

The stated meeting of the Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Advisory Committee of Abington Township was held on Monday, January 9, 2023, via webinar with Commissioner Vahey presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:03 p.m.

PRESENT: Township Representatives: Commissioner Vahey, Assistant Manager Wehmeyer, Director of Parks & Recreation Lukens

Simone Collins Landscape Architects: William Collins, Principal, Sarah Leeper, Project Manager, Emma Haley, Registered Landscape Architect

Committee Members: Leah Anderson, Tim Barton, Krystn Kuckelman, Rachel McNeill, Karin Rosen, Steven Sacavage, Mike Scotese, Joe Stevens

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. McNeill to approve the minutes from the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee Meeting of November 14, 2022.

MOTION was ADOPTED 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Recreation, Parks and Open Space (RPOS) - Advisory Committee Meeting #3
Initial Concepts Preview:

Ms. Haley said tonight, we will be presenting initial concepts as a preview from the work that has been completed from the last meeting, and within the planning process, we are at the preliminary recommendation phase with a few more steps until we get to the approved report. 156 more responses to the public opinion survey have been received; five focus group meetings were held in November, and key person interviews are scheduled for this month.

Ms. Leeper said the plan goals from 2006 were reviewed and then revised as proposed:

Goal #1 – Preserve & Enhance Environmental Resources – identify strategies to restore function to the Township’s natural systems with objectives to identify candidate sites for future preservation and acquire them as funding becomes available and identify developed sites that critically impair natural functions and strengthen protection of natural features vulnerable to development.

Goal #2 – Steward Park Resources – ensure that the Township’s Park system meets current and future community needs addressing all ages and abilities with objectives to develop select recreational facilities at appropriate existing parks to meet active and other recreational needs; address needs for new park facilities at both the communitywide and neighborhood levels; and develop stewardship plans for natural areas.

Goal #3 – Improved Multi-modal & Universal Access to Park and Recreation Amenities – develop access to parks to ensure that the Township park system meets community needs for all ages and abilities with objectives to connect neighborhoods to the County Trail System; develop a trails and greenway plan; identify strategies to link parks, schools, neighborhoods, transit stops and other Township destinations; identify trail stewards to assist the Township in operating and maintaining trails as the trail system expands in the future; and plan for accessibility throughout the park system.

Goal #4 – Capture green infrastructure goals and objectives under other goals of the plan.

Goal #5 – Create New Recreation Programs Opportunities – sustain and expand municipal recreation programming with the objectives to expand and improve recreation program opportunities for people of all genders and ages; and identify additional public and private partners to help and provide additional recreation programs.

Goal #6 – Refine Township Administration of its Park, Recreation, & Open Space System – identify sustainable management maintenance, funding, and communications about park and recreation resources with the objectives of exploring strategies to ensure municipal capital and operating budgets that maintain resources to meet growing needs; and identify ways to publicize and promote the Township’s Park, Recreation, and Open Space services.

Commissioner Vahey commented that a trail along Valley Road would be a great opportunity, and he would be interested in exploring ways to partner with SEPTA to use the right-of-way to connect Valley Road to the Pennypack trail.

Mr. Scotese commented that linking trails will provide safety for pedestrians.

Ms. McNeill questioned whether any goals from 2006 were obtained.

Ms. Leeper replied that will be determined.

Ms. Anderson asked about sports and athletic facilities being listed in the plan.

Ms. Leeper replied they are under Steward Park Resources.

Overview of neighborhood, community, and regional facilities were presented noting there are recreational gaps at Noble, Meadowbrook, and Elkins Park; also presented were recreational offerings by neighborhood and the school district comparing them to its peer communities.

Systemwide recommendations will be to identify acquisition/preservation priorities on an official map; define active parks versus passive open space; develop systemwide signage and branding; access improvements to and within parks; develop stewardship plans for open space; explore the use of the Pennsylvania Conservation & Land Development Act to develop a Township fund for land acquisition, stewardships and maintenance cost.

Commissioner Vahey noted that a pool feasibility study was done in 2018, and he asked for a copy to be sent to the Simone Collins Team.

Mr. Lukens replied he will do so.

Map of existing data of the Wissahickon, Pennypack and Tookany/Tacony Frankford watersheds were presented showing the topography and noting that the Valley Road corridor goes all the way to Noble, which is located at the top of the watershed, and that is where stormwater management is needed most as well as in Crestmont.

Recommendations for Township Parks –

Ardsley Park – crosswalk; ADA curb ramps; resurface walkways; canopy trees in parking lot; revegetate; reevaluate area for recreation such as improve play surface/prioritize fields and possibly an enclosed facility.

Alverthorpe Park – crosswalk; open access points; internal walkways; right-of-way walkways; remediate pond; speed tables; acquire land/conservation easement; improve drainage; reevaluate area for recreation such as 60' fields/football; golf course; reevaluate area for other uses such as possible rope course; remove old pool; convert wading pool to splash pad/ice skating; revamp Tyke Bike route; and possibly an archery area.

Mr. Scotese questioned whether additional access points are being considered.

Ms. Leeper replied we are exploring that with the Township.

Ms. McNeill asked about upgrading the camping area.

Ms. Leeper replied we will look into that.

Crestmont Park – crosswalk; internal walkways; right-of-way walkways; canopy trees in parking lot; revegetate; reevaluate area for recreation such as a football field; new hiking trails; disc golf; and suggest pool feasibility study. This plan warrants a Master Plan to maximize amenities.

Penbryn Park – crosswalk; open access point; internal walkways; canopy trees in parking lot; revegetate; invasive species removal; redesign area such as No Thru Traffic and Plaza; reevaluate area for recreation such as a 90' field; and suggest pool feasibility study. This redesigned area should be explored through a Master Plan.

Roslyn Park – crosswalk; resurface walkways; canopy trees in parking lot; revegetate; invasive species removal; naturalize stream; improve drainage; add lighting; and pavilion area.

Roychester Park – crosswalk; internal walkways; right-of-way walkways; revegetate; invasive species removal; impervious removal; and reevaluate area for other uses such as outdoor classroom; and restroom. This park might be home to the new Inclusive Playground with the location to be determined through other planning efforts.

Possible Dog Parks – Glenside Weldon Elementary and Hallowell Park – both parks warrant a Master Plan.

Public Meeting #2 is scheduled for January 26, 2023 to discuss initial concepts and the next advisory committee meeting will be held on March 22, 2023 to present draft plan recommendations; also, the survey is still open.

Ms. McNeill questioned whether the Township offers scholarships for low-income families to participate in recreation programs.

Ms. Leeper replied we will discuss that further with Mr. Lukens.

Ms. Anderson suggested the creation of a central portal for information on activities for children.

Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Advisory Committee

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Commissioner Vahey asked for any public comment. There was none.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary