

#15-2021  
WORK SESSION  
August 3, 2021 – 6 p.m.

A hybrid work session of the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, August 3, 2021 at 6 p.m. for the purpose of updating the public on several matters and reviewing the agenda of the August 17, 2021 Supervisors' meeting. In-person attendees included Supervisors Michele Minnick and Frederick R. Conner, Jr., along with Township Manager Roman M. Pronczak, P.E., Police Lt. William Armstrong, Solicitor Michael P. Clarke, Esq. and IT Director Nicole Leininger. Remote attendees included Supervisors Kimberly Koch, Jeffrey Campolongo, and Joyce Keller, Public Works Director Thomas Farzetta, Code Enforcement Officer Michael E. McAndrew, Finance Director Christine Bauman, Parks and Recreation Director Kurt W. Baker, Fire Marshal David M. Camarda and Human Resource Director Kathleen Yackin. Police Chief Kenneth Lawson and Township Engineer James E. Blanch, P.E. were absent. There were three members of the public: one in-person and two via Zoom.

IT Director Nicole Leininger gave an overview of the process for participants. As with all meetings, this is being recorded. She then turned the meeting over to Chair Minnick who asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Minnick began the work session with an announcement that the Planning Commission has cancelled its August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Chair Minnick then turned the meeting over to Mr. Pronczak to discuss tonight's agenda and review the agenda for the August 17<sup>th</sup> business meeting.

Mr. Pronczak began with noting a request from the Blue Bell Rotary to adopt a trail. He asked Parks and Recreation Director Kurt Baker to give further details. Mr. Baker said the Blue Bell Rotary made the request based on a similar concept by the Kiwanis and Lions Clubs adopt-a-highway program. The Rotary would like to adopt a trail. His department will explore the program possibility and set up protocols for what is required, who will maintain, or if it would include the purchase and installation of benches and signs. If we create a program, other entities can participate as well, setting up a new way of maintenance and environmental stewardship. Chair Minnick thinks it is a good idea. Supervisor Conner agreed, adding that after the storm of two weeks ago with the massive damage that was evident in the parks, open space areas and trails, this would be a good program. He suggested that the finance committee be updated with annual maintenance costs and establish a budget item for trail maintenance. Volunteer efforts are great, and it promotes the trails. Public Works always goes above and beyond in addition to its regular responsibilities. This is a great idea. Mr. Pronczak added that Public Works Director Tom Farzetta does a tremendous job tracking costs, and the maintenance can be broken out. The department has a good handle on the trails after the last storm. Wissahickon Trails (formerly known as Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association) has had so much damage, though it is on their trails and not within our maintenance responsibility.

Mr. Pronczak then discussed the preliminary meeting date calendar for 2022. The Board of Supervisors must hold the reorganization meeting the first Monday of the year, and that will be January 3<sup>rd</sup>. There are two conflicting dates with the Board's Tuesday meetings: May 17<sup>th</sup> is primary election day, and the Board meeting will be moved to May 18<sup>th</sup>. October 4<sup>th</sup> is during the Jewish Holiday of Yom Kippur, and Board will meet Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>. The calendar also includes meeting dates of all other boards and commissions.

Mr. Pronczak said State Senator Amanda Cappelletti will be holding office hours at the Township Building the first Wednesday of the month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Her staff will be able to utilize the setup in the atrium, as does the tax collector during the busiest times with high traffic for tax payments, and the hours for each do not conflict. Previous representatives have held remote hours in our building, and it worked well for constituents. We do not know when her staff will begin and will advise as soon as we do.

Mr. Pronczak then reviewed the business agenda of August 17<sup>th</sup> which includes a public hearing to consider enactment of Ordinance No. 4-258. This ordinance will allow extensions into setbacks from property lines in R-3 zoning. The Consent Agenda includes approval of the minutes of July 20<sup>th</sup> and August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the July Voucher List, Resolution No. 1467, a site feasibility study for a community center at Centre Square Park or Mermaid Park by Simone Collins as well as an inclusive playground design at Mermaid Park by Simone Collins, Amendment No. 2 to the sanitary sewer agreement with Lower Gwynedd Township, authorization for the Township Solicitor to review changes to the Human Relations Commission (HRC) Ord. No. 383, authorization to advertise proposed Ordinance No. 390 regarding stop signs, approval of the Costars salt contract for 2021-22, confirming authorization for Simone Collins to proceed with Phase 3 of the Mermaid Master Site Development Plan and an award of contract for the Union Meeting Road Trail Project. The Board will also consider approval of Resolution No. 1468 for Blue Bell Springs, which is a formality as it is an amendment of a previous approval. There are two Zoning Hearing Board cases with minor relief requests. The reason the Planning Commission cancelled its meeting this month is because the two cases are minor and there are no other land development matters to review.

Supervisor Campolongo asked if an inclusive playground will be included for the future Wissahickon Park. Mr. Pronczak responded that in the future, all newly developed playgrounds will be inclusive. Mr. Baker confirmed that this agenda item is related to the pods that have specific themes, but the national norm is to make as much as possible inclusive. This will carry into the development of Wissahickon Park with ADA and inclusive features.

Mr. Pronczak explained the intermunicipal agreement with Lower Gwynedd Township that will be amended to allow for an additional property to connect to their sewer system. Our current agreement contains a list of certain properties that can connect to the Lower Gwynedd system. We have a similar agreement with Lower Gwynedd for their residents to connect into our system.

Mr. Pronczak explained that the suggested amendments to the HRC ordinance will include expanded definitions for protected classes based on the PA HRC recommendations and other municipal ordinances. The Solicitor will review the suggestions, and if acceptable, we will authorize to advertise a consideration for an amended ordinance at a future meeting. Supervisor Campolongo added that much credit goes to the HRC members for putting it together, accepting insight from experts. The HRC is a newly created commission with no budget. The members will be sending an update to the Board on why a budget is necessary. They will be out in the field, performing outreach and handling mediations. The HRC will also look to enter into business partnerships with the library and Rotary for sponsored events. They have a need for supplies for their participation in this year's community festival. The HRC will also have to print brochures for the outreach program. He asked that his colleagues on the Board reach out to our business partners seeking assistance with donations. Supervisor Conner noted that he is skeptical about the benefits of expanding the scope of protected classes in the ordinance, though if it does move forward, he would like to have veterans' status included. Similarly, he would like to make sure the HRC is properly resourced, as are other boards and commissions.

Mr. Pronczak expanded on the motion to advertise the ordinance for stop signs. It has been recommended that all-way stops be made at the "T" intersections of Valley Road and Doans Way, and at Valley Road and Laurence Drive. It is similar to what we did when adding the stop signs on Cherry Lane. We met with the property owners, and one will require relocating a mailbox. If the ordinance is enacted, we will move forward.

Following the review of the business meeting agenda, Mr. Pronczak discussed a request from Tucker Cocodrilli, who was a student representative during the Comprehensive Plan Update, and is now an intern with the Engineering Department. The request is to use a metal detector at Mermaid Park. This is not permitted in our current ordinance. There were past cases of people not being responsible by digging and not backfilling, causing tripping hazards. Others are careful. The Parks and Recreation Department researched other municipalities, and Northampton Township in Bucks County allows metal detecting in parks by permit: one permit per person per park per year. If an ordinance is enacted, Tucker could apply and if approved, we would control the action. If the Supervisors are interested in pursuing this, we can make a motion authorizing the Solicitor to draft an amended ordinance to allow it. Supervisor Conner is supportive of this action, as there are two young people in his household who would be interested. He asked about the duration of the permit, and Mr. Pronczak explained that it is for one year, and permitted only during park hours, which in our parks is during daylight hours. Chair Minnick added that it is an interesting concept. Mr. Pronczak added that an additional consideration to note is that our current ordinance states artifacts are Township property. The Northampton Township ordinance has the finder immediately turning the item over to the Township, with a return to the finder in one year if there is no claim.

