

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, January 31, 2018 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Spiegelman presiding.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 8:47 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Commissioners SPIEGELMAN, BOWMAN, SCHREIBER, DiPLACIDO, MYERS

Township Manager MANFREDI  
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER  
Township Solicitor CLARKE  
Community Director STROTHER

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, SANCHEZ, BRODSKY, GILLESPIE, HECKER, ZAPPONE, THOMPSON, ROTHMAN, VAHEY

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2017 Public Affairs Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

**PRESENTATION:** None.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

Consider the Transfer of Crosswicks Deed from the Audubon Society to Abington:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to consider the transfer of Crosswicks Deed from the Audubon Society to Abington.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Mr. Andy Oles, Director of Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Oles said we have been working on acquisition of a small property abutting 13-acres of Crosswicks Bird Sanctuary, which is managed by the Audubon Society that will remain as open space wildlife bird sanctuary.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned whether there will be any need for maintenance done by the Township.

Mr. Oles replied maintenance would be minimal such as adding benches and tree-cutting.

Commissioner Rothman thanked everyone involved as it will be beneficial to the Township.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Leigh Altadonna, President of the Wyncote Audubon Society, commented that we are very supportive of this transfer as Wyncote Audubon has been associated with Crosswicks for over 60 years, and we look forward to working with Township's Department of Parks and Recreation.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Consider Resolution No. 18-013 Prohibiting the Location of a Category 4 Licensed Facility within the Township:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to consider Resolution No. 18-013 prohibiting the location of a Category 4 Licensed Facility within the Township.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Ms. Gallagher.

Ms. Gallagher said this is new legislation signed into law by Governor Wolf creating a new category of casinos known as "mini casinos" that are limited in the number of table games and slot machines they can employ. Licenses for these facilities will be granted to corporations already possessing a Category 1, 2 or 3 casino license issued by the Commonwealth. So if Sugarhouse obtains a license they can place a Category 4 Casino within 25 miles of their own facility, but they cannot place one within any other facility, and how current casinos are laid out, that eliminates almost all of Montgomery County and Abington Township from being able to host a Category 4 Casino. This resolution allows the Township to opt-out of having any of those casinos in Abington Township.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Consider Repealing or Amending Chapter 125, Real Estate Registry of the Township's Code of Ordinances that requires Property Owners to register any Deed with the Township following the Deed's Recording with the County Recorder of Deeds and Imposes a Fee for such Registrations:

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Manager Manfredi.

Manager Manfredi said in 2008, the law was changed prohibiting municipalities from registering with some exceptions, and current Township ordinance allows deed registration that serves a valuable purpose. A memo from Township Treasurer suggests why the Township should continue this practice and staff of Engineering Department also feels we should continue this practice because it keeps control of deeds and information available to the Township.

An issue arose when residents questioned why the service was duplicated, so this matter was placed on agenda to consider whether or not to continue this practice.

Commissioner Spiegelman clarified that the Township charges a fee as well as the County Recorder of Deeds. Is that correct?

Solicitor Clarke replied yes, Abington Township residents are paying two fees. Only eight municipalities in the County do not go through County Record of Deeds Office. If Township repeals this practice, the Township would then enter into agreement with the County that, once the deed is recorded the County Recorder of Deeds, they would send to the Township the recorded information. The Township currently requires a separate register of deed along with a \$10 fee.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Gillespie said the Township gets the information sooner, whereas from the County, it could take several months and the Township would lose control.

Manager Manfredi said if the issue is cost, perhaps the Board would consider reducing the amount of fee paid by the resident.

Commissioner Bowman commented that the Township does not need to register deeds as we have the County of Recorder of Deeds and the County should be required to notify Abington Township on registered deeds.

Commissioner Myers said when deeds are recorded with the Township in a timely manner there is a process involving the Fire Marshal's Office in regards to smoke detectors.

Assistant Fire Marshal John Rohrer replied when the title company files the deed with the Township's Engineering Department, they also submit affidavit for street address; smoke detector and carbon monoxide detectors verifying that safety equipment is installed in the single-family residence or twin homes.

Commissioner Myers said it is not a matter of the \$10 fee as it is the service the Township provides with those deeds being recorded with the Township.

