

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING – ZOOM
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022, AT 7:00 PM**

The Whitemarsh Township Open Space Committee Meeting was held on Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, at 7:00 PM. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Steve Kaufman, Chris Lane, Jim Mahoney, Hugh Moulton, and Steve Malloy.

BOS LIAISON PRESENT:

Laura Boyle Nester.

TWP. STAFF PRESENT:

Tom Blomstrom (*P&R*), Robert Vandegrift (*P&R – Minutes*).

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT:

Beth Howard (Public) and Debra Harris (Public)

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. The Whitemarsh Township Open Space Committee Meeting was called to order on Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, at 7:04pm, by Steve Kaufman.

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Steve Kaufmann announced that Kristyn Vandegrift has resigned from the committee.
- b. Reappointments
 - i. Edmond Shinn – Chose not to be considered for reappointment.
 - ii. Joan Biddle – Chose not to be considered for reappointment.
- c. Appointment
 - i. Stephen Malloy appointed through 12-31-24 by the Board of Supervisors on 1-13-22.
 1. Stephen provided a short introduction where he detailed that he and his family have lived along the Wissahickon Creek for the past eight years and was attracted to Whitemarsh by the open space. Would like to help the committee in preserving more of it and using the open space to keep the community more connected.
 2. Chris Lane inquired about Stephen's background and experience. Stephen replied that he works in commercial construction and has been for 16 years. This helps him understand the impacts of growing communities and how it impacts other local areas. Also noted stormwater management that seems to have been worsened by local construction and worse weather. Steve Kaufman recommended that Stephen might join the joint venture OSC-EAB-PR subcommittee about trails and connections.
- d. Vacancy – Two (2) vacant positions on the Open Space Committee

3. RE-ORGANIZATION

- a. Selection of Chair

- i. Chris Lane nominated Steve Kaufman to retain chair due to his knowledge and his good performance in the role. Seconded by Hugh Moulton. No other nominations were made. Selection passed unanimously.
- b. Selection of Vice-Chair
 - i. Hugh Moulton made the motion to reappoint Chris Lane and Jim Mahoney seconded. No other nominations were made. Selection passed unanimously.

4. 2022 OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

- a. January 26, 2022 – Re-organization
- b. April 27, 2022
- c. July 27, 2022
- d. October 26, 2022

Chris Lane indicated that the format of the meeting (Zoom/In-Person) would be solidified prior to each meeting.

5. UPDATED 2022 OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE CONTACT LIST

- a. Tom Blomstrom announced that an updated contact list will be sent around prior to the next meeting.

6. OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE – POWERS AND DUTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TOWNSHIP CODE

- a. Tom Blomstrom alerted the group to the fact that the powers and duties of the committee are included in the packet each year to help the committee.
- b. Steve Kaufman requested information regarding the summary of how amendments to agendas work. His recollection was that new topics are not supposed to be brought up unless there is a majority vote by the group but noted that the email Tom had previously sent alluded to the committee’s power being more limited than that.
 - i. Tom Blomstrom agreed to resend out the email from before. He elaborated that the committee could alter the agenda given a majority vote but should be used in emergency settings. These alterations shouldn’t include items that are financial or a vote-taking measure. The reasoning behind this is for transparency’s sake and so the public can have advance notice and attend the meeting.
 - ii. Chris Lane added that the email he thinks Steve Kaufman was referring to was sent on July 15th regarding the Sunshine Act law changes.
 - iii. Steve Kaufman followed up by asking if the restrictions on amending the agenda via a majority vote are Township policy or state law. Tom Blomstrom reiterated that it’s not Township policy but rather state law and that the amendments should not be done in matters regarding to funding or matters involving votes. Laura Boyle Nester clarified that it’s related to the updated Sunshine Law , that is the rule for all municipalities.

7. APPROVAL OF THE WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27TH, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

- a. Chris Lane made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Hugh Moulton seconded. The October 27th, 2021 minutes were approved, unanimously (5-0).

8. OPEN SPACE FUND (OSF) REPORT

- a. Debt Financing Motion to the BOS Update
 - i. Hugh Moulton asked about the EIT difference between 2020 and 2021, as in 2020 the EIT was \$2.7 million and in 2021 it is only \$2.2 million. He wondered if that was an impact from more people working from home in 2020.

1. Jim Mahoney explained that he doesn't believe that is the final number, as the income taxes for 2021 will not be fully processed until April 2022 due to the usual lag in receipts. Chris Lane asked whether the information gathered through April would be processed as a part of the 2021 EIT revenue. Jim replied in the affirmative as they pertain to the 2021 earnings. Upon further review, Hugh stated he thinks there needs to be more explanation for the numbers due to the fluctuation of the numbers over the last three years, including what the make-up is and the cut-off date. Steve Kaufman requested that Tom Blomstrom forward these questions to Kevin Barron in the Township Finance department. Jim Mahoney elaborated later in this segment about the sequential increases from report to report. At the end of the segment, Jim Mahoney noted that he had previously spoken to Finance Director Kevin Barron about the EIT but would need to speak with him again for further clarification.
- ii. Chris Lane requested information on when the \$800k for the Haub property would be paid from the Open Space Fund. Tom Blomstrom elaborated that they're still approaching settlement and it should be paid at some point in February.
- iii. Hugh Moulton requested information regarding Township real estate purchases, specifically a breakdown on the \$20 million total paid from 2006 to 2021. The group explored the report further and found a pie chart that detailed the real estate purchases over that time period. That addressed Hugh's question.

9. OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Notice to Real Estate Advisors
 - i. Chris Lane applauded Tom Blomstrom's efforts in acquiring the local real estate list and preparing the shipping labels for the mailers.
 - ii. Tom Blomstrom plans to send out the mailers by February 18th.
 - iii. Steve Kaufman mentioned that some local developers weren't on the list, such as Sal Paone. Tom Blomstrom clarified that this list was just real estate agents within a five-mile radius, not developers, but if there are people Steve believes should be added, that he should let us know. Steve also requested the addition of Wendie Steffens from Kurfiss Sotheby's.
- b. OSC-EAB-PR Mutual Interests Subcommittee Update - Chris Lane
 - i. Chris Lane started off by mentioning the group met by Zoom on December 1st and agreed to meet periodically to discuss what they can do together, such as expanding the trail system. This will be an ongoing process and Chris is excited to have Steve Malloy join him.
- c. Spring Mill Area Study Committee Update - Chris Lane
 - i. Chris Lane noted that he circulated the minutes from the previous meeting and that the study committee is moving along. The committee is not currently dealing with finances, but will submit a "Dream Plan" to the Township. The Township will follow-up by analyzing priorities and how they'll fund them. This is in an effort to improve transportation, safety and recreation in the area.
- d. Zoning Ordinance Steering Committee Update - Steve Kaufman
 - i. Steve Kaufman . Reported that the group had been focusing on cluster zoning over the last four months. Parcels over 15 acres, would have to be at least 50% open space and residences would have to be clustered. He followed up by recommending Steve Malloy and Hugh Moulton review the zoning ordinance closely once it is released.
 - ii. Chris Lane asked if this steering committee is reviewing a zoning text amendment proposed for continuing care facilities. Steve Kaufman updated that the steering committee is not involved, but that the proposal was rejected by the Planning Commission 6-0, with one recusal. He commented that the Planning Commission relied heavily on the revised and updated Comprehensive Plan and that it's nice to see the Comprehensive Plan having an impact on Township decisions.

10. UPDATES

- a. Highlands Mansion
 - i. The Township closed in December on the purchase of a Conservation Easement on a 28-acre parcel at the Highlands Mansion and Gardens. The 28 acres includes the fields and woodlands surrounding the mansion. The easement was purchased from the Highlands Historical Society, which will use the funds for improvements to the mansion and gardens. Hugh Moulton added that the whole transaction closed at the same time and that the entire tract is owned by the Highlands Historical Society. The group is appreciative of all the support from the Township committees and the Board of Supervisors.
 - ii. It was noted that Fran McCusker was appointed the Board of Supervisor liaison to the Highlands Mansion.
- b. Abolition Hall- Corson Tract Property
 - i. Hugh Moulton asked if there's a target date for completion, and if the hold-up was out of the Township's hands. Laura Boyle Nester let the committee know that there were no new updates to report.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- a. Debra Harris welcomed Steve Malloy to the committee. Debra also shared her thoughts on the EIT question posed earlier in the meeting by stating that as a former 1099 employee, she believes that 2021 taxes paid in 2022 haven't been factored into the EIT revenue yet. Finally, regarding the Abolition Hall – Corson Tract Property, she requested that the Township ask the public for donations if the donor falls through, as she and others would like to be helpful for this purchase to occur.

12. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. Hugh Moulton asked if it is time to update the Open Space Community Impact Statement from five years prior. The purpose is to inform the public on the benefit the Township has achieved with its Open Space preservation. The referendum authorizing the EIT occurred fifteen years ago, but that it might be best to delay until we can include Abolition Hall. Also stated it would be nice to update on how the Township has continued to preserve the land in comparison to the land being developed. Chris Lane agreed that waiting would be best and recommended that Hugh prepare the draft update, as he has done a great job in the past. The significance of the preservation process can be seen in a number of the large property purchases, such as the Highlands, Abolition Hall and even Erdenheim Farm.
- b. Chris Lane and Steve Kaufman discussed updating the Open Space Plan as the most recent iteration is from 2006 and adding it to the April agenda for discussion. Steve Kaufman let everyone know that the Open Space Plan is available on the Township website. He also elaborated that a full update of the plan would require the hiring of a consultant. Hugh Moulton reminded the group of previous issues with a consultant not respecting the views of the committee.
- c. Steve Kaufman then discussed the property and the potential it has, given the wetlands and its connection to other Township property – as well to as the Cross-County Trail. Chris Lane then followed up by asking if Tom Blomstrom knew of the plans for the vacant home on the property once purchased. Tom responded he was not sure what the plans would be.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chris Lane made a motion to adjourn, and Jim Mahoney seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:03pm.