

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, March 4, 2015 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Farren presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:41 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners FARREN, SR, SCHREIBER, SANCHEZ, JONES JR
Excused: SPIEGELMAN

Township Manager LEFEVRE
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Director of Parks and Recreation WENDELL

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, MYERS, HECKER, DiPLACIDO, BOWMAN

MINUTES: Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2015 Public Affairs Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Parks and Recreation Report:

Mr. Doug Wendell, Director of Parks and Recreation thanked all of the Abington Township Fire Companies for responding to the Roychester Community House last week. The fire, which was minor, was dealt with quickly with minimal damage mostly smoke damage.

Resolution No. 15-013- Designating the Township of Abington as a National Audubon Bird Town

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve Resolution No. 15-013 designating the Township of Abington as a National Audubon Bird Town.

Commissioner Farren recognized Greta Brunschwyler, Director of Briar Bush Nature Center, Jenn Sherwood, Chairperson of EAC and Dr. Leigh Altadonna and Abington Senior High School Students, co-chairs of the Earth Serve Club, who were in attendance this evening.

Ms. Brunschwyler introduced Senior High School Students Rachel Rawdin and Lexi Lee-Ittah, co-chairs of the Earth Serve Club to make the presentation about the National Audubon Bird Town.

Rachel Rawdin said that Earth Serve Club at the Senior High School is dedicated to improving the environment, and this year, our goal is to make Abington Township an official Bird Town.

Lexi Lee-Ittah said we are passionate about it and we hope that the entire Township will be passionate about as well. A Bird Town is a partnership between the Audubon and the municipality recognizing the municipality for its support of the environment and promotes conservation to create a healthier and more sustainable environment for birds and people.

Ms. Rawdin continued that a Bird Town makes efforts to create culture conservation where everyone is a potential steward of nature in their own backyard.

Ms. Lee-Ittah continued that Abington meets criteria for Bird Town recognition because Briar Bush Nature Center was established over 50 years ago; Abington established the EAC in 1994; Abington maintains over 424 acres of public parks; Audubon's Crosswicks Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Rydal and the Pennypack Watershed has been designed as Audubon as a Pennsylvania important bird area.

There are several benefits of a Bird Town designation. They recognize Abington Township's record of commitment to the environment; supports programs by the Abington EAC, Briar Bush, Earth Serve, Audubon and other partners and encourages efforts toward a more sustainable natural environment with healthier yards, schools and parks.

Our partners are Abington Township's EAC, Briar Bush Nature Center, Earth Serve and Wyncote Audubon Society and other partners we wish to pursue in the future.

Our initial Bird Town goals are to promote Abington Township's Bird Town designation, which would be to install Bird Town signs and expand Bird Town partnerships, and also to encourage residents to take the healthy yard pledge; encourage residents to register properties in the bird habitat recognition program; and conduct activities and events that support stewardship and a sustainable environment. For more information, you can visit www.pa.audubon.org/bird-town.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber clarified that if a resident wants more information about taking a healthy pledge, they can find it on that website. Is that correct?

Ms. Rawdin replied a healthy pledge is a signature stating they will respect the environment, but recognition is posting a sign in the yard saying it is a bird-friendly backyard, and all information is posted on the website.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Business Integrity Policy

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt the attached Business Integrity Policy, which establishes guidelines to ensure all business conducted by the Township observes the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Commissioner Farren called on Manager LeFevre.

Manager LeFevre explained that in regards to maintenance and contribution agreement with PennDOT relating to ornamental street lighting and decorative crosswalks as part of the Noble Bridge replacement project; PennDOT requires that any time a municipality enters into an agreement that the municipality has in place a written Sexual Harassment Policy in which the Township has had for a number of years, but also a Business Integrity Policy in place. Township Solicitor has reviewed this policy relating to the Township's procurement process to the satisfaction of PennDOT.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Sanchez commented that he feels it is an odd requirement because one would think it would be assumed.

Solicitor Clarke replied PennDOT requires everything to be in writing as a stated policy even though it may already be contained in other Township ordinances so there is no question, mostly because of the Federal funding aspect of it.

Commissioner Hecker said this isn't the first time the Township has partnered with PennDOT over the years; is this a recent practice on their part?

Manager LeFevre replied yes, it is a recent requirement and applies to any agreement that PennDOT enters into with any municipality.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked will this new requirement confuse things?

Commissioner Farren replied it will not confuse anything.

Commissioner Jones clarified that in regards to Federal grants; statement of assurances is required to be signed in which this is similar in that the Township is assuring that this practice is already being done. Is that correct?

Solicitor Clarke replied that is correct, and this policy has been reviewed and vetted by PennDOT officials and it cannot be changed besides inserting the name "Abington Township" where appropriate, which needs to be adopted and signed.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

TD Bank Grant for Green Streets

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve the acceptance of the TD Green Streets Grant in the amount of \$20,000. No match is required, but this is a reimbursement grant. Grant expenses will be paid for out of an account that will be set up at a later date by the Finance Department and then reimbursed at the end of the project after a final report has been submitted and approved.

Mr. Wendell explained that the Shade Tree Commission applied for the grant and they will administer the process.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber commented that we appreciate the work that Dr. Stevens did on this application.

Commissioner DiPlacido asked if the final report is not approved, will the grant be denied?

Mr. Wendell replied mostly likely if the final report has any issues, it will be discussed with members of the Shade Tree Commission to be worked out.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Deer Hunt in Karebrook

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve controlled hunts in the Karebrook Nature Study Area by Abington Deer Management for the entire season from September 19, 2015 to January 23, 2016. Signs will be posted along the perimeter of the area noting that the area will be closed inclusively for the dates noted above.

Commissioner Farren called on Director of Parks and Recreation, Mr. Doug Wendell.

Mr. Wendell said this is a continuation of our request by Abington Deer Management, which has done this for many years. Most of the deer are hit in the Meadowbrook Road area and the surrounding streets and the only place to intercept them is in Karebrook.

This past season, ADM did not remove any deer from there, but we know they are there because they are filmed by cameras. All rules and regulations of the Game Commission are followed by ADM and ADM does not charge the Township and they are insured.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned whether there was a vote taken earlier this year on deer hunting.

Mr. Wendell replied no, but there was discussion about whether or not the amount of deer would decrease as a result of hunting, but we cannot correlate that this year as there were no deer removed. However, if there is no hunting the numbers will increase.

Commissioner Farren asked for the size of the herds.

Mr. Wendell replied he has seen 10 or 12 different deer on the cameras in Karebrook.

President of Abington Deer Management Louis Clewell, 2442 Avondale Road, added that in addition to Karebrook we have quite a few properties in Meadowbrook and Huntingdon Valley in which we have done very well this year, which is why there weren't too many in Karebrook this year. Also, this year there were trespassers in Karebrook, who cut straps on our stands hampering our efforts, but we have done very well on adjacent properties.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments.

Raymond Bell, 2076 Parkview Avenue, asked are accidents caused by deer more prevalent at night than during the day?

Mr. Wendell replied he does not know because he only has the numbers of when and where the accidents occurred.

Mr. Bell asked about moving the deer instead of killing them.

Mr. Wendell replied travel transfer has not been successful and the Game Commission can provide more information about it. Also birth control has been tried, but that is not a successful method either.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, commented that she is opposed to deer hunting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-1. Commissioner Schreiber opposed.

Controlled Hunt in Alverthorpe Park

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Jones to approve a one-day controlled hunt to take place in Alverthorpe Park during the 2015-2016 season.

Commissioner Farren called on Director of Parks and Recreation, Mr. Doug Wendell.

Mr. Wendell replied hunting has not been done in Alverthorpe for about seven or eight years. There were a number of hunts from 1997 until 2007 and they were successful for removing deer from the park. There are a number of properties that surround the park that deer come from and we had calls from neighbors about issues with deer in their yards.

Abington Deer Management can help to remove them. It is a one-day hunt that runs before dawn until about 1 p.m. The park is closed with fencing around it and we have assistance by the Police Department. He is also on the grounds as well making sure everything is being done properly.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Jones said he lives close by to the park and clarified that notices will be sent out about the date of when this will take place. Is that correct?

Mr. Wendell replied yes, when the date is set, notices will be sent to surrounding neighbors and the park will be closed on that date with signage about the hunt.

Commissioner Sanchez clarified that it will be strictly bow hunting. Is that correct?

Mr. Wendell replied yes, shooting bows down towards the ground from tree stands and Abington Deer Management has never had any accidents.

Commissioner Farren asked has there been anyone trying to access the park when it was closed for hunting because they are used to using it for various recreational activities?

Mr. Wendell replied in 2007, there were two instances that were handled by the police quickly.

Commissioner Myers noted that Mr. Clewell was a Police Officer with Abington Police Department for 39 years and, certainly, if anyone knows about safety, it would be a Police Officer from this department.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-1. Commissioner Schreiber opposed.

Resolution No. 15-012 – Authorizing the Disposition of Certain Parks and Recreation Office Records

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Jones to adopt Resolution No. 15-012, authorizing the disposition of certain Parks and Recreation Office records as set forth in Exhibit “A.”

Commissioner Farren called on Director of Parks and Recreation, Mr. Doug Wendell.

Mr. Wendell noted these are old Township job applications with personal information on them as well as registration forms for programs.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked to view them before being disposed of.

Solicitor Clarke replied a “Right to Know” request would need to be filed and then a determination would be made as to whether or not they are public record by the Manager’s Office, which mostly likely will not be considered public documents or will be considered one of the exceptions listed in the “Right to Know” law.

Commissioner Jones said if personal information is released by the Township and there was no “Right to Know” request, the Township could be liable. Is that correct?

Solicitor Clarke replied yes.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Bid Award – Sandblasting of the Penbryn and Crestmont Pools

Commissioner Farren made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Jones to accept the lowest responsible bid of New Age Corporation in the amount of \$88,800.00 for the sandblasting and painting of both the Penbryn and Crestmont Pools. Funding for this project will come from 2014 Capital Account No. 07-24-800-7535. (Total budget for this project is \$95,000.00).

Commissioner Farren called on Director of Parks and Recreation, Mr. Doug Wendell.

Mr. Wendell noted that the Township received four bids and New Age Corporation was the lowest responsible bidder. Their references were checked in which they had done work for the School District and received a favorable review.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Star Community Rating System

For Information Only

Cakky Evans, member of the Township's Environmental Advisory Council, gave a power point presentation on their interest in participating in the Star Community Rating System on Local Sustainability, the cost of which to be funded from existing EAC balances.

Commissioner Farren asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Schreiber asked when will this program begin?

Ms. Evans replied training begins at the end of this month.

Commissioner Jones clarified that the School District will be a partner. Is that correct?

Ms. Evans replied we have not reached out to them yet.

Commissioner Jones asked will assistance be needed from the Board of Commissioners as well as residents of the Township?

Ms. Evans replied yes.

Commissioner Hecker asked will there be opportunities for partnership with other community organizations, civic associations, local churches, etc.

Ms. Evans replied yes, she is open to bringing this to other organizations.

Commissioner Farren asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern that she feels the "EAC is a nonprofit corporation, who gets grant money and has to account for it, which is walking around money, and she does not believe this is a good program."

Commissioner Farren asked for any general comments relating to Public Affairs.

Mr. Wendell said he was contacted by the Solicitor who represents the Jackson family who the Township bought Jackson Park from and their Solicitor indicated that the Jackson family is committed to giving the Township \$25,000 to go towards the work to be done in Jackson Park, and he thanked them for it.

Commissioner Myers said a resident spoke about “walking around money,” which is an old political term known as “WAM,” and in her 18 years, she does not know of any Abington Township Commissioner or any other Commissioner ever having any “WAM” money. It is a very old term that was used by State and Federal Legislators and was disbanded years ago.

She apologized to our guests, the EAC members, for the work that they do and it is truly appreciated by 99.9% of this Township, so please do not feel that it isn't.

Commissioner Farren also thanked the EAC members for the work that they do. He is excited and looking forward to working with them on this project as well as other projects in the future.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael LeFevre, Township Manager

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