Commissioner Spiegelman questioned the time it takes for the County to send deed information to the Township.

Manager Manfredi replied he would need to contact the County Recorder of Deeds.

Commissioner Gillespie added that it takes three to six months depending on how busy the County is.

Commissioner Kline said this past December he received two separate emails from residents of his ward who received letters from Township Engineering Department about not registering deeds. The residents did not understand why they had to pay the \$10 fee and these fees are not a revenue generator for the Township. After speaking with a rep from the County Recorder of Deeds, the transfer of deeds can be sent quickly to the Township. He feels this is a "business" that the Township should be getting out of and it is an unnecessary fee for Township residents.

Commissioner Bowman agreed with Commissioner Kline as deeds have been returned a lot quicker than they used to be.

Commissioner DiPlacido agreed with both Commissioners Kline and Bowman as it is an unnecessary extra step.

Commissioner Schreiber said she would like to have more information on this matter such as making sure there would be no concern from Fire Marshal's Office as well as the timing issue.

Consensus by Public Affairs Committee was to look into this matter further.

Consider Establishing a Policy Authorizing the Township Manager and Township Solicitor to Approve Settling County Assessment Appeals Negotiated by the Abington School District and Setting a Dollar Amount that Requires the Board of Commissioners Approval

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to consider establishing a policy authorizing the Township Manager and Township Solicitor to approve settling County Assessment Appeals negotiated by the Abington School District and setting a dollar amount that requires the Board of Commissioners approval.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Manager Manfredi.

Manager Manfredi said the School Board sends their Solicitor to every assessment appeal and the Township then gets requests from their Solicitor suggesting settlements on appeals that effects Township tax revenues. There is no policy established for authorization to approve those settlements based upon a dollar amount threshold.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for suggested threshold amount.

Solicitor Clarke replied he can work parameters for a suggested dollar amount. There has never been a policy established for the Township to bring it to the Board's attention and technically it is settling litigation and the Board should be voting on it.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Sanchez asked about the frequency for request for settlement.

Manager Manfredi replied there are not a great number of them and they come in spurts.

Commissioner Schreiber asked what is the dollar amount?

Manager Manfredi replied most are in the range of \$600-\$5,000. He would like to work with the Solicitors for the School District and adopt a policy similar to the School District, and if there is an excessive of \$10,000 or more, it should then be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked would the motion need to be amended to set a dollar amount?

Solicitor Clarke said the motion does not need to be amended. The Board can set the dollar amount and list it in the motion.

Commissioner Kline said \$10,000 in total Township revenue is about a \$4 million dollar change in assessed value and he would like the Board to have some information on property values of the Township, which affects future budgets, so he feels \$10,000 is a large threshold.

Commissioner Vahey asked for a monthly report to be provided to the Board on this matter.

Commissioner Bowman commented that a \$5,000 threshold is fine.

Consensus by Public Affairs Committee was to set the dollar amount at \$5,000 threshold.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that she feels residents need more information on this matter.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any general comments relating to Public Affairs.

Former Commissioner Michael O'Connor, 826 Norfolk Road, said the Township back in 2007 or 2008 purchased a 5.2 acre tract from the Somerford Corporation with \$2.2 million dollars of County Open Space money. Community meetings were held and there have been input from various organizations and a master plan was developed and adopted by the Board. Is there any plan to move forward with implementation of this project?

Manager Manfredi said he has been trying to schedule a meeting with Mr. O'Connor in regards to this project.

Andy Oles, Director of Parks & Recreation Department, added that is property located across from Alverthorpe Manor that is open space.

Mr. O'Connor said the plans have been done; trees have been marked and it only needs implementation.

Commissioner Kline noted that the Commissioner of the ward should also be included in that meeting.

Commissioner Myers agreed with Mr. O'Connor as there are many parks that have master plans with no action taken due to not having money for implementation. There was also a master plan done for Crestmont Park that she would like to look into as well as a master plan for Hillside.

Commissioner Luker added that Crestmont Park master plan includes the clubhouse currently under construction and almost completed.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, requested that the neighbors be included in meetings. Also, she expressed concern about changed rules for speaking on consent agenda items.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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