

The stated meeting of the Infrastructure Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, via webinar with Vice Chairman Commissioner Bowman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners Vice Chairman BOWMAN,
DiPLACIDO, THOMPSON, ZAPPONE
Excused: Commissioner Chairman ROTHMAN

Also Present: Township Manager MANFREDI

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Zappone to approve the minutes from the Infrastructure Committee Organization Meeting of January 19, 2022, and regular Committee meeting of March 2, 2022.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) proposed code and policy recommendations from Abington Township's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Ordinance Audit:

Manager Manfredi said Ms. Susan Myerov is a member of the EAC and works for the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), and she approached the Township about an opportunity for the possibility of PEC performing an audit of our green stormwater infrastructure where they would review Township ordinances and practices and make some recommendations.

Ms. Myerov said she is the Watershed's Program Director for PEC, which is a statewide nonprofit, and she gave a power point presentation on the work being done in Abington as well as adjacent municipalities. Much of the work that she does as a watershed planner is to improve water quality through implementation of green stormwater infrastructure practices managing stormwater right where it falls rather than sending it through extensive infrastructure.

The basic activity is to use an audit tool that was discovered through research and allows us to look at codes, ordinances, and policies to evaluate whether there is language that might prevent the use of practices such as green stormwater infrastructure.

The codes typically reviewed during an audit are zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances for major land use in the communities and throughout the Commonwealth as well as stormwater ordinances and other policy documents. PEC is funded to do this work through several grants so there is no cost to the Township.

The audit tool is a series of approximately 100 questions of 12 different categories from landscaping to public works standards and perform an assessment of the codes by responding to the questions, and she prepared a worksheet that was vetted through the Engineering team, the Code Enforcement Officer, and Fire Marshal. The worksheet was then developed into recommendations report as well as a technical appendix that was presented to the Infrastructure Committee.

The audit makes sure there are definitions in the code and references for green stormwater infrastructure and it begins with audit questions, provides the code reference, and notes the current practices of the Township, and then recommendations were made and the reason for them.

One of the questions is whether there is a process to waive some of the spacing and specie requirements in landscaped areas relating to buffers between commercial and residential and allows flexibility to have a dual function for stormwater management.

Photos were presented of parking lots that could be retrofitted to have a parking lot island in which the island can serve as a stormwater feature as well as add flexible standards for using just turf grass in new construction, and this recommendation is consistent with MCPC's green parking lot guide.

It was also considered whether the Township provides incentives for developers who reduce imperviousness or conserve natural areas or implement green infrastructure practices such as green roofs, rain barrels, and rain gardens. There are bonus provisions listed in the Township's Main Street Districts, but they are only given for green roofs and maybe there can be consideration for other types of green infrastructure practices.

Regarding the site plan category, she questioned whether there could be a requirement to show stormwater management features during the preliminary or sketch plan process, which is an option under existing SALDO and that would give the developer a chance to understand the Township's priorities and address it early in the design phase.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson commented that these recommendations are very good, and he appreciates the report.

Manager Manfredi said these recommendations would run parallel with updating the Comp Plan as well as the Stormwater Management study to include green stormwater infrastructure. We will review and evaluate recommendations internally and comparatively to those plans as well as revisions to the SALDO that will also be reviewed with Township Solicitor. It will then come back to the Comprehensive Plan Consistency Committee for recommendations and then back to this committee for consideration of moving it forward to the full Board.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments.

Cakky Evans, EAC member, commented that this will have an impact on the climate action plan, and are there any leading-by-example opportunities for the Township as well as metrics showing how municipalities saved money through green infrastructure.

Ms. Myerov replied we have looked at other codes from around the region and many municipalities have strong ordinances and they all are trying to address it for their own communities. There are many studies of the benefits of green infrastructure that relate to cost savings from energy and managing runoff.

Ms. Evans suggested a forum or EAC meeting that the Commissioners could promote and attend as it is important to educate the community.

Lance Weatherly, resident, commented that these recommendations are exciting, and the best time to put in green stormwater infrastructure is today, and he supports this audit; also, the recommendations should be evaluated as requirements.

Lora Lehmann, resident, asked for a stormwater page on the Township website, and there should be specific measures to mitigate flooding and ponding and controlling stormwater while increasing the density throughout the Township, which is of great concern.

Manager Manfredi replied all information will be posted on Township's website in a location that is easily accessed.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

Lora Lehmann, resident, asked for information to be posted on Township's website about the Huntingdon Valley Shopping Center.

Mike Tobin, resident, commented that he also has trouble finding things on the website, and he questioned whether any future building on the Huntingdon Valley Shopping Center has been discussed between both the Comprehensive Plan Consistency Committee and this committee.

Manager Manfredi replied the Township is running various plans concurrently to make sure of any considerations that need to be made in next year's budget. All committees were designed to work together to vet items and vote on whether to send matters to the Board of Commissioners Working Session or voting meeting.

Cakky Evans commented that every year, Green Building holds a sustainability symposium and one of the presentations was from Commissioner Thompson on the work that he and several of his colleagues have done on sustainability efforts and planning in Delaware County. She also applauded the Shade Tree Commission as trees are essential infrastructure and for the education they provide to the community.

Lance Weatherly, resident, commented that the minutes of the last meeting indicate that the Wood Company report focuses on two areas, the Huntingdon Valley Shopping Center and Keswick area on flooding, and it seems as though any recommendations for improvements are somewhat contingent on identifying grant funding, and if there is not adequate revenues to cover it, he suggested that this committee consider a drainage fee as a standalone stormwater revenue source.

Manager Manfredi replied there several vehicles for financing stormwater capital infrastructure, which is something that will be brought before the committees, and ultimately, the full Board.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary