

The stated Working Session of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, July 14, 2022, via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with President Hecker presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 8:10 p.m.

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

Also Present: Township Manager MANFREDI
Township Solicitor CLARKE

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

President Hecker made a MOTION, seconded by Vice President Vahey to approve the minutes of the Working Session of May 12, 2022.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

President Hecker announced that public comment will be taken on the presentation on the Citizens Service Request System held prior to the Regular Board Meeting as well as on the agenda item of Martin Luther King Jr. Day – Future Planning.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the scheduling of meetings; also, she commented that the new system can be a good thing, but there are a lot of people in the community who are not savvy or who do not want to be constantly on the computer, so she hopes there will be accommodation for it.

Discuss Martin Luther King Jr. Day – Future Planning:

President Hecker called on Commissioner Carswell.

Commissioner Carswell said for the past two years, she helped facilitate the Township's ongoing tradition of hosting an event for MLK Day, which has been held in-person at the high school, and then the pandemic hit and the person who chaired the event committee moved out of our community.

She found many to help including Township staff, members of the police department, the school district as well as community members including members of the Township's Human Relations Commission, and we held our first virtual event, and another event was held this year.

Let's stay committed to hosting MLK Day, which is an important annual event and add community service to it by engaging all various members of our community, but let's do it strategically, and invite community members to become part of it by establishing an annual committee of a team of volunteers, and a diverse population from one side of the Township to the other. She hopes everyone will feel that this is a great idea, and next month, the Board can make it official, and then recruit volunteers, so in January, the Township will have another wonderful program, virtual or in-person.

Commissioner Schreiber said when this idea was voiced, the Human Relations Commission discussed possibly adding this as part of their charge and were very excited about it, which is a great idea.

Commissioner Vahey said if the Board would like to go in the direction of appointing the chair of the HRC that would ease his concern about recruitment, and that flexibility would allow the Board to go in a different direction if we feel there are enough members for a committee.

Commissioner Carswell agreed that it would be helpful to provide flexibility, and in the past two years, members of the HRC were involved and they are committed to a shared goal of increasing engagement in our community of diversity and inclusion.

She recommended asking the HRC to take the lead role to buildout the team, although if it is a charge under their commission, they do not have the ability to add more members to their committee, so that may be a limitation. It was fun these past two years because there was flexibility to take it in a completely different direction, and it is important to get volunteers who want to own it, so it has "legs" for many years to come.

Manager Manfredi said the chair of the HRC indicated they would be on board with handling the programming and they look forward to any guidance from the Board of Commissioners, which would be greatly appreciated.

Commissioner Schreiber said she also spoke with the chair of the HRC who indicated that if they are charged with this task, they would not need more members; however, if they did need more, they would ask.

Commissioner Bole commented that former Commissioner Luker's spirit of this event was continued over the past two years, which has been one that seeks maximum engagement, so he feels the wrong starting place is to say, 'there are enough people to handle it.' It is successful because it is strategically designed to try and engage more people and that is what we should do, and if that becomes the task of a member of the HRC, that would be great as the ambition of engagement is a worthy venture. So, if we define the leader and the committee, then he hopes we do not lose the goal of maximizing engagement and to make the effort to recruit people creatively.

President Hecker said the language currently constructed allows for flexibility to adapt based on circumstances so we can get to the granular specifics, and the goal is to broaden the outreach efforts and participation across the Township, which is the starting point.

Commissioner Carswell said she would like to vote on the final draft at the August Board meeting, which would then allow to appoint a chair and let them build a committee and design the scope, which will need to be done prior to the winter holidays so we can begin promoting the event.

Manager Manfredi clarified that the final version of the draft would provide the option to go in either direction. Is that correct?

President Hecker replied between now and the August Board meeting, we will strive for clarity about how we want to engage the HRC and retain flexibility moving forward.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary