

**UPPER MORELAND TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

January 22, 2008

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Spearing called a meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee of the Board of Commissioners of Upper Moreland Township to order at 8:50 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Commissioner Spearing, Chairperson, took roll call. Present: Commissioners Lisa Romaniello and R. Samuel Valenza.

Others: David Dodies, Township Manager, Anne Thornburg Weiss, Township Solicitor, and Patrick Stasio, Director of Parks & Recreation Department.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Spearing accepted the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting of November 19, 2007 into the record as submitted. The December 10, 2007 meeting was cancelled.

REPORTS:

There were no questions regarding the Parks & Recreation Monthly Department Report or Parks & Recreation Advisory Minutes.

Parks & Recreation Monthly Department Report:

The Director of Parks & Recreation, Pat Stasio, commented that Parks has been working hard through November and December and he wanted to comment about the nice job that they are doing.

Commissioner Spearing commented on the efficiency of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Council.

Library Board Report:

Commissioner Spearing commented that the Library Board's reorganizational meeting went smoothly. Commissioner Spearing also announced that Friends of the Library have plenty of positions available. They also discussed developing a Strategic Planning Committee to review the bylaws and create a five-year strategic plan.

Commissioner Spearing also commented that Richard Booth had been appointed a trustee. In addition, the Library Board discussed housekeeping issues pertaining to building and grounds and they will be submitted to David Dodies.

OLD BUSINESS:

Boileau Park Repairs (Friends of Boileau)

Commissioner Spearing said that he understands that there are emergency repairs that need to be done so that the structure is not lost. He appreciates the effort that was put into the very extensive report prepared by A H Adams & Company.

Commissioner Valenza questioned whether the money for the repairs would come out of the grant program or is the Township paying for this.

Nicholas Scull, President of Friends of Boileau, responded that the issue came up last April and the insurance inspector said that the shed was in disrepair and would need emergency repairs. They had two builders come out to look at the shed and Adams came up with the estimate on this emergency work. It was decided at last October's meeting that an amount of \$20,000.00 was authorized to make these repairs. With the repairs recommended, the building should be in good structural standing and last until we proceed with the next part of the plan.

Commissioner Valenza commented that he would like to visit the site when the weather breaks.

Pat Stasio, Director of Parks & Recreation, stated that the bid specs from Mr. Adams are wonderful, however, he has a few minor changes such as dates and times that he can work out with Mr. Adams.

Commissioner Romaniello asked whether Code Enforcement or John Chambers looked at this package to make sure it complies with Township Codes. Mr. Stasio said he will run it by Paul Purtell. Also, Commissioner Romaniello commented that Mr. Adams recommended two contractors, Twining Construction and Westley Rapp. Commissioner Romaniello asked whether it was possible to get estimates to review before the next meeting.

Pat Stasio stated that our previous Solicitor said this would qualify under emergency repairs and that we may not have to go out to bid on this project. However, our current Solicitor has not yet reviewed this matter.

The Solicitor offered to review this matter and give an opinion as to whether she is in agreement that this project qualifies for emergency repairs.

Richard Booth, 3310 Bartram Road, Willow Grove, had a comment. Mr. Booth agrees that Arthur Adams did a great job in putting this proposal together along with detailing all of the problems. He also hopes that it comes in at \$20,000.00, however, the original estimates to repair the barn were between \$900,000 - \$1,200,000 and he is here to advocate against spending Township money on this project. The Township has a lot of other capital needs and the money could be better used in other areas of the Township; even \$20,000 for the shed which is no bigger than this room. In the past, there were no viable economic uses for the barn and most of the economic uses suggested were not welcomed by the neighbors. He would like to caution the Board to keep in mind that when you start spending \$20,000 - \$40,000, there is yet another \$900,000 - \$1,200,000 to make the barn useable. Initially, the Friends of Boileau indicated that they would get grants to take care of all of these problems, and obviously they have not been able to accomplish this.

Commissioner McKenna commented that several constituents from Ward 7 are for the Boileau Park project; however, Commissioner McKenna shares former Commissioner Booth's concern for the finances.

Commissioner Romaniello stated she is very positive and optimistic that the community will raise the funds for this long term project. She also stated that there is a lot of support coming from different levels of government.

Commissioner Valenza had a conversation with Glen Brown and wonders should \$20,000 be put into the main house rather than the barn. Are we wasting our tax dollars at this time?

Nick Scull replied that the Township has owned the property since 2002. We think it is a priceless building because it's from 1740. We are trying to raise as much as \$200,000.00 through the state to do a study of what we have and what we should save. We are at a study stage. This was a four phase plan that was recommended to the community in 2002 and stage one included stabilization of the buildings. The Township hasn't done anything and they are deteriorating and now have this emergency problem.

Commissioner Valenza said that the Commissioners talked about approving the \$20,000.00 and he doesn't have a problem with that. But in most every ward there are people with water issues and \$70,000.000 could fix a lot of water issues and we need to be fiscally responsible in everything we do.

Dog Park Project

Pat Stasio commented that several years ago the Board of Commissioners was approached by DOG (Dog Owners Group, Paw Prints) and they asked the Board to consider an addition of a dog park in Upper Moreland Township. At that time the Board

said they would consider it when the friends of DOG got together and were able to raise \$20,000.00. To date, they have \$16,163.00 in the dog park fund with another \$5,000.00 commitment from DCED through Representative Murt. We received a letter in December that we will be receiving that amount, which will bring the total amount raised by DOG to \$21,163.00. The group will then ask the Board of Commissioners to construct the dog park in 2008.

Commissioner Spearing said they will leave it on the agenda under “Old Business” and discuss the location of the park and move forward.

Public Comments

Thomas McLaughlin from Mill Road commented that Mill Road is a high traffic road; it is a 35 miles an hour zone but what is needed is to reduce it to 25 miles an hour. Egressing the dog park into a high traffic area is a big concern. He also said that sound barriers need to be looked at by the state.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Spearing said that Mill Road already appears on the upcoming Public Health & Safety agenda and some of those issues will be addressed and he is aware of the many safety concerns regarding Mill Road.

Commissioner Valenza asked if he had talked to the Chief.

Commissioner Romaniello asked Mr. Stasio to share with the Chief the plan and give the Board a scenario what a heavy dog park day might look like with the number of cars going in and out and see if there are any concerns.

NEW BUSINESS:

Proposal for use of Upper Moreland’s Open Space Funds

Dr. David Robertson of 2955 Edgehill Road, Huntingdon Valley, Executive Director of P.E.R.T, represented the Trust at the meeting and spoke on their behalf regarding the allocation of funds. He said that there is about \$845,000.00 that the Township hasn’t spent and if they don’t spend that money it will go back to the county. He would like the Board of Commissioners to allocate a portion of that money to an open space project that the Trust is coordinating in Upper Moreland Township and Bryn Athyn. The portion he is referring to sits at the corner of Masons Mill Road and Huntingdon Road. The Trust has negotiated an Agreement of Sale with the Lord’s New Church to preserve 36 acres. Twelve acres is in Upper Moreland Township as a conservation easement, 12 acres is also in Bryn Athyn borough as a conservation easement and 12 acres is in Bryn Athyn

Borough as a fee simple acquisition that the Trust purchased outright. The church would continue to own the 12 acres in Upper Moreland Township but would restrict any further development in the future. The owner would have to provide public access onto that piece of property which would mean that the public would be able to use it.

Commissioner Romaniello wanted to know the value of that parcel.

Dr. Robertson said the property appraised for an outright purchase and that was \$1,000,000.00. We are estimating that the value as a conservation easement is \$800,000.00. The Township would be eligible for 80% reimbursement for the purchase of the conservation easement so that the Township would gain \$640,000.00 of Montgomery County Open Space money for this project. The county likes it when the municipalities have spent their allocation, which shows that they are being proactive about open space acquisition.

Public Comments

Mr. de Jonge said he would endorse this endeavor.

Mr. Richard Booth said that the whole preserve of Pennypack is open to the public.

Mr. Dodies, Township Manager, suggested that they direct the Solicitor to prepare the appropriate resolution to authorize the allocation of open space funds available to Upper Moreland Township.

Commissioner Spearing said that they will move this for action at the February 4, 2008 Regular Meeting.

Dr. David Robertson presented to the Township a framed wildlife picture in appreciation of their generosity, which presently is displayed in the Township Manager's office.

Parking Improvements at Masons Mill Park

Mr. Stasio said that this is a project that can be done in-house. He asked Jim Faber from McCloskey & Faber to meet at the site and draw up a formal plan for parking which would include grading and striping and a better way of striping the existing parking lot so that we can maximize the space. We propose that we will double that and get up to about 69 – 70 parking spaces in the back lot. At the next committee meeting you should have a preliminary plan, which will show you the exact layout of all of the parking locations. Mr. Stasio also remarked that they are going to add a lot of landscaping when they do this project.

Commissioner Comments

There were none.

Public Comments

There were none.

Recommendation from PRAC regarding Friends of Boileau and Cottage Rehabilitation

Mr. Stasio said that at the November meeting Mr. Scull and the Friends of Boileau had asked the Board for consideration for funding or assistance with the carriage house. By a vote of 6-0 at the meeting of the Parks & Rec. Advisory Council, they are supporting the Friends of Boileau in their quest to revitalize the carriage house at a preliminary cost of \$200,000.00 to \$250,000.00 which is recoverable through monthly rental fees.

Commissioner Spearing has concerns regarding the area being zoned recreational with residential housing on it.

Mr. Stasio said some of the concerns are what the affects of having a tenant on the property with our tax base and how it's zoned, what are our insurance concerns and who would be responsible for resolving any problems that might occur.

Commissioner Romaniello asked what we were doing with other rental space that the Township owns.

Mr. Stasio said that he is not aware of all the rental space the Township owns.

Mr. Dodies replied that the space rented to the Chamber is taxable. It is excluded from the exempt status.

Commissioner Romaniello asked the Solicitor if she is familiar with any other municipality leasing space. The Solicitor responded that she would review our Ordinances reflecting that.

Commissioner Hotchkiss commented that Montgomery County has a Board of Assessment Appeals that currently will give partial exemptions to properties. For example, if there is a caretaker that lives on the property, a partial exemption may be granted.

Pat Stasio suggested that our insurance carrier look at the properties and make a recommendation. The carriage house, if this goes through, will be reconstructed but he believes we should get an opinion from the insurance carrier as to what liability we may have if the property is leased.

Commissioner Valenza stated that using the rent to finance the carriage house makes it less burdensome to the taxpayers and also improves the value of the property.

Richard Booth suggested that John Crawford prepare an analysis of what the expected rent plus costs would be so that you would be able to determine how long the pay-back would be.

Commissioner Romaniello asked that the Solicitor take a look at what some other Municipalities do.

Commissioner Spearing continued this matter to next month for further review and discussion.

PRAC Attendance and Recommendation

Pat Stasio said that each year he provides the Commissioners with an attendance record of members from the past year. There were two members that were not able to participate. It is difficult to have a forum when two members do not attend. Mr. Stasio recommended to the Board to remove the two members since they do not coincide with the By-Laws which read that you must attend fifty percent of the meetings and fifty percent of the special events.

Commissioner Romaniello suggested that the Committee be changed to seven members at-large or one person per ward with perhaps two at-large and cut the Committee down to what is realistic.

Pat Stasio said that, ideally, he would like 15 members that are committed and will attend meetings. There are members in this Committee that are valuable even though they cannot make all of the meetings. Mr. Stasio has no problem with a smaller group if they are committed, however, it would be difficult when there is an event that needs extra volunteers.

Commissioner Spearing suggested that they give it another month to see if two acceptable candidates are found.

David Dodies, Township Manager, suggested that Mr. Stasio send a memo to the Board after he checks the By-Laws as to the order in which replacement can be made.

Pat Stasio stated that typically when an appointment is up the Commissioner of that Ward is notified by the Manager's Office and the Commissioner will call the person in question to see if they would like to be reappointed and then the Commissioner will reappoint them. The two members in question have not responded and maybe it would be appropriate for the Commissioners of those Wards to speak with them and see what their intentions are.

Request by Army for Use of Mill Road Park

Pat Stasio said that the Army sent a letter to the Township asking to use Mill Road Park as an alternate location for their primary assembly area. We are talking times of emergency when their primary area would not be available to them.

Commissioner Spearing stated that he would like to see some other places also be considered. He asked if this proposal is for the Board to permit or deny. Commissioner Spearing asked if Mr. Stasio had an opinion on this.

Mr. Stasio said he wouldn't say no to the Army.

Mr. Dodies said to continue it until next month and have Mr. Stasio check with the Army for more information to report at the February 25th meeting.

Request for use of Mason Mill Park by Willow Grove Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Stasio said that it is called Willow Grove Community Day. Mr. McFatrige sent a letter to the Board of Commissioners asking that May 4th be a Chamber of Commerce Community Day to be held at Masons Mill Park. The significance is that the Commissioners would have to authorize Mr. Stasio to shut the park down for the day to use it as a Chamber event. This has been done in the past.

Commissioner Spearing said that this can be moved for action at the Regular Meeting on February 4, 2008.

Boileau Park Festival Day

Commissioner Spearing commented that this is a very similar request.

Mr. Stasio said that the Friends of Boileau are requesting a Community Day on May 3rd. We are asking that a resolution be passed allowing animals in the park which are currently not allowed. Parking will be available but the field will not be.

Commissioner Spearing said it will get moved for action the 4th of February.

Other Parks & Recreation Items – Holiday events recapped

Mr. Stasio commented on their Santa holiday calls. They made over 110 phone calls and with each phone call they probably spoke to 150 or more children. Last year they spoke to about 60. They have received many accolades for this.

Commissioner Comments

There were no additional Commissioner comments.

Visitor Comments

There were no visitor comments.

ADJOURNMENT: 10:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Heinemann