

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Stormwater Authority Committee Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2024, 2PM, 3 Weller Pl, Upper-Level Municipal Training Room

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Robert Blanchfield, Robert A. Lammi, Craig Swinsburg, Kendall M. Mitchell, James Farley, Paige Strasko, Scott Kistler, Jamie Paetzell, George White, David Pyle, and Luke Gibson. Ryan Cummings and Bruce Hulshizer were present on a team's call.
- b. Absent: Ann Marie Panella.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 2:24PM

2. Discussion Items

a. Utility Fee Report

- i. Strasko updated the Authority members that there have been 215 appeals received, she has processed 94 appeals and of the appeals processed 26 were approved and 68 were denied, there have been 14 credit applications received, four have been processed, and there have been 18 pre-application meeting requests received, and 16 have been completed.
- ii. PTSA members also discussed making a point about warehouses and their lack of credit applications to that point. PTSA members also discussed decks, stone driveways, tier four calculations and if there is anything else that can be done to change or lower the fee structure.
- iii. Blanchfield asked that HRG and Township staff come up with more ideas for the fee such as a maximum for residential. HRG staff, Township staff and other PTSA members discussed re-evaluating the fees and tier structure in the fall in line with the budget review, and the need for the Board of Supervisors to be involved in the discussion. Lammi discussed the critical need for the Capital Improvement Plan and the prioritization of projects along with budgeting. HRG staff discussed how the Authority and Township staff are still putting out fires and have not discussed plans for pipe replacement that needs to occur and will be a large cost to plan for.
- iv. Charles Bellis commented that the Authority should be pushing the Meadow Avenue project to have those residents champion the program. Strasko discussed the comments she has heard from residents and expressed the need to create a larger sense of community beyond what people experience in their own neighborhoods or developments.

b. Stormwater Partnership Credits

- i. Blanchfield asked about the credit application for the Highlands of Glenmoor, Strasko stated that their application was received yesterday and

that she and Pyle will be reviewing the submitted documents and completing the credit review process as time allows.

- ii. Blanchfield also discussed the farmers and stated that he wanted to give them as much relief as possible. PTSA members and HRG staff discussed the credit structure, the percentage of credit allowable under an already established credit for other Townships and that this structure would only allow for 60% credit. PTSA members briefly discussed the credit manual and the regulations within it. HRG staff and Gibson stated that there needs to be a uniform rate for the credit.
- iii. PTSA members agreed that they will use the same credit structure that was previously discussed with the farmers at last month's workshop meeting and will assign them 60% credit. Strasko asked clarifying questions about the other land that is not owned by the farmers that they farm under the same conservation practices, and PTSA members agreed that the other property owners should also receive a 60% credit since the same conservation practices that the farmers follow also apply to their land. Other requirements for credits were also discussed briefly including size and acreage of farmed land. Hulshizer and PTSA members also described usage of land use codes for agricultural zoned land or utilizing county information of preserved farmland. White discussed the Act 319 program called Clean and Green. PTSA members discussed a Van Buren Road property where a percentage of the land is being farmed, and a percentage is separate for a dwelling. PTSA members agreed that if 50% of the land is being farmed, they should receive the same credit and that credit should not transfer to other properties or parcels. PTSA members also agreed that the credits should be given based on parcel since the utility fee is established by parcel and that the easiest and fairest method should be used to assign credits to parcels.

c. Lower Nazareth Commercial Land Development

- i. Blanchfield and White discussed confusion with obtaining development plans including possible internal issues with Bohler Engineering who was completing the plans for the proposed development in Lower Nazareth. White explained that Bethlehem Township was sent a copy of the plans to review, but cannot release them without the property owners permission, but he was able to obtain a copy of the plans from the real estate listing for the lot, that the plans are identical to what was in place before but the developer needs to go back to the municipality because their land use approvals expired and they had proposed an underground stormwater management system.

- ii. Blanchfield asked about where the runoff from the underground basin will go, and White stated that it would most likely discharge to the swale connected to the Meadow Avenue drainage system, but their design must meet the current stormwater standards.
- iii. Farley suggested reaching out to Bethlehem Township for a joint meeting and possible discussions of drainage in the area. HRG staff also discussed expanding their view to look at any construction in the watershed that may affect the drainage patterns. Gibson and HRG staff also briefly discussed Townships that are currently suing each other over stormwater drainage and runoff issues.
- iv. PTSA members asked about the plan process and when the information would be available to the public. White explained that the plans are not public until they are going to the county to record them. PTSA members and HRG staff also discussed flow requirements for stormwater discharge and starting the conversation with an information meeting with both municipalities.

d. Palmer School Stormwater

- i. Blanchfield summarized that PTSA members had noticed that runoff from Palmer Elementary School was not performing or functioning the way that it was intended, and that he had recently spoken with Jim Lawrence from the Northampton County Conservation District (NCCD) about the issues happening on site, as well as Rick Rosebury from Collier Engineering. Blanchfield and HRG staff discussed and described the infiltration and spray irrigation is not operational, and that the Township's municipal engineer is working with the project's engineer to correct the stormwater systems since the project is still in active land development.
- ii. PTSA members and HRG staff also discussed how the project should be an NCCD issue since the basin is not performing the way it was designed and approved, that it is still an unfinished project, that the ground is not stabilized yet, and that the PTSA should discuss with Carroll Engineering.

e. Township Staff Reports

i. Public Works

- 1. Kistler and PTSA members discussed the most recent bill that was added to SharePoint for the work completed by Public Works. Kistler described the heavy load of stormwater work, that there has not been much time for other activities, and that they are working on the most critical cases first, how the department is becoming more proactive for stormwater management, and that street sweeping is providing the biggest bang for our buck and helping to reduce materials collecting on storm grates.

2. Kistler and Blanchfield briefly discussed grass on the road being a stormwater issue, as well as a safety issue, Strasko offered to write a newsletter article about grass and how it pollutes and negatively impacts water ways and wildlife. Blanchfield and Kistler also discussed educational Facebook posts from Public Works related to how much material the street sweepers collect, inlet grate cleaning, and maintenance activities.
3. Bellis suggested including a QR code in the newsletter article to bring residents to a resource about grass clippings in the street and stormwater management.

ii. Public Services

1. Godbout stated that he was looking for guidance on how to best handle areas where there are no curbing and residents ask the Township for stormwater management. Township staff and PTSA members discussed asphalt berms, the lack of curbing in general areas of the Township, as well as the expense to the homeowner.
2. Kistler described the long-term maintenance issues with asphalt berms, and the current procedure where homeowners who have them installed with the Township sign a waiver for maintenance. Township staff and PTSA members also discussed concrete curb installations have to be designed by a professional, old ordinances and standards included in them for homeowner curb installations, as well as deferrals for curbing, how many roads in the Township currently do not have curbs, and the legality of installing curbing where there is none.

iii. Finance

1. Farley stated that he will not be available to attend the Authority meeting on May 15, 2024, and that he would provide Strasko with the necessary information for approval.
2. Farley explained that he would be looking for approval for the Township invoice that was provided to PTSA members at the last Authority meeting, and approval to transfer funds from the Township's account into the Authority's newly formed bank account. Farley also updated the PTSA members that there have been \$1.03 million collected in revenue so far, that there was a delay in billing collection for warehouses due to incorrect mailing addresses, and that there will be another update in May. Farley also stated that he had all the signatures needed for the bank except Ann Marie's the best methods for bookkeeping for audits in the future, invoices should be added to SharePoint as they are received,

Strasko added the invoices for the packet that was provided to members at the April meeting, and the current total for the July storm temporary repairs is \$712,000.

