

The stated meeting of the Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Advisory Committee of Abington Township was held on Monday, June 12, 2023, via webinar with Commissioner Vahey presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:04 p.m.

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

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 Mr. Barton to approve the minutes from the Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Advisory Committee Meeting of March 22, 2023.

MOTION was ADOPTED 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Recreation, Parks, and Open Space (RPOS) – Advisory Committee Meeting #5 – Final Plan Revisions:

Ms. Leeper said this will be our final advisory meeting to request feedback from the committee on the draft plan as well as review any public comments. The next step for the committee would be to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for plan approval. Draft plan will be posted for public review/comment until June 30th and then sent before the Board of Commissioners for consideration of approval in July.

To-date, 29 responses have been received noting significant comments were made by the Roychester community regarding not removing the basketball and tennis courts at Roychester Park. The intent was to show that as an idea and not a decision point as that would need to be made at a master plan level with the community, and we do recognize that the community values the basketball and tennis courts in that park, which will be noted in the draft plan. Also, the YMCA was a loss to the community and that will be noted in the plan as well.

Ms. Leeper asked for feedback from the committee members.

Ms. Kuckelman thanked everyone for the fantastic plan, and questioned how we can move forward to the next phase, so we don't lose momentum.

Mr. Scotese commented that this is a great plan; however, there should be more trails throughout the Township as inclusivity is a high priority.

Elena Jadach agreed that inclusivity is very important, and suggested picnic tables for Jackson Park.

Joe Stevens commented that the plan is very impressive, and this committee can help prioritize projects as there is a long list.

Ms. Rosen commented that the plan is comprehensive, and inclusivity is important; however, the downside is that the previous surface will be covered with impervious surface, and we should not create more stormwater runoff problems.

Ms. Leeper agreed that we should explore alternative surfaces and look at permeable options, so we are not adding to stormwater runoff issues.

Ms. Anderson commented that it is a great plan, and she supports keeping the momentum. She suggested a celebratory event drawing attention to some of the smaller projects that may get funded, which is a way to let residents know that the Township cares and looks out for the community.

Ms. McNeill commented that inclusivity and accessibility to playgrounds has always been her number one priority. The plan is comprehensive and data-oriented in helping residents see what makes up Abington Township, so a job well done. Moving forward with our committee would be wonderful and our role would be to help prioritize projects and investigate all financial aspects to help fund them.

Mr. Sacavage commented that it is a fantastic plan that is highly actionable providing detail relevant to implementation as well as financial benchmarking that would be a starting point in building a framework to act on the plan as quickly as possible. We should look closely at the tax referendum and planning grants, and he supports continuing the committee to focus on executional aspects going forward, and he thanked the team for their great work.

Mr. Burton commented that the plan is comprehensive and hopes it dovetails with other entities. Has the School District been contacted regarding the use of their land?

Ms. Leeper replied no; however, they reissued a policy during the process regarding high school fields usage, but still maintained the same policy for the elementary school fields that has been in place for years.

Mr. Burton continued that the pool feasibility study should be a priority, and although it is a big-ticket item, we will need to consider how the cost would impact other projects.

Ms. Wehmeyer agreed with the comments made by the committee, and we will apply for grants and hopefully receive funding for these projects.

Mr. Lukens commented that it is great knowing what the community wants and needs, and he welcomed any help from this committee.

Commissioner Vahey commented that this plan has completely met his expectations and reflects all comments made to date.

Ms. Leeper presented the top five priorities and goals as follows:

Preserve & Enhance Environmental Resources – identify strategies to restore function to Township’s natural systems.

Steward Park Resources – ensure that the Township’s park system meets current and future community needs addressing all ages and abilities.

Improve Multimodal & Universal Access to Park and Recreation Amenities – develop access to parks to ensure that the Township’s park system meets needs for all ages and abilities.

Create New Recreation Facility & Programs Opportunities – sustain and expand municipal recreation facilities & programming.

Refine Administrative Procedures for the Township Park, Recreation & Open Space System – identify sustainable management maintenance, funding, and communications about park, and recreation resources.

Estimated cost range for fields, site furnishings, facilities, hardscape, natural features, and services were presented and will be incorporated into the final plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about targeted acquisitions, and suggested that a pool for seniors should be a top priority as well as community space.

Christine Hoff, resident, thanked the team and committee for listening to the neighbors in the Overlook section as well as for their hard work.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary