

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING – JUNE 3, 2015

LOWER SWATARA TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The June 3, 2015 Special Meeting of the Lower Swatara Township Board of Commissioners was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by President Thomas L. Mehaffie III. President Mehaffie called for the pledge of allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

Roll call was taken with the following officials in attendance:

- Thomas L. Mehaffie III, President
- Laddie J. Springer, Secretary
- Michael J. Davies, Commissioner
- Dominic D. DiFrancesco II, Commissioner (arrived at 6:10 P.M.)
- Samuel D. Monticello, Township Manager
- Peter R. Henninger, Solicitor
- Erin G. Letavic, HRG, Engineer
- Robert S. Greene, Planning and Zoning Coordinator
- Richard D. Brandt, Police Chief
- Daniel L. Wagner, Public Works Superintendent
- Jean R. Arroyo, Recording Secretary

Absent: Jon G. Wilt, Vice President

Residents and visitors in attendance:

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEET

President Mehaffie stated that the purpose of tonight's Special Meeting is to discuss potential improvements to the Township parks. He thanked the members of the Township Recreation Board, which include Jim Kazakavage, Scott Dintiman, Ginny Knoll, Carl Dupes, and Tim Yeich. Jason Wagner, alternate to the Olmsted Regional Recreation Board, was also acknowledged as well as Todd Truntz of the Athletic Association. President Mehaffie thanked these individuals for volunteering their time. He then turned over the floor to Erin Letavic, HRG, Township Engineer.

Ms. Letavic added that Lori Yeich, an employee of DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) and also a Township resident, is here tonight to explain the grant

process. Ms. Letavic noted that the intent of this meeting is to discuss the status of the parks today and improvements that the public would like to see happen in the future. The Township has already been awarded grant funding for some improvements, and is waiting to hear back about additional funding applied for. The Township will continue to pursue grant dollars and wants to make sure monies are being invested in the parks in a manner that the public desires. Ms. Letavic showed photos of what is already proposed for the Old Reliance and Shopes Garden Park, which includes playground equipment, poured in place rubber matting, mulch, ADA compliant walking paths, and storm water related improvements such as rain gardens.

Lori Yeich, DCNR, explained the grant funding process. She stated that by January 1, 2016, the Township's latest grant application, if approved, will be awarded. The Township had also applied for matching funds from DCED last year, but cannot use those funds as match before this last grant is awarded. However, if approved, the Township will get fully funded park improvements. The community has every right to say what it would like to see in the parks, within certain guidelines.

A resident in attendance asked if the grant money can be used to have an AED (automated external defibrillator) at each of the fields. She explained that she almost lost a grandson, and these devices can be life-saving. Ms. Yeich explained that unfortunately, most of these grants are typically for more than \$250,000. However, the Township may want to look into having a foundation provide these. Ms. Letavic stated that she will add this to the list of suggestions.

Commissioner Davies asked if dog parks could be covered under this type of grant funding. Ms. Yeich confirmed that they could be. She stated that this is a very popular request from the public. Walking paths are probably the first requested use, with dog parks following. Commissioner Davies stated that the Township has a significant right of way along the Swatara Creek. Ms. Yeich asked if the Township owns it. Commissioner Davies responded that the Township does not own it; it is owned by a private entity. He asked if funds could be used to obtain a parallel right of way to the rail. Ms. Yeich explained that this is called "rail with trail". The Township would need permission from the railroad, as well as some type of agreement that if this was funded, the railroad would allow it to be open to the public.

Linda Mehaffie stated that Woodridge Park needs additional parking for its baseball fields to alleviate the current parking up and down the streets and on the grass.

