

The stated Public Meeting #2 of the Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Advisory Committee of Abington Township was held on Thursday, January 26, 2023, via webinar and in-person with Commissioner Vahey presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:04 p.m.

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

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

NEW BUSINESS:

Recreation, Parks, and Open Space (RPOS) – Public Meeting #2 – Initial Concepts and Recommendations:

Ms. Leeper said the planning process involves collecting site data, analysis, developing programs for the park's facilities, programming, and maintenance. Preliminary recommendations will be presented in a draft plan that will be online for public review and reviewed further by the committee. Once the plan is approved, it will provide the blueprint for securing funding, design and engineering, construction, and completed improvements of the park system including open space.

This is the second public meeting with focus group meetings and key person interviews ongoing working towards a final plan to be presented in July.

During the first public meeting, we brainstormed categorizing ideas into goals, facts, concepts, and partners. Concepts include updating amenities; ecological efforts; teen spaces; community center; new recreation activities; guides and wayfinding; working with partners; security/safer spaces; and accessibility.

There have been 1,096 responses to the web-based public opinion survey to-date and the results will be included in the draft plan report.

Goals and objectives –

Goal #1 – Preserve & Enhance Environmental Resources.

Goal #2 – Steward Park Resources.

Goal #3 – Improved Multi-modal & Universal Access to Park and Recreation Amenities.

Goal #4 – Integrate green infrastructure goals/objectives in parks with other initiatives.

Goal #5 - Create New Recreation Program Opportunities.

Goal #6 – Refine Township Administration of its Park, Recreation, & Open Space System.

Maps of the watersheds, transportation, trails, and facilities of the Township were presented.

Park systemwide recommendations include identifying lands-acquisition priorities on official map; define active parks versus passive open space; develop systemwide signage and branding; access improvements to and within parks; consider nature-based play areas in open space areas; develop stewardship plans for open space; and plant trees in parking lots.

Community Park recommendations include installing modernized lighting at recreation fields; provide for sufficient field drainage; consider trends such as disc golf, street hockey, splash pad, improve ice-skating, inclusive playground, ropes course, community gathering spaces, and recreation center.

Township Park recommendations will be to explore facility offerings in the larger parks such as Ardsley, Roslyn, Crestmont, Roychester, Alverthorpe/Little Meetinghouse/Manor, Hallowell, and Penbryn, and each park's recommendations were presented.

2018 Pool Feasibility Study – recommendations include removing the tot pools replacing them with new tot pools and splash pads; demolish the leisure and lap pools and construct one combined pool offering multiple activities while meeting user needs and township's programs and goals; provide new ADA compliant site furnishings, appropriate landscaping, site lighting, and state-of-the-art security systems; demolish the bathhouse buildings and construct new ones that meet user and township needs, codes, energy efficient, and utilize current technology; also, demolish and immediately rebuild one pool complex at a time, in phases.

Public Comment -

Residents questioned whether there is conflict with overlapping football and baseball activity on the fields; inventory of recreational programming; how to determine what parks should have a master plan and how that fits into the overall open space plan; there was concern about taking soccer fields away; and suggested was having someone from the township monitor the fields making sure there is downtime, so they are playable for upcoming seasons; installing modern lighting at the correct height, removing fencing around Alverthorpe Park opening it more to the community; and connecting neighborhood parks via trails.

Also, a resident of Upland advocated for a park in their neighborhood and suggested that the corridor from Noble to Rydal would be ripe for pedestrian and bicycle improvements; also, tearing the fence down around Alverthorpe would be a good idea for open access.

Ms. Leeper replied football scrambles the most for finding places to practice and we will be looking at safety standards of each field as well as delve into recreational programming offered by the township. Focus group interviews were held with reps of each youth organization and any suggestions are welcome.

Penbryn and Crestmont warrant a master plan update as they both have outdated pools, and we would see how a modern pool would fit into those parks; however, all the parks were established in the 60's and 70's, so all the parks would benefit from having a master plan update to understand how they can be improved with modern trends.

Regarding opening Alverthorpe Park, there is the possibility for the Township to make a policy on what they would like to see happen there.

Commissioner Vahey said regarding the data on the desire for a community center; the township does have one, so we would not be starting from scratch, but he would like to know what the gaps are.

Ms. Leeper replied we will review it further.

Ms. Kuckelman encouraged everyone to keep informed about the inclusive playground that is being proposed at Roychester Park. Also, she asked about a proposed timeline for the plan and questioned whether there may be any roadblocks in moving this plan forward, and who will be assigned to identify funding sources.

Ms. Leeper replied that the timeline will be discussed with the advisory committee. In terms of plan of implementation, each goal has objectives supporting it, and then there will be recommendations for an action plan with a priority for implementation.

Mr. Collins added that we create rational criteria to help the Board of Commissioners make decisions, and part of our tasks is identifying grant opportunities.

Commissioner Vahey said the Township has staff who works on applying for grants; however, based on the scope of this project, we may need additional assistance to be successful.

Ms. Anderson said with new sports structures being built who will be tasked with the mindfulness of making sure there is access for those on wheels?

Ms. Leeper replied that inclusiveness is an overarching goal of the plan.

Commissioner Vahey added that as a Board inclusivity is one of the top priorities of the strategic plan, and there is a separate committee focused on inclusive playgrounds for the Township.

Ms. Leeper announced that the next public meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary