

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, October 2, 2019 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Spiegelman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 8:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners SPIEGELMAN, SCHREIBER, DiPLACIDO, MYERS
Excused: BOWMAN

Township Manager MANFREDI
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Township Engineer MONTGOMERY
Director of W.W.T.P. WRIGLEY

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, ROTHMAN, ZAPPONE, BRODSKY, CARSWELL, THOMPSON, GILLESPIE, WINEGRAD, VAHEY

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to approve the minutes of the Public Affairs Committee Meeting of September 4, 2019.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

PRESENTATION:

Water Quality Improvement Plan:

Ms. Lindsay Blanton, Water Programs Manager, Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, 12 Morris Road, Ambler, PA, 19002, reported that the water quality improvement plan has been finalized and a resolution was approved by the management committee of a final draft of the plan that was sent to the EPA. Plan consists of three components; projects, policies and programs aimed to improve water quality by focusing on stormwater and stormwater management. Parameters are measured through areas treated; number of acres; volume managed stormwater; number of BMP's completed/installed, linear feet of stream restoration/bank stabilization and protection of open space.

This is a 20-year adaptive management plan in five-year permit cycles where in each of those cycles completed work is assessed and then it is determined which assessments have been the most productive in terms of water quality improvement and then the plan is tweaked moving forward. Projects would be strategically coordinated and prioritized across the entire watershed not just in Abington. Policies would be to make sure everything is in uniform and consistent in terms of stormwater ordinances, zoning ordinances, protection of riparian buffer and protection of open space. Programs would be jointly funded sharing resources for operation and maintenance of programs installed; water quality monitoring over time and reporting to the EPA; also applying for grants.

So the plan was sent to the EPA and there will be a meeting to receive their comments/revisions, and the plan will be revised, and then we will move forward to officially prepare a new inter-governmental agreement and formalize the plan as our TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) alternative. There is no specific timeline as to how long that process will take.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Vice President Kline asked will cost-sharing agreements between permit holders and sewer treatment plant operators be reviewed after EPA's adoption of the overall plan.

Ms. Blanton replied throughout the process, wastewater treatment plants and municipalities have shared costs. The wastewater treatment plants are viewed as a separate representative that has one vote and Abington Township has one vote and both parties pay the same amount for its representation. Once we know exactly what will be implemented then discussions will take place of equitably shared-costs.

Vice President Kline said during this process there has been concern about each of the permit holders' doing only what is needed in their area even though they agreed to share costs of the TMDL alternative plan with some municipalities doing larger projects than others that benefits the entire watershed.

Ms. Blanton replied all municipalities will retain their MS4 permits and PRP's (Pollution Reduction Plan) will be prepared separately; they will complete the projects laid out in the plan and individual credit will be claimed. Projects of water quality improvement plan fold into work being done separately although everyone is contributing as it is being jointly funded.

Vice President Kline clarified that if all of the municipalities just maintain their MS4 permit and just took that stance, they may not achieve the goals of the alternative TMDL. Is that correct?

Ms. Blanton replied everyone will have to go above and beyond their existing MS4 permit/plan.

Manager Manfredi asked Ms. Blanton to explain further how previously there was concern about meeting phosphorus limits in the TMDL and now it has shifted to address stormwater and stormwater management.

Ms. Blanton explained that there was monitoring and research conducted of the stream over the course of a year during all seasons and wet/dry conditions to find out why the creek is impaired and what will be compelling to the EPA on how to improve it. Findings by Temple research is that phosphorus is an issue, but there are many other stressors and limiting phosphorus next to nothing is not sufficient to improve aquatic life in the creek, and stormwater needs to be addressed in order to make a difference.

Vice President Kline questioned whether a budget has been put together of the amount of funds required by municipalities from this point forward until the time the plan is adopted.

Mr. George Wrigley, Director of Wastewater Treatment Plant, replied we are in a holding pattern because we need to get feedback from EPA and that will determine the next steps, so no solid numbers have been put together or how it will be shared.

Vice President Kline asked about a policy in regards to the golf courses that empty into the watershed in which there is chemical output.

Ms. Blanton replied she read the entire plan and does not remember a specific callout to golf courses, but there is language in the plan to work with private landowners educating them in order to meet these goals.

Manager Manfredi referred to the plan that lists existing projects of Abington Township, which are as follows: Sandy Run Streambank Stabilization Project; Madison Avenue Meadow Construction; Roychester Park Rain Garden; Roychester Riparian Buffer Restoration; Roychester Park Bio-retention Infiltration Trench; Roychester Park Infiltration Berms/ Retentive Grading; Evergreen Manor Park Infiltration Basin; Grove Park Stream Restoration and Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary Streambank Stabilization and Basin. All of these projects have been completed; in the process of being completed or being considered in the capital budget.

Ms. Blanton said there are proposed metrics that the 20-year plan will be measured against, which is the overall number of projects that are installed; the area treated in acres by stormwater management; the number of linear feet of stream restoration and bank stabilization and the amount of protected open space. The EPA is allowing the exploration of another option so we do not have to manage a rigorous phosphorus level of TMDL, and we will offer a good-faith number of how much we want to manage. Also, credit dates back to 2003, so all projects completed across the watershed still count towards this goal.

Commissioner Gillespie commented that she has informed residents in her newsletters over the past years about not letting cut grass that was fertilized go into storm sewers.

Ms. Blanton replied that education and outreach to stakeholders and private landowners of the watershed will be incorporated into the 20-year plan.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

Commissioner Spiegelman reminded everyone that on Wednesday, October 16th in the 2nd floor boardroom of the Township building at 7 p.m. will be a public informational session about proposed Ordinance No. 2169, which would create the Township's Economic Development Corporation. Questions can be submitted through Township website ahead of time and there is a dedicated page about proposed EDC.

PUBLIC COMMENT – general matters relating to Public Affairs:

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, stated that “the consent agenda items are completely against the interests of the public; also we don't want you developing in our Township and we want you to listen to what we say to you; and we are not being invited to work on the website.”

Ron Holt, 2564 Rubicam Avenue, stated that “in regards to public use of land; the redevelopment authority will be allowed to do what the taxpayers' want this Board to do and we want that power to remain with this Board because we voted for you to do what is proper for the people of this Township, and unintended consequences will happen.”

Commissioner Spiegelman said there are misconceptions being spread around regarding proposed ordinance of the Economic Development Corporation and he would be happy to meet with residents individually to address their concerns.

Natalie Sherstyuk, 1165 Delene Road, stated that “I urge everyone to get on the website and look at Obermayer's proposal and it is not a misconception; and the informational session is not listed on Township calendar and the information needs to get out to residents.”

ADJOURNMENT: 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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