3. Bellis asked if there is a policy in place for penalties and late payments. Farley explained that typically penalties are added after the due date a month after they are mailed, that there are no penalties added this quarter, and the Township uses Portnoff collection services for debts owed to the Township.
4. Blanchfield asked clarifying questions about what happens with the next utility bill that will be mailed. Farley stated that he, the finance team, and Strasko are working on making as many adjustments as possible before the bills are mailed, and that residents and businesses have a month's time to pay.
5. Lammi asked if the school district and churches have paid the stormwater fees yet or not. Farley could not recall if the school district specifically had paid, but he did describe a church that had contacted him looking for their stormwater fee before the bills were mailed for their annual budget.

iv. MS4

1. Strasko updated PTSA members that she was still working on scheduling inspections with HRG staff to complete more inspections at once, that she is working on scheduling municipal training for MS4 and hopes to include police and fire, how they are still compliant with education requirements for MS4, explained that there was stormwater information available at Earth Day, Arbor Day, she would be writing a newsletter article about grass pollution, and she is still working on storm drain relabeling with the ESC to get volunteers together in groups to help educate more residents with each outing.

f. HRG Project Updates

i. Kingwood Street Construction

1. Cummings updated PTSA members that HRG is currently reviewing contractors' documents including insurance information, and he expects the notice to proceed to be issued within two weeks or by June 1, 2024, and that there are still a few tweaks they are making.
2. Farley asked if there are still supply chain issues for materials like they were facing last year for the emergency repairs. White and Cummings stated that there may be about a week extra on the

project timeline, but supply has not been a major deterrent like it was a few months ago, and pricing has come down as well.

ii. Drainage Project Updates

1. White summarized the May Engineering Report starting with 25th Street. White explained that HRG and Township staff will need to meet with homeowners, easements both temporary and permanent will need to be obtained, and they will be adding the easement details to the plan. White also discussed temporary and permanent easements needed for the Meadow Avenue Old Nazareth Road project. Bellis asked if there is right-of-way in residents' back yards for this work. White, Bellis, and Township staff discussed paper alleys and easements, as well as HRG's standard procedure for contacting residents.
2. White also updated the PTSA members that for Old Nazareth Road HRG is currently working on designing the sewer and subsurface testing for utility exploration and location. White discussed and summarized other projects including Bayard Street where HRG staff for Bethlehem is coordinating a meeting and the need for a memorandum of understanding between Palmer and Bethlehem Township to start working across the border, how working together may give MS4 credit to both in the future, that White would be making a site visit to Wedgewood next week, the survey for Schoeneck Creek was completed and they continue to work with Strasko for WRPP grant planting.
3. Pyle also updated the group that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) kickoff meeting will happen shortly at HRG, and they plan to move forward quickly.

iii. Stormwater Concern Reporting Flow Chart

1. White presented a flow chart that HRG put together to describe the process of how stormwater concerns from the Township's website are communicated, investigated, and followed up on. White explained that Township staff will review first whether doing a desktop review, or a field review, if Township staff feels that the issue requires more assistance, HRG may be called out to review, as well as the flow of communication from that point.
2. Lammi asked clarifying questions about the process.

g. Section 219 Funding Update

- i. Strasko updated the group that she has been working closely with Mary Himmelberger from HRG and their grant team to keep up with deadlines and submissions for the Section 219 Funding program, and that she

recently submitted support letters signed by Blanchfield and Lammi for Congresswoman Susan Wild.

h. Social Media- Purpose and Details

- i.** Blanchfield discussed his idea for a separate page for the PTSA to share information including work schedules, photos of HRG in the field, and educational posts specific to stormwater management like what Public Works has shared regarding their stormwater work and maintenance activities. Blanchfield discussed conversations with Township staff to ensure that Justine Caiazzo-Strouse was able to start and run a PTSA Facebook page.
- ii.** PTSA members, HRG, and Township staff also discussed the complaints received and viewed on social media related to the stormwater fee, and that less than one percent of residents are currently complaining about the fee and stormwater program.

3. Public Comment

- a.** There were no further comments from the public.

4. Adjournment

- a.** The meeting was adjourned at 4:43PM.