

The stated meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held as a Zoom webinar and teleconference on Thursday, February 11, 2021 with Vice President Hecker presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:21 p.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners THOMPSON, BRODSKY, BOLE, CARSWELL, ROTHMAN, VAUGHN, MYERS, ZAPPONE, BOWMAN, DiPLACIDO, WINEGRAD, VAHEY, SCHREIBER, HECKER, SPIEGELMAN

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 14, 2021.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

PRESENTATIONS:

Comprehensive Plan Update:

Mr. Michael Narcowich, Assistant Section Chief of Community Planning with the MCPC, provided an update on Vision 2035 Comprehensive Plan for Abington Township. Official logo was presented that will be used for branding, promotional material, and advertising for public outreach. Two components of the process are public outreach and timeline/next steps. The team has been working on the plan for a little over a year that is chaired by Commissioner Thompson along with members of various backgrounds who have provided insight, advice, and critical thinking.

Four workshops were held during the first round of public outreach that helped developed goals, the vision and begin the process of reaching as many people as possible. The workshops were held in the four corners of the Township: Edge Hill Fire House, Crestmont Clubhouse, McKinley Elementary, and Rydal East Elementary on the dates as noted. Those who attended were encouraged to place a dot on the map to indicate where they live to provide a sense of how many were reached across the Township. Instant polling, Word Clouds and Poll Everywhere apps allow questions to be asked and answered using their cellphones providing instant results for sharing.

Results showed that the public would like to preserve community services, parks and open space, and the character of the community. Also, they would like to enhance transportation in the Township for safety in residential neighborhoods as well as on Routes 611 and 232, and to make it easier and safer for bicycling and walking. Also, the public was asked what they would like to transform, and the results were transportation such as walkability as well as the environment and sustainability such as greater use of alternative energy, more green buildings, and more green/landscaped areas.

In defining the vision, the public was asked to use three adjectives to describe an attractive residential community and the reply was safe, great schools, diverse, clean, green, great parks and inclusive. The public was also asked what chapter should be emphasized and the reply was economic development and revitalization; also, what would be another chapter to add and reply was sustainability (holistic) and environmental sustainability, which will be incorporated into the environmental management and resilience chapter as a special component. Diversity, equity, and inclusion also received support and will be interwoven into the chapters of the plan.

Next steps: 9 of 14 chapters are in draft form as listed with five remaining noting that special attention will be placed on environmental management and resilience as well as the Township's history and historic preservation. Timeline going forward includes internal review by the MCPC of the draft chapters; public outreach on transportation improvements; economic development, public outreach on future land use; parks and open space; implementation; draft of final chapters and formal vetting.

Per the MPC, the adoption process includes review by the Township's Planning Commission, then forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for review; public advertisement and soliciting of comments from School District officials and contiguous municipalities; and then schedule a public hearing, and if there are no major changes, the Board may consider adoption. Also, referenced in the plan will be the stormwater management plan as well as comprehensive recreation-parks and open space plan. More information: www.abingtonpa.gov/vision2035.

Vice President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson thanked Mr. Narcowich and all members of the Comprehensive Plan Development Team who have taken part in the process, and despite the challenges of this past year, they have done a heroic job in keeping the process moving forward, and he looks forward to working with all of them while moving through the next five chapters. He encouraged everyone to take part in the public engagement sessions that will be held over the next few months to make your voice heard as this plan is for the entire community of Abington Township.

Commissioner Bole thanked Commissioner Thompson and Mr. Narcowich for their leadership and work on the plan. He is excited to see that sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion will be incorporated into the future of the Township.

President Spiegelman also thanked Commissioner Thompson and Mr. Narcowich and the team for all their work.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:

Lora Lehmann, resident, asked for “presentations to be made in committee meetings with proper speaking rights.” Also, she expressed concern about the number of grant projects of Briar Bush and about preserving green space; and she asked whether Hunter Soccer put funds aside to return the field to natural.

Cathy Gauthier, member of the Planning Commission, questioned whether the draft chapters of the Comp Plan are available for public review. Also, she suggested that the housing chapter may need to be revised based on the 2020 Census.

Manager Manfredi replied that all documents will be posted on the Comp Plan webpage when completed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Consider and discuss accepting Renew Design Group, Inc.’s Professional Service Proposal for the Briar Bush Master Site Plan Implementation Grant: Design & Engineering in the amount of \$29,800 and authorize the Township Manager to execute:

Manager Manfredi introduced Mark Fallon, Director of Briar Bush Nature Center, who has been working on this project for some time along with the employees and the Friends of Briar Bush who work diligently to not only keep Briar Bush green, but also natural.

Mr. Fallon said this project began with the planning process where several public workshops were held with public comment sessions using a grant through DCNR to ask the community what they would like to see at Briar Bush Nature Center in the future. Responses were that most want Briar Bush to stay natural and feel like the woods, so we are committed to that version, and there will be no addition to the footprint of any buildings or parking lot. Also, this project will include new stormwater management facilities.

Briar Bush has a new matching implementation grant through DCNR to construct four priority components of the Master Site Plan, and Renew Design Group, Inc. was the second lowest bidder for design and engineering in which this firm has more experience in landscape architecture and that is what we are looking for.

Vice President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Vahey commented that this seems to be a good proposal and recommended advancing this item to the Board of Commissioners meeting next month without any further committee process.

Commissioner Schreiber commented that this process began in 2018 and the match for this grant will not cost the Township anything as it is from Friends of Briar Bush and volunteer hours. She also recommended that this item be moved to the Board of Commissioners meeting next month.

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Vahey to move this agenda item forward to the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting on March 11, 2021.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Consider and discuss approving the Five-Year Winter Traffic Services Agreement with Pennsylvania Department of Transportation:

Vice President Hecker announced that this item was previously approved this past October, so no action is needed.

Consider a motion to approve authorizing advertisement of Ordinance #XXXX - an ordinance amending Chapter 156 - "Vehicles and Traffic," Article II - "Traffic Regulations," Section 11 - "Turns at Intersections," Section 14 - "Stop Intersections," and Article III - "Parking Regulations," Section 28 - "Special Purpose Parking Zones" to add a new Section 156-11.5 - "Turning Traffic Must Yield to Pedestrians (Left)," to add a Turning Traffic Must Yield to Pedestrians (Left) sign on Hamilton Avenue at Easton Road, a "Stop" sign on Gregory Road northbound at Pepper Road and remove a "Handicapped Parking" sign in front of 2552 Brookdale Avenue:

Vice President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Vice President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to move this agenda item forward to the Board of Commissioner Regular Meeting on March 11, 2021.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

Consider a motion to appoint candidate Timothy Seydel from the Civil Service Eligibility List to the position of Probationary Police Officer provided he successfully completes the Background, Physical and Psychological test and all entry requirements of the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commissioner for Act 120 Training effective March 8, 2021:

Vice President Hecker called on Deputy Chief Kelley Warner.

Deputy Chief Warner noted that Tim Seydel is currently employed as a part-time dispatcher and a fine candidate who will be replacing an individual who left some time ago.

Vice President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Vahey said due to the substantial financial crisis, one of the greatest sacrifices in personnel was that the police department has graciously made-do with three less police officers and this is not one of those positions, so he fully supports it.

Vice President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Brodsky to move this agenda item forward to the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of March 11, 2021.

MOTION was ADOPTED 15-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary