

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Spiegelman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners SPIEGELMAN, BOWMAN, SCHREIBER, ROTHMAN, KALINOSKI

Township Manager LEFEVRE
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Director of Parks and Recreation WENDELL

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, MYERS, SANCHEZ, GILLESPIE, DiPLACIDO, BOWMAN

MINUTES: Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2016 Public Affairs Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Marian Stroup, Montgomery County Outreach Coordinator, Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission

Ms. Stroup said for the past year, we have been located in an office of the Abington Baptist Church and we help not only homeless people, but those who are struggling to keep their homes.

The Sunday Breakfast Mission was established back in 1878 and it is a faith-based nonprofit organization providing services in Philadelphia, Bucks and Montgomery Counties. We receive calls directly from those who were referred to us and we provide assistance by helping with utility payments, rent and how to navigate the system if they are going to be homeless. We also inform them of the locations of food cupboards and other agencies available in Montgomery County that they can contact for assistance. We work with them on a one-on-one basis, which is something other agencies are not always able to do.

We collaborate with other agencies in Montgomery County and there will be a summer food service program that is available through the USDA where organizations, churches or other agencies can become a sponsor to provide lunches for children or people who are struggling with food insecurities during the summertime. In the wintertime, during the school year, schools provide meals for children, but during the summer is when children struggle.

The Sunday Breakfast Mission is planning to hold a workshop and Regional Conference in October 2016 for small organizations and churches in the Eastern Montgomery County area to provide information on what agencies are available such as “Your Way Home” to help those who are struggling.

Commissioner Spiegelman thanked Ms. Stroup for her presentation tonight and questioned whether State Representative’s Office as well as the State Senator’s Office is aware of this program. Also, he questioned whether there is an email, newsletter or presence on social media about this organization.

Ms. Stroup replied she does not know at this time. This organization has a website and Facebook page.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber commented that she has worked with Ms. Stroup many times and she appreciates how well Marian works with people and thanked her for it. How would a church, VFW, synagogue that had a kitchen get the word out to residents?

Ms. Stroup replied they need to contact the USDA to be qualified as well as get the food to provide the meals, and the Mission can be listed on the Township website as well as newsletters of the Commissioners and Township Facebook page. Churches are another area where information can be provided.

Commissioner Luker commented that the name, “Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission,” does not do it justice as to all of the things this organization does. It is more of a resource center, and he thanked Ms. Stroup for her work.

Ms. Stroup replied that the Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission also operates downtown Philadelphia at 13th and Vine where they operate a 180-bed shelter for men. We also have a women’s center in Germantown and thrift stores in Bucks and Montgomery Counties as well as at Olney and Rising Sun Avenue in Philadelphia.

Commissioner Myers asked do the thrift shops help fund this organization and is this organization a nonprofit, 501C3.

Ms. Stroup replied yes, we are funded by donations and the operations of the thrift shops and take no government funding, and we are a nonprofit, 501C3.

Parks and Recreation Report:

Commissioner Spiegelman congratulated Director of Parks and Recreation, Mr. Doug Wendell on winning the “Abington Community Task Force – Citizens that Care” Award.

Mr. Wendell announced there are three upcoming events; the first is our trip to Annapolis, Maryland on July 16, 2016 and ticket price is \$50 and the other is the U.S. Open Tennis Championship trip to New York City on September 1, 2016 and ticket price is \$125. Also, the spring programs are now open for registration.

Resolution No. 16-019 – Supporting a Grant Application to TCDI for ‘Walk, Park, Train Abington’

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt Resolution No. 16-019 approving Abington Township to submit an application to the Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI). The grant submission will support the ‘Walk, Park, Train’ concept of the Master Bike Plan.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Manager LeFevre.

Manager LeFevre explained that this is a grant opportunity with a portion of the grant implementing a section of the bike plan. There are two additional components in that we identified gaps in our sidewalk system to promote pedestrian mobility and to study a quarter mile radius around the train station to identify zoning opportunities for transportation-oriented development.

The funding will come from DVRPC who funded the Township’s Master Bike Plan, and he feels we are in a favorable position to gain funding.

The resolution before the Board is to authorize Township staff to apply for the grant, if we are successful, staff will come back before the Board seeking approval of the grant as well as approval for the Township’s matching share.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Kline questioned the timeframe for when the Township would hear about the grant. He also asked about the TAP Grant.

Manager LeFevre replied he does not know, and there has been no notice about the TAP grant.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern that she feels “the people here were not keeping the Colonade within the laws of the Township.”

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Penn State Abington/Abington Township Scholarship Program Guidelines

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to approve the Penn State Abington/Abington Township Scholarship Program Guidelines setting forth the Purpose, Criteria, Requirements, Guidelines, Amount, Timeline and Award of the \$30,000 annual allocation.

Commissioner Spiegelman called on Manager LeFevre.

