

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, May 3, 2017 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Spiegelman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 8:58 p.m.

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

Township Solicitor CLARKE
Director of Parks and Recreation OLES
Community Director STROTHER

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, MYERS, FARREN, HECKER, SANCHEZ, MARKMAN, DiPLACIDO, ZAPPONE, GILLESPIE

MINUTES: Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2017 Public Affairs Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Abington Art Center Report:

Hana Iverson, new Executive Director of Abington Art Center, provided a copy of Art Center's summer brochure and gave a slide presentation on Abington Art Center's new vision to the Board.

Parks and Recreation Report:

Mr. Andy Oles, Director of Parks and Recreation, announced that summer tickets are on sale now at the office. Trip to Annapolis, Maryland will be on Saturday, May 20th. Wednesday, July 12th will be a trip to Washington, D.C. Montgomery County Senior Games will begin next week, which is a multiple-municipal initiative, and last year, 450 seniors participated. Info can be found on www.montcoseniorgames.com. Also, Alverthorpe Park's summer hours are 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Commissioner DiPlacido asked for an update on the new mowing schedule for fields.

Mr. Oles replied there have been issues with the grass-cutting of fields as we have a new contractor, but he met with the contractor onsite to show them what the Township is looking for, and he will be checking up on them.

Datacenter Upgrade

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski authorizing proper Township officials to contract with MJM Systems, Inc. for a five (5) year term in an amount not to exceed \$160,000.00 for the Datacenter Upgrade. Funds will be drawn from Capital Accounts reserved for this purpose.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Kline asked for the budgeted amount for this project.

Nathan Vasserman replied there was approximately \$110,000-115,000 budgeted as there was money leftover from projects that were not done last year. Cost came in higher because we thought we would use existing hardware, but we did not go that route and we also thought we could save money in the long run by opting in for five years for licenses, warranties, etc. Finance agreement is \$2,200 a month for 60-months.

Commissioner Kline asked for more information to be provided to the Board prior to its meeting next week.

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

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Resolution No. 17-016 – Authorizing the Disposition of Certain Administrative Office Records

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Kalinoski to adopt Resolution No. 17-016, authorizing the disposition of Right-To-Know requests dated April 2015 and prior.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned whether a Right-To-Know request can be filed for review of Right-To-Know requests.

Solicitor Clarke replied yes, as it is a document.

Commissioner Kalinoski questioned whether the Township charges for copies of documents of Right-To-Know requests, and if so, is it the maximum of what State law allows.

Solicitor Clarke replied yes, and the amount of the fee is also per State law.

Commissioner Schreiber asked does the Township need to keep those records for any certain length of time.

Solicitor Clarke replied under the Record Retention Act, the Township systematically disposes of records after the time period expires.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that she filed a Right-To-Know request for these Right-To-Know requests.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Resolution No. 17-017 – Gerrymandering of Districts

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Rothman to adopt Resolution No. 17-017 in support of a Citizen’s Commission for Legislative and Congressional redistricting.

Commissioner Spiegelman noted that he provided materials to the Board from Fair Districts PA, www.fairdistrictspa.com asking each municipality to support this legislation, and there is a Fair Districts PA meeting to be held on Wednesday, May 17th from 7-9 p.m. at the Abington Friends Meetinghouse located at 520 Meetinghouse Road, Jenkintown.

This resolution supports the creation of a nonpartisan, nonpolitical citizen’s commission to handle the redistricting of State Legislative Districts, State Senate Districts and Congressional Districts that occurs after every census. The legislation is in two forms; State Senate Bill 22 and State House Bill 722.

He asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Rothman said we, as a Board and as a community, wish to take a stand and work towards making politics less partisan, and he approves and supports this resolution.

Commissioner Bowman commented that he supports the resolution as he would like it clarified who our U.S. representative is on any given year.

Commissioner Zappone questioned whether this is mandated by the State.

Solicitor Clarke replied no, it is not.

Commissioner Zappone asked who does the selection process?

