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Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee Minutes of the Meeting April 13, 2023

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: William Connolly, Chairperson of the Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Mr. Connolly led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were:

William Connolly, Chairperson, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Mike Diorka, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee, Warrington Township Supervisor
Lynn Laurelli, Secretary, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Joanne Mancini, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Christian Jones, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Melissa Conte, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc committee
Michael Parker, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Phillip Rittenhouse, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Patricia Tuberty, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Mary Roth, Alternate Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee

Attending Virtually Was:
Vincent Kelly a member of the public

Also present were Warrington Township Police Chief Dan Friel, Lee Greenberg from Warrington Township Emergency Services, Ivy Ross, Barbara Brown, Ruth Schemm, and Brian Tuberty, all members of the public.

Mr. Connelly stated that Ms. Albillar has resigned from the Warrington Township Board of Supervisors. The Board has appointed Mr. Diorka as her replacement in the Supervisor position of the Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee. All members welcomed Mr. Diorka.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Consider March 9, 2023, Minutes for Approval.

Mr. Connolly asked if there were any comments or corrections to the March 9, 2023, Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Ms. Mancini, to approve the March 9, 2023, meeting minutes. The March 9, 2023, meeting minutes were approved by the Committee members.

At this time Mr. Connelly stated that tonight's Agenda would be reviewed in a different order and Item 4, **New Business**, would be presented first.

2. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Safety Issues – Chief of Police Dan Friel

Chief Friel discussed the safety issues raised by Committee members that Mr. Connelly had shared with him. Chief Friel said that Warrington was becoming more walkable, and there were police concerns about how to monitor criminal activities. How do officers get out there, especially to patrol the miles of trails? Ideas include a bike patrol, using an ATV, mule, or bicycles. The carrier could be placed on the back of a car. It is important to determine how to get back to the area.

Depending on how desirable the space is, more folks would be inclined to visit, but it may take a while for this to happen. Some juveniles living in nearby neighborhoods could become a problem. The police department is seeing this at Lion's Pride Park. The perception of officer presence is a deterrent. The department is short of staff, but this should not cause a lot of problems.

No major crimes are anticipated. This is usually a safe place to be, and the dedicated staff keeps trails safe and active. Chief Friel did some research about vehicles that are utilized in neighboring towns. Remote areas can have call boxes.

Chief Friel asked if there were questions from those present.

Mr. Diorka asked if having more park stewards would help. Park stewards patrolling could help keep the area safe. Chief Friel likes the park steward system. They could patrol using mules, ATVs, and bicycles.

Ms. Conte asked for any suggestions regarding rules. There is an ordinance about ATVs, but teenagers take a chance and ride ATVs. Should the rules be posted at the entrance of the Preserve? Chief Friel thought this was a promising idea. They can share the emergency vehicle with Emergency Services to show presence.

Mr. Diorka mentioned the dog rescue team was in the Mill Creek open space. Did they notify the police and is this allowed? Chief Friel said the police should be notified. The group is not associated with Warrington Police. Should they report to the police they are on site? These are search and rescue canines – but does the Township want them there?

Mr. Connelly said there is no township permission for this group.

Ms. Ross said there was a phone call yesterday. The search and rescue team contacted Lt. Gottenberg but the dogs are off lead which is in violation of the township ordinance. They do not have a permit. Mr. Oles will contact the head of the rescue team. These are well-trained dogs, but the public should be made aware. Mr. Oles will let them know the rules. They must let Mr. Oles know and have a discussion with the Township. They provide a good public service, but it is up to the Board of Supervisors to determine whether they should be allowed to go into the open space. Chief Friel will follow up with a letter. The park is going to be under construction.

Ms. Conte mentioned that the access road is very narrow. Mr. Lingo's trucks use up the space on the entire road which is more like a one-way street. What about traffic patterns with the road being so narrow? It is like a one way access road. They need to make improvements for entering or exiting. Chief Friel said to look at the driveway and as this road becomes more desirable start there to address the added traffic. It is not a great access point now and it might need to be expanded.

Mr. Parker commented that there is little crime in the township. Maybe kids drinking? Does Chief Friel anticipate any change? Chief Friel replied if you open the space up it will be more accessible, just like Lion's Pride Park. The trouble will probably be from kids in the local neighborhood, but he does not see major crimes increasing. The structures present in the open space are meadows. The possible issues include graffiti and property damage, some kids playing a game, but they will be walking not driving. There are not a lot of structures to damage.

Mr. Connelly asked Chief Friel relative to Lion's Pride Park – is there spillover crime in adjacent neighborhoods? Chief Friel replied no, the damage is isolated within the park.

b. Safety Issues – Director of Emergency Services Lee Greenberg

Lee Greenberg said the biggest concern is that the trails are naturalized so they present challenges for emergency response in the way of access. For the average resident tripping over a branch and breaking a leg this is not so bad, but if there is a heart attack Emergency Services will need to get to the person quickly. Acquiring the ATV and aid is in the budget – not just for Mill Creek, but for Bradford Dam Park – and this is long overdue. This needs to become a reality. It is imperative to have "you are here" locator signs to give the location for a true emergency along with a corresponding map. Put them close enough. We need to be able to find the person. We will respond and we will get there. The ATV will be stationed in Station 78. It will be driven on Township roads. A normal golf cart will have special firefighting capabilities to put out brush fires and will have a stretcher on it too.

Ms. Tuberty asked about fire hazards – how bad are the dead trees or dryness. Mr. Greenberg replied that fire happens, and it is good for the underbrush. Nothing scares me here.

Mr. Diorka asked about future expansion of Station 78. Can we get the ATV to come from the back end and go directly into Mill Creek? We should see if it can be done – we should investigate this. Mr. Connelly said one trail will make the cut.

Mr. Connelly said not everything on the safety list is addressable by the Chiefs. Now is the time to address any concerns.

Ms. Tuberty mentioned the dying trees.

Ms. Conte mentioned #2 the dead ash trees – what is our vision to manage that?

Mr. Connelly said the general policy is to leave them be. Fall Hazard #1. Explore the Pennsylvania Tree Law where the obligation is to remove dangerous trees if they have notified Township the trees are dangerous. Public Works can survey if the trees are a fall hazard and plan for removal in those locations.

Ms. Tuberty said we need a list of Rules and Regulations.

Mr. Connelly replied that there is a need to adopt this and to make the neighborhood feel safe. Have the right rules in place and keep track of them.

Mr. Diorka said the Board of Supervisors emphasized the aspect of educating the public – the dos and don'ts should be published and available.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. MEMBERS' COMMENTS

None

4. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Site Visit to be Held on April 15

Mr. Connolly stated that the scheduled site visit will be this Saturday at 10:00 a.m. Bring maps to orient yourself. Go down the lane and park at the edge of the woods. Carpooling would not hurt. This is negotiable without four-wheel drive. Are there any comments or questions?

- b. Dark Hollow Wildlife Report and Survey

Mr. Connelly discussed the PNDI report. Fish and Boat identified a turtle concern. This is based on what they know plus what is being proposed to be done. The Dark Hollow project involved a paved multi use trail and culvert crossings. The report makes recommendations regarding construction practices. It contains a wildlife inventory that came from their advisory committee. There is generalized valuable information.

c. Rails and Trails Guide

Here they discovered a variety of wildlife. We should conduct a survey with a professional looking and listening before we do anything.

Ms. Tuberty said you really need to know what is there.

Mr. Rittenhouse talked about populations of wildlife; for those that are not threatened and endangered, we do not want to take away more habitat. Ceasing farming and creating meadows enhances habit.

Ms. Mancini mentioned the reforestation plan and asked for a review.

Mr. Connelly said there are two acres. The back field to the left is the smaller reforestation area.

Ms. Ross said the reforestation approach can take one of several methods. One is to acquire trees for the least cost such as through the Keystone 10 Million Trees Initiative. Warrington is on the list to acquire trees for free. It is most economical getting trees for the left most field behind the Tuberty's house. We could start within the next month. These are all native trees, no invasives; thus, they will support local wildlife. At the back of the homes there would be larger trees, like the ones in the Weisel preserve.

Ms. Tuberty and Ms. Conte said they worry about this. There should be a buffer zone between the homes and the trees. Let's plan what will happen. We need to talk about reforestation. We need to have a thoughtful discussion.

Mr. Diorka said that people can come and be part of the final review of this idea. We need a plan, and we should get it together.

Ms. Ross said that with the reforestation we might be able to have the Township's own tree nursery, Tree planting would happen by the stream.

Ms. Conte said she does not want trees right next to her property. Mr. Connelly replied that when we have the walk we can discuss. Ms. Conte said that the trees behind her house are dead ash trees. A buffer is needed.

Ms. Connelly said that during the farming period there was not a tree in sight.

Ms. Rittenhouse said trees will grow in the meadow if succession is allowed.

Ms. Tuberty said that tree planting needs to be organized.

Ms. Ross said we need reforestation to bring the environment back. Wildlife was at a minimum during the farming period. When the area is farmed, wildlife is disturbed all the time. The land is constantly turned over. Now that farming has ceased, you will see an increase in wildlife. Warrington's EAC E bird investigations have revealed 217 migratory species in Warrington. The night skies ordinance protects these species. Remember the Eagles nest? Please report unusual wildlife sightings to the EAC if you see

something. The Blue Heron rookery has over thirty nests. We want to build the wildlife list up and add birdhouses on the property.

Ms. Tuberty said the Merlin bird app is a good one.

Ms. Mancini said trail cams could help as well as a native plant list.

5. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Ms. Conte said she would like to see reactions to the field trip be placed on next month's agenda. In addition, there should be a vision idea; does this plan fulfill the vision of passive recreation?

Mr. Rittenhouse asked what is the purpose of this whole concept? We should create a pro and con list.

Mr. Connelly replied that passive recreation is anything that is not sports. Many people can walk around and enjoy nature.

Ms. Diorka asked what is the meaning of "preserve" What is it intended to be? Program statements should be clear about what it is and what it is not. People will find a way to do something different. We are going to respect the environment, and this is how it is going to be done.

Mr. Connelly said we should know what is included and what should be prohibited.

Ms. Tuberty asked is the vision plan for Warrington residents only or who else?

Ms. Roth said that preserves in other Townships are great too.

Mr. Connelly said that the planning is for very few visitors, but from an environmental standpoint we are preserving an eastern Pennsylvania ecosystem the way it used to be.

Ms. Roth said this is how it was.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The next meeting will be Thursday evening, May 11, 2023, at 7 p.m. in the Township Building.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynn Laurelli

Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee Secretary