Manager LeFevre explained that through the land development process for the Penn State dormitories, reps of Penn State indicated that the Township could expect to receive approximately \$722,000 in permit and applications fees if the dorms were to be approved. After it was approved, Penn State officials became aware that they were not legally obligated to pay \$722,000 as a State institution.

Nevertheless, Penn State is fully committed to making the Township whole on that project and will pay those fees. Township Solicitor is working with Legal Counsel representing Penn State in drafting two agreements; a permit fee agreement in the amount of approximately \$260,000 for fees they are required to pay, and the remaining \$460,000 will be paid as a one-time impact fee.

Penn State is looking for credit for funds they currently pay the Township in which they pay \$70,000 a year in total for police overtime, park maintenance and for their share for Emergency Management Director. We hope to expand that by an initial \$30,000 for this scholarship program and the remaining funds would be a one-time payment.

He had hoped to come before the Board with both agreements in place at the same time, but it did not happen that way, so hopefully they will be in place by the meeting in June.

The reason this is on the agenda now is that we are hoping to have the scholarship program in place for the next school year beginning in August until May, so we need to approve it this evening.

Dr. Sandler came up with the concept of this program because over the years she has been approached by members of this Board and previous Boards about a scholarship program for students who are Abington residents to attend Penn State primarily based on financial need, but not limited to that, and they would be open to those who are disabled or returning Veterans, etc.

Initially, Penn State reps wanted the Township to administer the program; however, we would not have access to the funds, but accept applications; process applications and select the winners. We realized that would not work for a number of reasons, so we suggested that Penn State assume the responsibility in processing of the applications and select the winners.

However, reps of Penn State asked that Township staff accept the applications, track what wards the applicants were coming from, and over the years what wards were successful in receiving the scholarships.

Township staff drafted the guidelines with changes made by reps of Penn State and the application was prepared by reps of Penn State.

The basic structure of the program is five, \$5,000 scholarships awarded for the school year and \$5,000 retained for emergency cases. In the event there are no emergency cases, they would consider allocating additional \$1,000 for those five applicants for books or other expenses or carry those funds over to the following year. Residency requirement is that the applicant has to be a resident of Abington for at least one year. However, the application has a component where the Township Commissioners would sign off on the applications in support in which he feels would be problematic for a number of reasons.

Commissioner Spiegelman agreed that it would be problematic for the Commissioners to sign off on applications and it should be removed. He asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Schreiber agreed that the component about the Commissioners signing off on applications should be removed, and she clarified that the Board will be voting on the amended draft of the guidelines. Is that correct?

Manager LeFevre replied that is correct.

Commissioner Schreiber clarified that there will be a financial stipulation. Is that correct?

Manager LeFevre replied yes, financial need will be a component, but it will not be limited to just that.

Commissioner Kalinoski asked will the Township promote the scholarship program?

Manager LeFevre replied Penn State will publicize it internally for its students and we would hope the Commissioners will promote it in their email blasts or newsletters as well as it will be posted on Township website with a link to the application. Tracking of the wards will be done by Township staff and then turned over to Penn State.

Commissioner Bowman also agreed that the component about the Commissioners signing off on applications should be removed from the application process.

Commissioner Spiegelman commented that he feels it is a good starting point for this program.

Commissioner Rothman agreed that the about the Commissioners signing off on applications should be removed from the application process, and he clarified that the Board will be able to review the amended final copy of the guidelines prior to voting on it. Is that correct?

Manager LeFevre replied amended draft will be sent to the Board prior to the full Board meeting next week.

Commissioner Sanchez clarified that the annual allocation will not be netted against permit fees. Is that correct?

Manager LeFevre replied Penn State will be expanding by a little more than 30% of what they are currently paying the Township and will continue to do so in the future.

Commissioner Kalinoski commented that this is a win-win situation for Abington and Penn State.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern that she feels she is being "taxed to set up labor to run a scholarship program."

Commissioner Spiegelman replied no one is paying tax dollars to run this program. This is a program that Penn State Abington is providing along with a few minutes of time that it will take Manager LeFevre to send paperwork to Penn State Abington.

Manager LeFevre agreed that there is no Township tax dollars involved in this program. These are Penn State funds and this program will be administered by Penn State. It will only take a very small fraction of his time sending emails as opposed to the amount of time that he spends emailing and answering questions from one particular resident of this town that greatly exceeds any time he will spend on this program.

Raymond Bell, 2076 Parkview Avenue, referring to the statement about Penn State asking the Township to evaluate who will receive the scholarships; how would that be done without privacy issues being a factor.

Manager LeFevre replied the Township will not be going to as we realized early on that the Township is not equipped to handle the process of determining recipients. So we turned that over to Penn State who has fulltime employees to handle the process. The Township will just collect applications; collate them by ward and turn them over to Penn State.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any general comments relating to Public Affairs. There were none.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael LeFevre, Township Manager

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