

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING
AT THE WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2019**

MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:09pm

X BIDDLE ___ INDELICATO ___ VACANCY

X KAUFMAN X LAMB X LANE X MOULTON

BOS LIAISON: STERLING ___ NESTER X TOWNSHIP STAFF: BLOMSTROM X
BENDER (MINUTES) X

2. RE-ORGANIZATION

- a. Selection of Chair
 - i. Hugh Moulton nominated Steve Kaufman, seconded by Joan Biddle. Steve Kaufman was selected unanimously.
- b. Selection of Vice Chair
 - i. Hugh Moulton nominated Chris Lane, seconded by Joan Biddle. Chris Lane was selected unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 24TH MEETING MINUTES

- a. Chris Lane made a motion to accept the meeting minutes, seconded by Joan Biddle. Minutes were approved unanimously.

4. OPEN SPACE 2019 MEETING DATES – Dates were reviewed and noted by Open Space Committee members.

- a. January 23rd
- b. April 24th
- c. July 24th
- d. October 23rd

5. UPDATED OPEN SPACE CONTACT LIST

- a. Open Space Committee reviewed. Deborah Lamb removed her work phone number from the list.

6. OPEN SPACE FUNDING REPORT

- a. Nate Crittendon, Interim Finance Director, gave an overview of the Open Space Fund report.
- b. Steve Kaufman stated that the report showed approximately 2% interest earned on invested funds. Nate stated that the interest is a variable rate and there was a significant uptick this year. Nate stated the funds are invested in a vehicle that is similar to a short term money market account.
- c. Hugh Moulton stated that in previous years the committee received a list of what the money was being used for. Nate passed around a graph that showed how the money was spent, from 2006 through 2018.
- d. Hugh Moulton stated that the \$20 million collected for Open Space was a remarkable achievement and asset for the township. The 2006 referendum speaks well for the residents.
- e. Steve Kaufman praised the restoration of the Gambone Tract and stated the Parks and Recreation department gets a lot of volunteers out each year and accomplishes a lot of work at modest expense.
- f. Public Comment:

- i. PUBLIC COMMENT: Eli Glick, Whitemarsh resident, asked where the 25% maintenance allowance came from and expressed concerns that the 2006 Referendum authorizing the ¼% EIT for open space did not refer to maintenance. He stated the Gambone Tract was turning into a park and asked why open space funds are being used. He also asked if there were other uses for the money and asked for more transparency from the Township.
- ii. Steve Kaufman asked if the Township Staff or Board of Supervisors could provide to the OSC the language used in 2006 for the Bond Referendum.
- iii. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick asked at what point do Park and Recreation funds take over from the Open Space funds.
- iv. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick stated there was a transparency issue about this.

7. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. Tom Blomstrom gave an overview of the January 2019 status.
- b. Christopher Lane stated that the process to date and the report from the consultants seemed thorough.
- c. Laura Nester asked if anyone had been at recent meetings and if church properties were being discussed. She stated that she was concerned about churches with large properties going through changes and asked what would happen with their land.
 - i. Steve Kaufman explained that church properties with significant acreage could be included in the Open Space Plan. The Township could then approach them about selling their development rights to the Township.
- d. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick asked how the Township approaches sellers, specifically with respect to Abolition Hall. He stated that the Township should be sending a friendly face, not just staff to make a presentation.
 - i. Steve Kaufman stated that the Open Space Committee does not approach sellers, but advises the Township. Laura Nester stated she was not sure who approached the owners of the Abolition Hall property.
 - ii. Joan Biddle stated that the OSC has a list of contacts for each property of more than ten acres.
 - iii. Hugh Moulton stated that the Township used a consultant at one point, but ultimately that did not work out.
- e. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick asked about the difference between appraisals for undeveloped land and appraisals for land for which a developer has proposed a particular plan.
 - i. Hugh Moulton stated that was done with Erdenheim Farm. The difference in value between the land without development restrictions and the land as restricted by the easement is the value of the easement. Steve Kaufman added that appraised value may increase after conditional use and/or zoning is approved for a development proposal.
- f. Joan Biddle stated her concerns about the Comprehensive Plan Update. She stated that if someone wanted to use a mixed use space, it should be subject to zoning for that area. She stated she was specifically looking at the area along Bethlehem Pike in the vicinity of Hope Lodge and St. Thomas Church. She stated there should be open space requirements that should be met when new developments come in.
 - i. Christopher Lane stated that residents do not want developments, but private owners are allowed to do what they want, subject to zoning requirements, and we cannot deny their rights.
 - ii. Joan Biddle stated that each project should be considered with the quality of life.
 - iii. Steve Kaufman stated that a lot of things could be tightened-up in regards to ordinances, which are often vague enough to allow varying interpretations. He added that the Steep Slopes, Wetlands, and Riparian Corridor ordinances should be made more rigorous, if allowed by state law.
 - iv. Tom stated that the Comprehensive Plan Update would be heading to the Planning Commission again in late March- early April. Then at some point following it would be on the agenda for the Board of Supervisors.

- g. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick stated that the Comprehensive Plan was not being considered in the open and there was nothing on the website about the Plan or the Steering Committee. He stated that he had to submit a Right-to-Know request to learn who was on the committee and was concerned that the committee was made up of less than 50% of Whitemarsh Residents. He added that he spoke to a planner and he was informed that this was illegal. He stated there was a lot of pushback from the residents on development. He indicated that Bergmann and Associates is being paid \$75,000 and that there was a conflict of interest because Charlie Guttenplan's wife worked for them. He also stated that the document on the website did not have an author/origin and was not signed.
- h. Joan Biddle asked who was in charge of the document, and Tom Blomstrom stated that Charlie Guttenplan oversees the update process.
- i. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick expressed concern that there was no representation from the Environmental Advisory Board or the Shade Tree Commission on the committee.
- j. Christopher Lane stated that developers and other private business interests were brought in for their perspective in updating the plan.
- k. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick expressed that there was not enough representation from the residents and that this is a critical piece that will dictate how Whitemarsh will look in 10-20 years.
- l. Hugh Moulton asked if there was an updated copy and Joan Biddle stated that it was on the website, and she presented a copy. Steve Kaufman stated that the version of the Plan on the website is a power point summary and not the final, detailed Plan.
- m. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Glick stated that the report needed more voices from the Township and the Township needs more transparency with residents about the vision for the Township. He also stated the public should have the right to give input and this is creating "nimbyism" in the community.
- n. Christopher Lane suggested that the committee prepare for an interim meeting in early March to review the final draft when it is available.
- o. Tom stated that he would make a note to e-mail everyone a copy of the draft and set-up a special meeting when it is available.

8. HIGHLANDS MANSION UPDATE

- a. Tom Blomstrom gave a brief update on the Highlands Mansion, saying that the Board of Supervisors is in the process of reviewing the matter. He has been told that they are supportive of working with the Highlands and are waiting to hear from the Highlands regarding an appraisal.
 - i. Hugh Moulton asked if the Township would rely on the appraisal from the Highlands or if the Township would get their own. Tom stated that he did not have an answer.
 - ii. Hugh Moulton asked if this was in the Highlands court, and Tom Blomstrom stated that was his understanding. Hugh gave a history of the Highlands property and also stated that the matter was in limbo and the property needs attention. He added that the Township should be getting its own appraisal to determine the value of the proposed easement.
 - iii. Joan Biddle stated that the Open Space Committee had passed a resolution in October and asked why the Township had done nothing. Tom Blomstrom stated that the resolution was passed on to leadership as requested.
 - iv. Laura Nester stated that she understood that there was communication between the Highlands and the Township. She added that she thought the Township is supportive of preservation.
 - v. Hugh Moulton read aloud Amy Grossman's e-mail to the Highlands in June, which stated that the Township is supportive but needs to consider the financial aspect. He said that was the last of the communications and he would like to know who the point person is for the Township. Tom stated that the point person was the Township Manager.
 - vi. Hugh Moulton stated that he spoke to Rick Mellor and was told the Highlands would be given consideration in early 2019. He added that the Township needs to communicate with the Highlands.

- vii. Joan Biddle added that the committee would be disappointed if the Township does not do anything.
- viii. Steve Kaufman stated that Hugh Moulton should talk to the Highlands and have them talk to the Township Manager. Christopher Lane added that the Township needs to make a decision about the process to follow, which Hugh Moulton has referred to as a “work plan”.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- a. Aaron Costick, resident and attorney who lives in Mitchell Court, was in attendance.
- b. Eli Glick asked that all information given at meetings could be available to the public and attached to the agenda on the website. He added this should happen with all boards and commissions without having to file a Right-to-Know request. Christopher Lane stated that he agrees and everything should be posted.
- c. Eli Glick also asked that the draft minutes from the meeting be posted on the website. A discussion ensued between committee members about the wisdom of posting a draft before final minutes were approved by the committee at a public meeting. Mr. Glick responded by saying that he was told by the Township Solicitor that once minutes are approved they cannot be amended. Steve Kaufman added that if there was something in the previously adopted minutes that someone objects to, this can be brought up in the next meeting and the resolution recorded in the minutes of that meeting. The majority of the Open Space Committee felt that drafts do not belong on the website.

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. Hugh Moulton added that the State's amending Act 153 in 2013 to allow the use of Open Space funds for maintenance was probably done to encourage the purchase of Open Space, since ongoing maintenance is required to protect that Open Space, and this would be a factor in deciding to make purchases.

11. ADJOURNMENT

- a. Hugh Moulton made a motion, Deborah Lamb seconded; meeting adjourned at 8:34PM.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 24th at 7PM

NOTE: Chris Lane, Vice-Chairman of the Open Space Committee, requested that the correction of the amount that has been paid to Bergmann Associates for the Comprehensive Plan Update be reflected correctly as approximately \$34,000.