Commissioner Sanchez replied the new Bill is modeled after a similar plan in California to begin the process of changing the State Constitution to create a new 11-member redistricting commission composed of citizen volunteers without ties to elected officials who meet additional criteria to be specified by the legislature.

Using those criteria, the Pennsylvania Secretary of State would create three pools of qualified candidates with one pool representing each of the major parties and a third composed of a third party or independent voters. No elected officials, candidates, political party officials, their aides or spouses would be eligible to serve nor would anyone who has recently served in such a capacity, and Legislative leaders from both Houses and parties would be able to strike a designated number of candidates from each pool.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Rebecca Landau, 739 Baeder Road, commented that the Pennsylvania Legislature now draws the district lines for voting and this is a conflict of interest because it is in the legislature's interest to draw the line to keep itself in power. Montgomery County has a population that warrants enough to have a representative in Congress, but we are split into five districts and we do not have a representative for us. If it was an independent commission, they would not have access to "voting individual information" and this would eliminate a lot of the bias and polarization. The way the district lines are drawn now they do not comply with some enforced regulations.

As of April 26th, there have been more municipalities writing resolutions in favor of redrawing the district lines, and in Montgomery County, there are at least five municipalities who have passed resolutions in favor of reforming the redrawing of the district lines. She urged Abington Township to join those other municipalities and adopt this resolution supporting a Citizen's Commission for Legislative and Congressional Redistricting as it is the right thing to do to give the citizens a vote in our democratic process.

Jim Sharp, 2073 Oakdale Avenue, thanked Commissioner Spiegelman for bringing forth this resolution. It's important for municipalities to speak for its citizens and he urged the Board to be a leader and pass the resolution as it is the right thing to do.

Nina Bisbee, 160 Woodpecker Road, reiterated how important this is for democracy and how polarized the country actually is, and she feels gerrymandering is at the root of it and we all have to send a message that it has to stop.

Dan Keiffer, 2020 Maplewood Avenue, expressed his support for this resolution.

Meryl Hyatt, 1829 Allen Lane, agreed with what everyone has said.

Annette Baultz, 1259 Cox Road, agreed with everyone that gerrymandering is a big threat to democracy, and she found that "Pennsylvania has a terrible reputation for it."

Anett Petrich, 228 Cadwalader Avenue, said she hopes the Board supports this effort and it very important that everyone knows that their vote counts.

Mark Schaffer, 23 Brookline Court, Ambler, PA., said he does not live in Abington, but he will be the one making the presentation for Fair Districts, and he will also make that presentation available to the Public Affairs Committee.

Commissioner Zappone stated that he supports this resolution.

Commissioner Farren said the meeting is being held on May 17th and would it behoove us to wait until after that meeting to take a vote as it would be an opportunity to gather input that may provide more insight into the discussion and then come back next month. He is in favor of this resolution, but he feels it would be more logical to have it follow in a chronological order.

Commissioner Spiegelman said we will have access to all information and the idea is to build momentum for a critical mass to get as many municipalities across the Commonwealth to move on this and get this done. Both State Senate Bill 22 and State House Bill 722 were introduced with bipartisan sponsorship and before we know it the next census will be here.

Commissioner Farren asked how many municipalities passed this resolution?

Paula Schaffer, Coordinator for Montgomery County Fair Districts PA, 23 Brookline Court, Ambler, PA., replied 58 municipalities in the State of Pennsylvania passed this resolution and five in Montgomery County.

Commissioner Farren questioned whether there was a community presentation in each of the five municipalities.

Ms. Schaffer replied no.

Commissioner Kalinoski commented there is no financial impact for the Township. It will be a long process so getting it started now is a good idea, and he supports this resolution.

Commissioner Rothman said we need to pass this because it is the right thing to do and we need to do it now.

Commissioner Zappone agreed that passing this resolution is the right thing to do.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

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

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern that she feels “Abington residents are paying for things that other people are using.”

ADJOURNMENT: 9:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin S. Barron, Assistant Secretary

sev