

**LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 3, 2024**

Members in Attendance

Stan Smith
Jim Seidler
Kirby Lentz
Wendy Steinbrunner
Sandy Mort
Alan Gallagher
Neal Johnson

Members Absent

Bob MacIntyre
Mayur Patel

Also in Attendance

Rachelle Scott, Staff Liaison
Residents of Blue Ridge Village

**ANNUAL REORGANIZATION
& CALL TO ORDER**

Rachelle Scott, Staff Liaison, opened the reorganization meeting of the Lower Paxton Township Parks and Recreation Board at 7:15 p.m. on the above date, in Meeting Room 174, at the Lower Paxton Township Municipal Center, 425 Prince Street, Harrisburg, PA.

Ms. Scott asked for nominations for the positions of chair, vice chair, and secretary for 2024. Neal Johnson was nominated by Mr. Smith as the 2024 chair. Jim Seidler was nominated by Mr. Lentz as the 2024 vice chair. Mayur Patel was nominated by Mr. Lentz as the 2024 secretary. Hearing no other nominations, the members voted unanimously to approve the nominations.

The regular meeting of the Lower Paxton Township Parks and Recreation Board was called to order at 7:16 pm by Mr. Johnson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No action was taken on meeting minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Parkland at Blue Ridge Village

Adrian Buckner, 1402 Alexandria Ln, is on the HOA for Blue Ridge Village. He stated the residents are 100% in opposition of the plan to build more apartments on the land that is to be dedicated as parkland. He clarified that if there was any suggestion that the residents were in agreement-that is not true and they knew nothing of the idea until recently. Homeowners in the development have been told many lies and to such an extent that complaints have been

filed with the PA Real Estate Commission. He emphasized that the Township may appreciate the tax revenue that Triple Crown Corporation (TCC) brings in, but the elected officials are chosen to represent the residents too. This neighborhood already deals with so much traffic and congestion, and adding more residential units would increase it dramatically. The developer promised the land would be a park when the Township builds it, and promised it would be nothing until then. The HOA meeting minutes reflect these conversations and can be shared with the Township. The residents are not in favor of more homes.

Brittany Rodas, 1424 Alexandra Ln, owns one of the houses that abut the greenspace. She has found 25 articles and advertisements referencing the guaranteed greenspace. There are approvals using this land as a condition of the development, and it is documented in meeting minutes from Township Supervisor and Planning Commission meetings. The people who bought lots in this area were guaranteed that this land would remain open, in meetings and conversations. The residents do not care to have a pavilion or pickleball or those sort of activities behind their houses. They especially do not want apartments behind their homes. The neighbors in Forest Hills are also extremely against the proposal. She noted that the developer may have connections to the Supervisors but no one wants the land to be anything other than the greenspace it was supposed to be. She will work on a petition to show the feelings of the homeowners in the area. Mr. Seidler requested the petition be done quickly so it can be taken to the Supervisors showing that this would be a poor decision.

Mr. Lentz stated that there were several ideas offered. He asked if a dog park would be agreeable. Ms. Rodas wouldn't like a dog park, and noted there is a small one that TCC put in by the apartments, but it is always locked and is nothing more than a fence around grass/dirt and not maintained. Mr. Lentz asked about disc golf. A resident agreed that would be ok since it would keep the area natural. Mr. Lentz asked about walking trails. All of the residents in attendance were in favor of walking trails.

Mr. Seidler stated that the park wasn't able to be included in the comprehensive park plan done in 2023 because the land wasn't dedicated to the Township at that time. It was expected to be dedicated about three years ago but there have been questionable delays in the process. The delay in transfer also means there is nothing budgeted for the improvements at the park or the planning that needs to take place prior to any improvements.

Mr. Lentz stated that the ordinances require developers to either give land or give money in lieu of land that can be used for park-related things. TCC has noted that the number of apartments that would be built would equal about \$300,000 in fee-in-lieu money, and in their most recent discussion, they are offering to increase that to around \$750,000 and do the work to build a park at that value.

Kelly Fogarty stated that they put curbing and sidewalk throughout the development but did not finish the section next to their house, rather they put three squares of concrete along the side of the Fogarty's house. Mr. Fogarty suggested the developer planned to do this all along based on piecing together all of the activities and stories.