Todd Truntz stated that he is here on behalf of the Township's Athletic Association; he serves as chairman of the fields committee. He thanked Mr. Wagner and the staff for all the great work on the ball fields. He stated that he has several points for Board consideration. First of all, the Township is really in need of another softball field. The Township is currently using one on the Glad Tidings Assembly of God property. Due to development in that area, there is a lot of truck traffic which leads to safety concerns. Also, there is no parking lot, so parking is on the side of the road. He asked the Board to consider another softball field, maybe in the Greenfield Park area. The second suggestion is a concession stand at the Shopes Garden Park. In the past, the Lions Club had provided concessions, but it has ceased from doing so. Mr. Truntz explained that a concession stand would be for the convenience of families attending games and would generate revenue for the Association. The major component here would be the need for electric and plumbing. Mr. Truntz added that he will bring up the suggestion of securing AEDs to the baseball association. Ms. Letavic asked if there are storage sheds at the Shopes Garden Park. Mr. Truntz explained that there is one small one for storage of the garden tractor, drag, rakes, etc. It is not large enough for a concession stand. President Mehaffie asked if the Athletic Association had talked to the Lions Club about using its facilities for concessions. Mr. Truntz explained that he had not done so personally, but understands that there are liability concerns with doing so. President Mehaffie suggested they speak to Mario Corradi from the Lions Club about the possibility of using its building for a year until things get hammered out. Ms. Letavic asked if the enrollment in the Athletic Association has trended in any particular direction. Mr. Truntz responded that there is a consistent registration, although there is fluctuation. Mr. Dintiman estimated that this year, there are approximately 250 kids.

President Mehaffie stated that for the record, Commissioner DiFrancesco is now in attendance.

Linda Mehaffie stated that with the construction of the new high school, the School District cut out plans for a softball field because of the budget. She asked if there is any way to incorporate that and work with the School District to put in the new softball field so that the Township can also use it. She explained that it is already designed, but was cut from the project due to budget concerns. Ms. Yeich confirmed that this can be done. Whoever owns the land would need to be the applicant. Since it would be funded through public funds, it would need to be open to the public.

Commissioner Davies asked if the Athletic Association still uses the Kunkel ball field. Mr. Truntz confirmed that the School District graciously allows its usage and also does a good bit of the maintenance on it.

President Mehaffie stated that one resident approached him about a bocce ball court, perhaps at the Old Reliance Park.

Ms. Letavic asked if there are any other parks that could use additional parking. Ms. Mehaffie suggested Greenfield Park could use more. President Mehaffie added that Old Reliance Park could probably use a few extra spaces.

Emil Notarfrancesco suggested accessibility is a problem at the Little Hollywood Park (Memorial Park). He suggested the possibility of a walking trail or bike trail around the whole park. He also suggested other aspects be explored to draw more people there. One suggestion is concrete tables and chairs that are secured and cannot be moved. This could lead to chess or checker tournaments. Other possibilities include concerts, plays, kid events, etc. As far as the Shopes Garden Park, Mr. Notarfrancesco stated that the basketball court pole takes up space. An overhead backboard would allow the poles to be removed. This would increase useable space and be safer. Mr. Notarfrancesco asked if the Market Street Extended Park has been improved. President Mehaffie responded that new equipment was installed about three years ago. This park definitely has more room for expansion. Commissioner DiFrancesco suggested that this park would be a nice spot for concrete tables, since a lot of seniors walk the park. He added that it would also be beneficial if this park could someone be incorporated into the Highspire reservoir area. President Mehaffie asked if the Township could work with the Borough of Highspire to bring its walking path up into the park. Commissioner DiFrancesco suggested that this could perhaps be done with a set of steps. Ms. Letavic asked Ms. Yeich if it is possible to fund projects between two municipalities. Ms. Yeich agreed that it is absolutely possible. Lower Swatara Township could be the lead applicant, and Highspire Borough would sign the letter of support stating that it agrees to the grant and agrees for construction to happen on that property.

Commissioner Davies referenced the Jednota Flats flood properties that the Township acquired with federal funding. It was a “checkerboard” type of acquisition, and the properties have to be maintained as non-developed space. He stated that it would seem logical to try to acquire funds to consolidate these into one unit for a park use. Ms. Letavic explained that as part of the acquisition, no permanently affixed structures can be placed on these properties. This

includes fencing. It could be a picnic area though. Ms. Letavic added that if there is a property owner nearby who would be willing to sell, the Township could purchase that property with non-related funding and then that property would not be bound by the same requirements. The flood properties, however, would still need to remain as open space. President Mehaffie asked the public to keep their ears open for anyone who wants to donate or sell land at a reduced value for possible development of another field or park.

President Mehaffie stated that Lower Swatara Township does not have a town square or a downtown area. It has parks, and these parks should be the crown jewel of the community. He added that he particularly likes Commissioner DiFrancesco's idea of encompassing the Highspire reservoir and Market Street Extended Park.

Ms. Yeich noted that one thing she would strongly recommend is that the Township identify properties now that could be potential parks.

Commissioner DiFrancesco stated that the idea of a boat launch at the end of Fulling Mill Road has been discussed for probably 20 years. He asked why it never came to be. Ms. Yeich stated that it is her understanding that the Township was negotiating with that land owner, Mr. Church, but the parties could not agree on a price. President Mehaffie added that there is a piece of property down there that was just developed into a warehouse. It is the flood zone. Jim Clymer and Reid Townsend have discussed a possible donation of that land. Discussions did not go any further, and it may be because they are concerned that this land will be used for something other than recreation. If parking is not sufficient, it may result in parking on their property; they cannot have this with their tenants, and it could also pose liability issues. President Mehaffie suggested staff reach out to these gentlemen again to get a status report. Mr. Monticello agreed that a boat launch would be ideal for this area.

In response to question from President Mehaffie, Mr. Greene confirmed that the comprehensive plan review does include parks and recreation. He added that the Township will be looking for individuals from the parks and recreation organizations for the comprehensive plan committee.

Bonnie Kiner said she has nothing against sports fields, but thinks that the Township needs to look at the big picture. There is no destination park in the Township. It would be great to have one here. Lower Swatara Township could be the Strasberg of Dauphin County if it wanted to be.

Ms. Yeich stated that she is now speaking as a resident and parent. She would like to see a connection from the neighborhoods to the parks through walking trails or bike paths. This would take pressure off roads as far as maintenance, and trails are a lot less expensive to maintain than fields. Dan Magaro asked if it is even possible to connect all the parks. Ms. Yeich agreed that it is, but it is also challenging since it involves working with property owners to obtain right of ways. She added that nice parks increase property values.

Patrick Quinn explained that he is working on developing his Eagle Scout project and had talked to Mr. Wagner and President Mehaffie about installing signs in the eight parks. He asked if there is funding for this. Ms. Letavic stated that the cost is probably too small for the type of grant that is being discussed tonight. However, if he proposes a budgeted project, the Township can look around to see if there is anything else available. President Mehaffie stated that the Township could also use money in the Recreation Fund for this purpose. He agreed that it would be nice to have signs at every park, either new or refurbished. Commissioner DiFrancesco added that it would be great to have a geo-cache in every sign.

President Mehaffie stated that he will also look into the idea of acquiring AEDs for the parks.

Ms. Letavic thanked everyone for their comments, and referenced a park survey near the sign-in sheet. She asked residents to complete it and submit it to the Township office. President Mehaffie also suggested that residents “like” the Township’s Facebook page and sign up for email notifications to stay informed.

ADJOURN:

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Commissioner Davies, seconded by Commissioner Springer, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting adjourned at 7:04 P.M.

ATTEST:



Jean R. Arroyo, Recording Secretary

SIGN-IN SHEET
Lower Swatara Township
Park Development Public Meeting

NAME (Please Print)	CONTACT INFORMATION
Caryn Darraw	Phone: 717-329-5098 Address: E-Mail: caryn7780@yahoo.com
Todd F. Trutz	Phone: 717-991-9008 Address: 1813 Scarlett Lane E-Mail: tfttrutz@comcast.net
Linda Meluffe	Phone: Address: E-Mail:
Patrick Quinn	Phone: Address: E-Mail:
Lori Yuch	Phone: 717-991-8297 Address: 536 Colony Dr. E-Mail: lkyuch@gmail.com
Jessica Emes	Phone: 717.461.5140 Address: 59 Kathy Dr. Middletown E-Mail: emes1541@gmail.com
Scott Dintzman	Phone: 461 1283 Address: 1405 Candace Ave E-Mail: sdintzman@aol.com
Michelle Wagner	Phone: 564-0720 Address: 644 Longview Dr, Middletown E-Mail: dmichwag@hotmail.com
Nancy Aulse	Phone: 944-9891 Address: 1451 N. Union St. E-Mail: lonewolffarm@verizon.net
Emil Notarfrancesco	Phone: 939-6158 Address: 13 Richard Ave E-Mail: cesceemil@gmail.com
Eric Wise Press And Journal	Phone: Address: E-Mail:

