

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, April 4, 2018 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Spiegelman presiding.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 9:20 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, GILLESPIE, HECKER, ZAPPONE, THOMPSON, ROTHMAN, VAHEY

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2018 Public Affairs Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

Library Board:

Mr. Thomas Tyler, President of the Board of Trustees of the Abington Free Library, reported that he will be attending the Public Affairs Committee meetings every quarter. Also, there is a vacancy on the Library Board since November and he encouraged the Board of Commissioners to fill that seat as we do not have a full Board compliment.

Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) Report:

Jennifer Sherwood, Chairperson of the EAC, gave a power point presentation describing that the EAC that is appointed by the Board of Commissioners who help to protect the environment in Abington Township. Presentation included objectives; goals; sustainability plan; water issues; open space and educating the public. EAC programs are Shop Local Initiative, Go Green Rewards Card and Rain Barrel the Town. EAC works to improve water quality; Clean Water Act and assist with MS4 requirements.

Also presented were upcoming Earth Day events and information about the Audubon Bird Town. EAC is looking for nominees for the Montgomery Award and deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup>. Also, in recognition of the EAC's volunteer efforts in 2017, we received the Montgomery County Planning Advocate Award mostly for our lead role in the STAR Community Sustainability Plan in which Ms. Sherwood presented to the Board of Commissioners.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

PA-01-041218:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve submitting a grant application to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission for a feasibility study for a new sidewalk project at Old Welsh Road in the Willow Grove section of the Township.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Community Director, Mr. Van Strother.

Mr. Strother said in 2015, the Board of Commissioners approved of the use of CDBG funds to construct a sidewalk for a limited section of Old Welsh Road specifically the 2700 block. After approval, his department moved forward to engineer the drawings and prepare to go out for bid. During the preparation of bid specs, we received comments from residents who had mixed emotions, so we put the project on hold. Drawings were completed and permits were secured from PennDOT and we planned to move forward at a later date.

In 2017, Willow Grove Mall reps conducted a public meeting during which time public comments were made about public improvements to traffic and pedestrian access way. With those public comments along with previous Board action from 2015, we are looking at expand the scope; however, still improve the limited area within the upcoming budget year, but there is grant opportunity to perform a feasibility study to extend sidewalk all the way out to Fitzwatertown Road.

So the motion before the committee is to consider authorization for Township staff and Township Manager or his designee to submit application to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Bowman questioned whether sidewalks would be on just one side of the street on the north side.

Mr. Strother replied yes, and it is continuous because sidewalks go all the way down to the mall down to Easton Road and wraps around. It would complete sidewalk continuation that this section of Old Welsh Road has and terminate at Fitzwatertown Road.

Commissioner Bowman commented that it is a good idea as it is too narrow for pedestrians and bicyclists and he supports it.

Commissioner Myers said this was revisited at the mall meeting, and due to the new movie coming to the mall, it will increase foot-traffic. This particular stretch of road from Coolidge Avenue down to Fitzwatertown for most of it there are no sidewalks on either side and it is extremely narrow and very dangerous to walk there. This would be a huge enhancement for the Township and the neighborhood that is all residential. This is in President's Luker's ward and the lower section closer to Fitzwatertown is the ward that she represents and she hopes it moves forward.

Commissioner Schreiber clarified that the rendering in addition to sidewalks shows new retaining walls, so what exists now will be taken down and new walls will be constructed not just sidewalks. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied that is correct.

Commissioner Myers said there is only one property that has a retaining wall and the way these properties are situated some type of retaining wall would be necessary.

Mr. Strother continued that no local tax dollars would be used. This is just to request permission through the Township Manager's Office to submit application for funds for feasibility study to identify all components to successfully complete the project and not for construction at this time.

Note: Commissioner Zappone left the meeting at 9:39 p.m.

Commissioner Thompson asked could this be extended to include crosswalks?

Mr. Strother replied we can look into it as that would be part of the engineering study.

Commissioner Kline clarified that when this was discussed in 2015 it was only for the 2700 block of Old Welsh. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes, in 2015 funds in the CDBG budget was just for the limited block of 2700.

Commissioner Kline questioned what the purpose was for just doing the 2700 block at that time.

Mr. Strother replied because that was the eligible area for CDBG funds. Project scope begins at the 2700 block of Old Welsh all the way down to Fitzwatertown Road.

Commissioner Kline clarified that part of Fitzwatertown Road is part of the 2800 block. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Commissioner Kline asked is all of that part of the community development area?

Mr. Strother replied no.

Commissioner Kline clarified that the grant money for the feasibility study can be used outside of the community development area. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied for administrative purposes doing a planning study, yes.

Commissioner Kline asked about construction.

Mr. Strother replied no.

Commissioner Kline questioned where the funds would come from for sidewalks to be constructed outside the community development area.

Mr. Strother replied that is part of this effort to do a feasibility study. Montgomery County has a local share account that is available in the amount of \$200,000, which is an eligible grant opportunity that we should pursue for the 2700 block of Old Welsh all the way down to Fitzwatertown Road as well as others to be pursued.

Commissioner Kline clarified that all those grants would require some kind of match. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes, it would require some kind of match.

Commissioner Kline said he is concerned about this because just this time last year we had a subdivision of the 2800 block of Old Welsh Road and it was advocated for the developer that there would be a sidewalk waiver given and now we will be potentially installing sidewalks in this very same area. Sidewalks should be installed and there should not be waivers for it.

So, now the Township will have to afford putting money out for sidewalks when we could have had the developer install them for at least the existing home and subdivided property. Also, has it been discussed with the neighbors about the maintenance of sidewalks and retaining walls because if this were to happen will the Township be relieved of the follow-through of maintenance on those retaining walls and sidewalks?

Mr. Strother replied we discussed that the next step would be to meet with residents, who would be impacted, but because of time restraints the application is due in two weeks, and sequentially it needs a resolution attached to the application.

Commissioner Kline said he is fine with making the areas walkable, but it would have been great to have begun that last year when the subdivision was in front of us.

Commissioner Myers said at the time, this was long before the mall had come up with their new development, and at that time, it would have been a sidewalk to nowhere which is exactly what was stated at the meeting and she could not see making the homeowner putting in sidewalks when there were no sidewalks nearby. If it is part of a plan then that is something different, but there was no way at that time to see into the future, and this is needed for the full length and not just in front of one or two properties.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item PA-02-041218:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve submitting a grant application to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission for the Transportation & Community Development Initiative to create an Easton Road Revitalization Plan.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Mr. Strother.

Mr. Strother said in 2009, the Board of Commissioners applied for a grant with Montgomery County Planning Commission to prepare a Montgomery County Revitalization Plan titled for the Roslyn Community, but it is better titled for the commercial corridor along Easton Road and that was completed in 2010, and there is a need to update that plan.

Before the Board tonight is a map to extend that corridor from Hamilton Avenue all the way up to Old Welsh Road to do a study and update the improvements that were done since 2010. He has a copy of the 2010 plan for review by the Board, but outside of that, this is a request for the same funding source from the DVRPC to apply for the grant.

Manager Manfredi said the reason why it will be applied to the commercial corridor along Easton Road is because Roslyn is not in an area applicable for CDBG funds.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber clarified this will go from the train station all the way down to Welsh Road. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked if anything is being done different from the 2010 plan.

Mr. Strother replied nothing is being done different, but there has been improvements following the 2010 plan and there is a need to update that plan of what was implemented as well as future goals.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Youth Meal Program:

Mr. Strother said last year, through approval by the Board, we conducted a Summer Youth Meal Program for school-age children from 1-18 years old, and we will be having that program again this year in Crestmont Park. Township Manager Manfredi and Assistant Township Manager Weymeyer found new and improved ways to deliver the services and he will provide further updates.

Item PA-03-041218:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to advertise Ordinance No. 2154 adopting a certain inter-municipal agreement for the purchase of pool chemicals and supplies among numerous municipalities.

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

Mr. Oles said this would allow us to enter into a consortium buying the same chemicals at a cheaper price.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Sanchez commented that he wholeheartedly supports this item.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item PA-04-041218:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to accept the Watershed Restoration and Protection Program grant from the Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) in the amount of \$100,000.00 to support the Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary Project. The grant is for the construction and engineering relating to the expansion of stormwater basin and streambank stabilization at the Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Amy Montgomery Director of Engineering & Code said this came through last year and the next item on the agenda also relates to this item.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item PA-04-041218:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve the application for a grant for the Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary Basin Retrofit and Stream Restoration in the amount of \$250,000.00.

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

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item PA-06-041218:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to authorize proper Township officials to contract with Louis F. Biase, Landscape Contractor, for the 2018 service year in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for the Business District Landscape Maintenance Contract. Funds will be drawn from economic development capital accounts reserved for this purpose.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Bowman asked for the reason why Mr. Biase was awarded this contract.

Manager Manfredi replied three years ago, bids were solicited and instead of awarding the bid and enter into contract for each of the three years, the bid was awarded and the Township did not enter into contract, and then each year, the Board authorized the work to be done in accordance with the bid. Process will be revised in the future.

Commissioner Kline asked were code issues with this property rectified.

Manager Manfredi replied yes, they have been rectified by Mr. Biase.

Solicitor Clarke added that the property was not in compliance and certain items were brought to the property owner's attention and he rectified the issues. Code Enforcement staff determined that after changes were made the property was in compliance and it has not been appealed.

Commissioner Kline asked about any further complaints from property owners.

Solicitor Clarke replied there have been further complaints, but the property is in compliance and the property owner who had been complaining was notified of the appeal process and he does not know if they availed themselves to that appeal process, but he does not think so.

Manager Manfredi added that the matter has been resolved.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that she “will continue to protest economic development or any other funds being used for specific properties.”

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

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

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern about citations being presented, and she asked about Star Communities.

Commissioner Spiegelman replied Star Communities is a national rating system and it has been an EAC initiative to obtain a Star Communities rating.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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