He further stated that there was a delay in some other work or materials, so to keep their workers busy TCC sent them with excavating equipment to push off the land. When they pushed the dirt around, they covered and destroyed the cart paths which were supposed to connect the new sidewalk to the doctor office, the pharmacy, and the Jewish home. The employees told the homeowners that they were there "just to do busy work". Because this earth movement wasn't done correctly, there are big problems with stormwater.

Ms. Rodas added that the rent for studio apartments in Blue Ridge Village is \$2,000, so if TCC says they are providing affordable housing or doing something for the community, they are not. There are also a lot of HOA fees, which are supposed to be for recreation, but the pool is often closed and the tiny park is only for tots and is locked most of the time. Mr. Lentz heard that the rec fees are being used for the Linglestown Road improvements, and asked if that was true. The neighbors said that half goes to the rec features, and for 10 years they have to pay \$360 a year to reimburse TCC for the improvements on Linglestown Road.

Ms. Rodas stated the roads in the townhouse area were supposed to be dedicated to and then maintained by Lower Paxton Township, however they are going to remain private roads and TCC has to plow and maintain the roads.

Ms. Fogarty asked if the park would be intended for the neighborhood only or if it would be for the general public. Ms. Scott stated that with the size of it, it should be a community park, which is the larger of the two designations.

Mr. Smith stated that after the land is transferred to the Township, the Parks and Recreation Department will put it into the budgeting schedule to develop a master plan. That process involves the residents in the area and they can help shape what is planned there. He added that during the conversations with TCC there were ideas and park amenities discussed and sketch plans looked at, but those were done in an effort to gauge the intent of the developer. A master plan for a park is a formal process and uses a professional consultant.

Ms. Fogarty stated that the volume of residents in the neighborhood already makes it so difficult to get anywhere, and the schools are overly crowded. The wildlife uses this area and will be pushed out and will have nowhere to go.

Ms. Rodas stated the back yards have major drainage issues. Tom Yeckley has a corner lot and stated that the drainage was bad at first but the water is so much worse and can take five days or so to dry out after it rains, making his yard unusable much of the time. TCC has mowed the parkland once this year, and six times in three years.

Ms. Bim Arthun, 1412 Alexandra Ln, said that the builder had to add things to her house to work around the grading issues, and they blamed the problems on the developer. She had been unable to get grass to grow in her yard for over a year because of the lack of drainage.

Ms. Arthun stated that one of the paths goes close behind her house and she would love to be able to use it. She added that a walkable connection to Forest Hills and to Susquehanna Township would be great, and it would allow her to not have to drive everywhere. She added that the paths would be a much better place for the neighborhood children to ride bikes since they currently ride in the street. She noted that the amount of kids in the neighborhood is much greater than she expected and to have a place where they can be and not worry about traffic would be a fantastic asset.

Mr. Yeckley stated that the plans shared look like they would put a road across the creek, which would likely make the water problems much worse.

Mr. Seidler has walked the parkland and he stated that walking trails would be ideal use for this land, so that is what he would advocate for, especially as a member of the Greenway Committee. He noted it is important that the neighbors speak out because when the PR Board heard from TCC, they said that their residents want a fully developed park and that you had been pushing them for it.

Mr. Smith suggested that staying involved and present at the Board of Supervisors and Parks & Recreation meetings will help advocate for what you want in your neighborhood. He added that the Parks & Rec Board has not heard anything that sways them in favor of giving land back for apartments.

Taniesha Yeckley stated that her house is across the street from what would be the entrance driveway to the park or apartments, and faces those that back up to the parkland. The advertising for the lot that they bought emphasized the greenspace across the street, and more open space behind their lot equivalent to a football field, which then turned into another row of townhouses. The other attractive thing was the connectivity of the sidewalks, which also has not panned out. Had she known that those things were not true, they would have bought a different lot in the neighborhood.

Mr. Seidler cautioned that development of a parks takes time, and that even once the land is transferred, it will take some years till even just walking paths are repaired/installed.

Mr. Gallagher thanked the nine residents that came out and spoke to the Board, and encouraged them to stay involved. He also suggested that if the group goes to the Board of Supervisors they should plan to have one person speak and plan their presentation so that they don't each repeat what the others say. They will be more effective if they go frequently with new or updated information rather than spend a lot of time at one meeting.

AUTUMN OAKS UPDATE

Ms. Scott stated that Joel McNaughton told her he has opted to work with PPL because the wish list created was excessive. He emphasized that it might take a long time, and asked if the Township would be willing to take dedication without the parking lot lights. She told him that if he wasn't willing to accommodate the list of smaller improvements, she would be sticking to the developer agreement. He mentioned the option to close the park down.

NAMING RIGHTS

Ms. Scott stated that someone might be interested in sponsoring the dog park. She stated the part of the ordinance that regulates naming rights was written in order to solicit sponsorships to support the Friendship Center, so it isn't clear when it comes to outdoor facilities. Mr. Smith stated that the FC was the proponent, but the supervisors recognized it could be a new funding source for the parks and their facilities.

Members reviewed the ordinances. Mr. Lentz suggested consulting with the solicitor. Mr. Johnson stated that there is no bidding involved in naming rights. Mr. Smith clarified that the ordinance only calls for an approval process through the Supervisors if an RFP is used.

Ms. Scott stated there are improvements planned for the dog park, which will cost \$126,000. Yearly maintenance costs are not known at this time. She asked what amounts the PR Board would like to see if a sponsor were interested in a 5-year term. She also asked if the amount should be the same regardless of the facility.

Mr. Smith stated that the cost of yearly maintenance should be known in addition to the improvement cost. Another facility would have different needs, so determining appropriate amounts for sponsorships would vary from facility to facility. The length of time that the

sponsor was committed to the project can also vary, and when the term is over, another sponsor can take their spot.

Ms. Scott also asked for the Board's feedback regarding recognition of the sponsor, which has been avoided in the past. She asked if the PR Board would be in favor of a sign or some sort of recognition of the sponsor at the park. Mr. Johnson would be fine with it if it was a reasonable size and nicely done. Mr. Lentz would be fine with a sign if it complied with the color requirements that are in place for the sports organizations. Mr. Seidler noted that there is some flexibility since the ordinance isn't clear, so he suggested the sponsor can offer ideas and the PRB could review for changes to recommend Supervisor approval.

PARK UPDATES

Blue Ridge Village Park

Ms. Scott stated that YSM has reviewed the proposals from TCC and drafted mock-layouts for park amenities with and without the apartments. The plan is drawn as though it was a neighborhood park so it includes the typical amenities of pickleball, basketball, and a playground. Mr. Smith noted that disc golf in Swatara Township has tees and baskets on the shoulder of the walking trails, but this plan shows it in its own area. The cart paths are all in bad shape, so when TCC said they were willing to add connections between paths, they will actually have to replace all of the paths. Ms. Scott will request cost estimates to aid the PR Board in reviewing what TCC brings to the next meeting.

GIS Mapping

Ms. Scott shared the map and demonstrated the layers showing assets, incidents, and maintenance. The background aerial image is updated every six months. Pictures can be attached to the data. A great deal of work went into building this, and it will be extremely helpful to staff.

Cameras in the Parks

Ms. Scott stated the cameras have been delivered and should be installed shortly.

ARTS COUNCIL REPORT

Mr. Smith shared that they are enjoying the connection with the library and the display of artwork by local artists. The guiding document has been an ongoing discussion, and the members of the Arts Council are willing to work with it. It doesn't have a fully-free range to operate in, but the group is in a government environment, so there will be some boundaries to work with.

Ms. Mort asked how people stay aware of the book discussions. Mr. Smith stated it is on the website and facebook, and Ms. Crawford has an email list she uses.

GREENWAY COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Seidler stated the meetings have moved to the first Wednesday of the month at 5:15 pm.

The idea of going under Locust Lane is on pause for now until some other information can be researched. The Committee is working on a project to identify missing links in sidewalks and walking paths. This was done years ago, and was useful to the Planning Commission and the Supervisors, and an updated version will provide valuable information for when developers request waivers or deferrals for sidewalk installation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

The CEC did not meet in December, and they will meet again January 17, 2024, with Michelle Thompson as the staff liaison.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2024 at 7:15 pm. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Hiner, Recording Secretary