution No. 1455 (rebalance funds in the General Fund), and Resolution No.1454 (final plans 190 Plymouth Road). The Board will then review the Zoning Hearing Board cases scheduled for May 20th which are residential and minor in nature. The Planning Commission typically remains neutral on residential subdivisions, and since these cases are residential, the Planning Commission will not meet May 11th.

Mr. Pronczak said the Board will meet in executive session following this meeting to discuss a matter of potential litigation.

Chair Minnick called for any final comments. With no additional comments from the Board or the public, a motion was made by Supervisor Conner, seconded by Supervisor Campolongo to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Roman M. Pronczak, P.E.
Township Manager