Mr. Pronczak said metal detecting is not currently permitted, though we believe some may be doing it without permission. Tucker is following the rules by asking permission. Supervisor Campolongo asked for confirmation that this is only on Township property, not private property. Mr. Pronczak agreed, adding that the Northampton ordinance limits how deep and how wide of an area can be utilized. This will be reviewed and presented at a future meeting.

Mr. Pronczak said an additional request was made to allow stargazing in Township parks. This is difficult because the parks are only open during daylight hours. We can discuss this with the Police and Parks and Recreation Departments to address their concerns, or maybe include permission during special events that are held several times a year. We must make sure proper safety precautions are taken. If the Supervisors are interested in allowing this, we will ask for a more formal recommendation from Parks and Recreation. Supervisor Keller thanked Mr. Pronczak for bringing up this wonderful opportunity. It is another way for residents to become more involved with using Township properties. Vice-Chair Koch added that Montgomery County Community College opened up public viewing from its telescope once a month. They could be excellent partners in providing speakers who might offer information on how to best view the stars. This concludes this evening's agenda.

Chair Minnick called for public comment. There was none. She called for any old or new business from the Board. Vice-Chair Koch brought up the traffic concerns of the residents living in Blue Bell Springs and perhaps we can schedule a meeting with their representatives. She would like to put this on a list of things to take care of in that community within the near future. Mr. Pronczak said that the Rt. 202 conditions have been monitored during the widening and explained that the lanes have been shifted closer to the development which has alleviated some of the sight distance problems. We do want to make sure there is a permanent alternative, with a possible second means of egress. Supervisor Keller clarified that this is a state road and PennDOT will not allow a traffic light to be installed. Mr. Pronczak explained that there is a process for approval of traffic light, one part being a warrant analysis. The traffic in this area does not warrant a traffic light. Supervisor Keller wants to be on record stating that the state is wrong. Mr. Pronczak said unsuccessful talks were held with both Representative Harper and Representative Hanbidge. We will look into possible alternatives. Supervisor Campolongo received an inquiry regarding the Zoom sessions, asking if there is an obligation for us to provide relay, sign language or captioning services. Mr. Mrochko said we are in preliminary discussions with a firm in Philadelphia and are sorting out if an interpreter is needed at all meetings, or upon request. There are different price points for each service that they provide. Supervisor Campolongo wants to make clear that sign language is not the only form of communication, adding that captioning or another auxiliary aid might be beneficial. Mrs. Leininger said Zoom does offer captioning, and we have it as part of our account, though a configuration is required for added costs, and there are other options available. She said there is also an option to add closed captioning after the live meeting to the recorded video. Supervisor Conner brought up the significant storm from two weeks ago that caused the worst damage anyone can

remember. Much has been addressed, but there is still much to be done. He and the Chair observed staff through the Emergency Operations Center. Approximately 80% of the Township was without power. With the coordinated response among departments and agencies, it was a job well done. It is also the price to be paid for being named Tree City USA and having an ordinance that addresses the tree canopy. These natural events have thinned the canopy a bit. Supervisor Conner also noted the passing of Linda Teti, wife a former Supervisor Nick Teti. Chair Minnick also addressed the storm and its aftermath. She walked a couple of the neighborhoods the day after the storm, and it was nice to see the community members come together to help one another. She thanked everyone for looking out for one another. Mr. Pronczak thanked all the departments who responded as things quickly escalated. The Police Department took the initial brunt of the calls before the EOC was opened. He thanked Dave Camarda and Nicole Leininger, who stepped up to the challenge and quickly came together. Mr. Pronczak also offered special thanks to Public Works for the very long hours they put in during difficult situations. He also thanked the residents for their patience. We were fortunate that no one was injured.

With no additional discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Roman M. Pronczak, P.E.  
Township Manager

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