

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
PARK & RECREATION BOARD MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING – ZOOM
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND, 2021 AT 7:00 PM**

The Whitemarsh Township Park & Recreation Board Meeting was held on Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021 at 7:00 PM. The meeting was held virtually, via Zoom, due to COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jim Convey, Joanne Crawford, Terry Ferris, Kevin Kissling, Tom Manley, Megan O'Rourke

LIAISONS PRESENT:

Laura Boyle Nester (BOS), Joy O'Brien (WAC)

TWP. STAFF PRESENT:

Tom Blomstrom (P&R Director), Mike Lannutti (P&R – Minutes)

ALSO PRESENT:

Debra Harris (Public)

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. The Whitemarsh Township Park & Recreation Board Meeting was called to order on Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021, at 7:03pm, by Joanne Crawford.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Reappointments
 - i. Tom Blomstrom announced that Board of Supervisors have reappointed Jim Convey & Tom Manley to the Whitemarsh Township Park and Recreation Board. The positions carry 4-year terms and will expire on 12/31/2024.

4. RE-ORGANIZATION

- a. Selection of a Chairperson
 - i. Joanne Crawford was nominated for consideration by Kevin Kissling. No additional nominations were made. Kevin Kissling made a motion to re-elect Joanne Crawford as Chair of the Whitemarsh Township Park and Recreation Board, Terry Ferris seconded.
 - ii. Joanne Crawford's election as Chair of the Whitemarsh Township Park and Recreation Board was approved unanimously.
- b. Selection of a Vice-Chairperson
 - i. Tom Manley was nominated for consideration by Kevin Kissling. No additional nominations were made. Kevin Kissling made a motion to re-elect Tom Manley as Vice-Chair of the Whitemarsh Township Park and Recreation Board, Terry Ferris seconded.
 - ii. Tom Manley's election as Vice-Chair of the Whitemarsh Township Park and Recreation Board was approved unanimously.
- c. Park and Recreation Board Member List
 - i. No updates were made to the Park and Recreation Board Member List.

d. List of 2021 Meeting Dates

- i. Tuesday, February 2nd – Reorganization Meeting
- ii. Tuesday, April 6th
- iii. Tuesday, June 1st
- iv. Tuesday, August 3rd
- v. Tuesday, October 5th
- vi. Tuesday, December 7th

(a) Tom Blomstrom shared that Township resident, Eli Glick, reached out to express his concerns regarding the Township’s schedule of public meetings. Mr. Glick shared that he felt that no Township advisory board meetings should be held on the same night, in case individuals would like to attend multiple meetings. He also noted that this would provide a better opportunity for the advisory boards to collaborate.

(i) Joanne Crawford asked Tom Blomstrom which, if any, advisory committees held their meetings on the same night as the Park and Recreation Board. Tom noted that the Shade Tree Commission is the only regularly conflicting schedule and any other overlap stems from rescheduled/non-traditional meetings. Joanne Crawford stated that the PR Board would monitor the schedule and adjust if necessary.

(ii) Laura Boyle Nester noted that the BOS are aware that the work of the advisory committees often overlaps and understand that the topic of information-sharing between the committees, has come up. She shared that, at the upcoming BOS Workshop, they will be discussing how they can help improve communication between the advisory committees.

(iii) It was decided that the PR Board will continue to monitor conflicts in the meeting schedule, but ultimately will be meeting on the schedule designated by the Board of Supervisors.

5. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 1ST, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

- a. Tom Manley made a motion to approve the minutes, Kevin Kissling seconded. The December 1, 2020 Park and Recreation Board Meeting Minutes were approved unanimously.

6. PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD LIAISON – COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. 4th of July Parade Committee

- i. Tom Blomstrom shared that the 2021 meeting schedule is still to be determined, and he will provide that information to the Board when it becomes available.
- ii. Tom Manley made a motion to appoint Joanne Crawford & Terry Ferris as the PR Board Liaisons to the 4th of July Parade Committee, Jim Convey seconded. Joanne Crawford & Terry Ferris’ appointment as PR Board Liaisons to the 4th of July Parade Committee were approved unanimously.

b. Whitemarsh Athletic Association (WAA)

- i. Tom Blomstrom shared that the WAA is planning a virtual spring meeting. The official date is still to be determined, but sometime in March is most likely.
- ii. Terry Ferris made a motion to appoint Tom Manley as the PR Board Liaison to the Whitemarsh Athletic Association, Megan O’Rourke seconded. Tom Manley’s appointment as PR Board Liaison to the Whitemarsh Athletic Association was approved unanimously.

- c. Miracle-Nature Trail (MNT) Steering Committee (Liaisons: Joanne Crawford, Jim Convey & Laura Boyle Nester)
 - i. Tom Blomstrom shared that the 1st MNT Steering Committee meeting was held on Thursday, January 14th, 2021, via zoom.
 - ii. Joanne Crawford mentioned that the 1st meeting went very well and that she was excited to see an excellent level of participation from everyone involved. She noted that after introductions the committee reviewed the draft map and public survey draft. Both items will be made available to the public as a part of the feasibility study, to collect feedback from members of the community.
 - iii. There will be an MNT Public Presentation and Listening Session in April.
 - iv. The next Miracle-Nature Trail Steering Committee Meeting will be held in May.
 - v. Tom Blomstrom noted that the Public Survey is slated to go out sometime in February and will be available for approximately 4 weeks. A Miracle-Nature Trail webpage, which will include the most up-to-date news & information about the project, is being added to the Township website. This webpage, along with other Township media outlets, will be utilized to generate public interest & involvement with the project.

7. WHITEMARSH ART CENTER REPORT – Joy O’Brien

- a. Joy O’Brien presented the Whitemarsh Art Center (WAC) report, as submitted. Joy highlighted the following items from the report:
 - i. She thanked the Township for their recent support in reimbursing the WAC for over \$1,100.00 worth of expenses incurred for painting and other repairs to the building.
 - ii. Joy shared that the WAC successfully hosted a virtual Student & Teacher Art Expo, at the end of the year. During the event, Students & teachers presented their artwork and fielded questions and comments from those in attendance. She noted that the event was a fun and creative way for WAC members to get together, show off their artwork, and interact with one another.
 - iii. Joy noted that January classes have already kicked off, and additional classes, including 2 new ceramic courses, are set to begin in February.
 - iv. Joy mentioned that the WAC is applying for a 2nd round of funding through the Payment Protection Program. During the first round, the WAC received approximately \$6,000.00 worth of funding, which has been extremely helpful to the organization.
- b. Kevin Kissling asked Joy if the WAC has had any success in securing funding through other sources with specific opportunities for art-focused facilities, in relation to COVID. Joy noted that the WAC did receive grant funding from Montgomery County for PPE-related items, and that she knows the WAC is exploring other related funding opportunities.
- c. Kevin Kissling made a motion to accept the Whitemarsh Art Center Report, Tom Manley seconded. The Whitemarsh Art Center Report was accepted unanimously.

8. PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- a. Whitemarsh Township Parks & Recreation Director, Tom Blomstrom, presented the report, as submitted. Tom highlighted the following items from the report:
 - i. The Parks & Recreation Department has continued with weekly virtual engagement opportunity e-blasts. The engagements have recently included topics such as Holiday Activities for Families, Snow & Winter Health Tips, Free Virtual Health Webinars, Winter Energy Tips for Your Home, Winter Bird Feeding, & Climate Change.
 - ii. The *Jan-Feb 2021 Recreator* was released by the Parks & Recreation Department in December. This version of the *Recreator* was available online and included programs & special events being offered in January & February, as well as the Township’s 9-week summer camps.

- iii. Tom thanked Bill Koelewyn & Bob Puksta for their efforts with the holiday displays that were placed in Miles Park, at the corner of Germantown Pike & Joshua Road.
 - iv. The Boy Scouts held their annual Holiday Tree Sale in the Lower Lot of Miles Park. Tom mentioned that the group was sold out after approximately the 1st week of December, which is sooner than he's ever heard of before.
 - v. Tom noted that the Parks & Recreation Department has been working to develop partnerships with like-minded organizations and other local Parks & Recreation Departments. The Department partnered with Upper Dublin Parks & Recreation on a nature program they were offering, to extend the reach of both entities and spread the importance of environmental issues.
 - vi. Tom mentioned that the Department has been offering new programs and events during these difficult times, with mixed results. Some new programs, such as the virtual Sing-A-Long & Sweat fitness program have been successful, while others have been more challenging to develop, like the virtual Winter Dance Program.
 - vii. Tom shared that, even though certain programs & events have faced challenges of late, the Department's recent special events have been extremely successful.
 - (a) The Gingerbread House Decorating Contest had 46 entries. After registering to participate, individuals had to pick-up their supplies at the Parks & Recreation Office, during designated pick-up timeslots. They decorated their gingerbread houses at home and submitted pictures of the final product for judging.
 - (b) The new Light Up Whitemarsh: Holiday Lights Contest had 41 homes register to participate, which was outstanding.
 - (c) The new Winter Hayride event, held at Cedar Grove Park, had 103 participants over the two nights.
 - (d) The Annual MLK Clothing Drive collected a record 1,414 bags of donated clothing & related accessories. Whitemarsh Township residents were extremely generous, once again.
 - (e) The Valenteenies Day event scheduled for February 12th, has received a great amount of interest, thanks to the marketing efforts of the Parks & Recreation team. Both time slots being offered appear as though they will be filled.
 - (f) The Spring Shredding Day event will be held on Saturday, March 6th, in the Lower Parking Lot of Miles Park, from 8:00am – 12:00pm. Barren Hill Fire Company will be the organization providing volunteers for the event and will receive a portion of the donations collected during the day.
 - viii. Tom Blomstrom concluded his report by asking if there were any questions or comments from the Park and Recreation Board members.
 - (a) Joanne Crawford acknowledged the Parks & Recreation Department's efforts in putting together the *Recreator*, which she thinks looks outstanding.
 - (b) Megan O'Rourke acknowledged how well-run & organized the Cedar Grove Summer Camp was last year, in her experience working with them. She noted how the Township is extremely fortunate to have such a service available.
 - ix. Megan O'Rourke made a motion to accept the Parks and Recreation Director's Report, Terry Ferris Seconded. The Parks and Recreation Director's Report was accepted unanimously.
- b. NEW BUSINESS**
- i. 2021 Parks and Recreation Fee Schedule
 - (a) The 2021 Parks and Recreation Fee Schedule was approved by the Township Board of Supervisors. The 2021 Fee Schedule is included in the meeting agenda packet as submitted.
 - (b) Tom Blomstrom noted that the key element in the approved fee schedule can be found in the last few paragraphs of the document. The referenced section outlines the Parks and Recreation Department's cost-recovery model, which is developed to be a self-sustaining model.

c. OLD BUSINESS

- i. Update on The Highlands Mansion & Gardens
 - (a) Tom Blomstrom shared an article that provided an update regarding the Highlands Mansion & Gardens. Since the PR Board's last meeting, where they discussed the Township's involvement with the Highlands Mansion & Gardens, the referenced legislature was passed. Tom acknowledged of the Township Board of Supervisors, PA State Representatives, and other elected officials for their foresight, efforts, and leadership in seeing this wonderful preservation opportunity through till the end.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- a. Member of the community, Debra Harris, was present for the meeting and provided comments. Debra shared her disappointment in not being accepted as a member of the Miracle-Nature Trail Steering Committee. She noted that she hoped to be more involved in the process but was frustrated that she was not selected.
 - i. Tom Blomstrom apologized for the disappointment that she was feeling but encouraged her to remain involved with the project as a member of the community. Tom noted that she was selected as a Key Stakeholder in the process and was contacted by the Grant Consultant for a personal one-on-one interview and also to fill-out a survey. He noted that there will be ample opportunity for community input & feedback throughout the project, and he looks forward to hers.

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. No board member comments.

11. ADJOURNMENT

- a. Tom Manley made a motion to adjourn, Kevin Kissling seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:44pm, unanimously.