

## **Palmer Township, Northampton County**

### **Stormwater Authority Workshop Meeting Minutes**

**April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 2PM, Upper-Level Conference Room, 3 Weller Place**

#### **1. Roll Call**

- a.** Present: Robert Blanchfield, Robert A. Lammi, Kendall M. Mitchell, Matthew Gunther, Craig Swinsburg, Scott Kistler, Jamie Paetzell, James Farley, Rebecca Frederickson, Karen Celia, George White, Ryan Cummings, David Pyle, Luke Gibson and Zach Trexler.
- b.** The meeting was called to order at 2:00PM.

#### **2. Discussion Items**

##### **a. HRG Project Updates**

##### **i. Schoeneck Creek Update**

- 1.** White said we are continuing to monitor the bank pins, and with the rain we have gotten we should be getting some good data. Gunther said he's been to the site with the new Engineer.

##### **ii. Wedgewood Update**

- 1.** Cummings said the test pitting has been completed, and we received the info from the subconsultant. He said he would be reaching out to Kistler to aid in locating some laterals that were not initially located. He said the final design will be revised to reflect the test pitting data.
- 2.** Kistler said he checked on the area after the last heavy rainfall and it was looking good, with repairs performing as expected.

##### **iii. Storm Sewer Inventory Update**

- 1.** White said the guys in the field are wrapping up their loose ends, and once preliminary mapping is done, they will reach out to Kistler to help locate any missed structures as they follow up with them in the field. White said they have located over 6,570 structures to date, and we are not locating structures on commercial complexes because they are all self-contained. White said by next month he hopes to have an electronic draft map for everyone to look at.
- 2.** Blanchfield asked if the next phase is taking pictures of the structures and White confirmed. He said we are currently taking photos, and the assessment work will be the 360 view of the structures. The first phase will complete the mapping of the system.

3. Gunther stated that he would draft a one-page letter explaining the work that is being done so that all site personnel can have them in hand to give to any concerned residents.

**iv. Kingwood Street Status**

1. Blanchfield said he checked out the site today and everything seemed to be holding well. He asked Kistler for his thoughts, and Kistler said the repairs performed better than expected through the Winter. He said he is looking forward to getting the rest of the project ironed out and across the finish line.

**v. 25<sup>th</sup> Street Update**

1. White said we are still waiting on PennDOT. Pyle said we are getting the grant package ready to submit, which is due by the end of April. This will provide up to \$300,000 in funding for the project. Gunther said he is continuing to follow up with easements for the project. Blanchfield asked if any construction would be done in 2025, and Pyle confirmed.

**vi. Old Nazareth Rd Update**

1. Blanchfield said we will discuss this project later in the meeting.

**vii. Hobson Street Detention Basin Update**

1. Cummings said the preliminary design is in progress right now and we met with the Conservation District last week on the site. Cummings said the biggest thing to come out of the meeting was the complications of adding the paved trail on the spillway. He suggested simply grading the area to allow for a paved surface to be added in the future once the permits are closed out. Blanchfield asked if there were any complications with the portion added and Cummings said no.

**viii. Capital Improvement Plan**

1. Lammi said we met last week, and a financial model was presented which we spent a lot of time on. He said next year we will have two budgets. One will be for operating expenses and the other for capital expenses because we will be dealing with reimbursements which need to go into a separate account.
2. Lammi said we also talked about the current PennVEST work, and it became apparent that we have very poor communications right now. As the Treasurer, Lammi said he has not seen anything related to PennVEST. Farley agreed and echoed his concerns with how things work right now. He said we had an epic fail with this PennVEST situation, with bids coming in way over the asking bid. Farley said this was preventable, and it does not look good for the

Authority and should never happen. He said another reason it was rejected was because of material misstatements, and that the answers should have been reviewed by the Authority because this mistake is also avoidable. Farley stated that we need better communication between HRG and the Authority. Pyle said he takes responsibility for the lack of communication, and Cummings said the delay will only be one month instead of three. Cummings also discussed what caused the price change. White also apologized for the poor communication and said they will hold meetings internally to discuss improvements. Swinsburg suggested HRG really emphasize when plans and designs change so that the Authority is abreast of all changes occurring.

**ix. MS4 Credits**

1. Gunther said he has a meeting setup with the MS4 representative from HRG to discuss where things are at and develop a game plan. He said they will go out in the field to see how he does inspections as well to ensure that they get done as planned.
2. Blanchfield said that Gibson's firm is holding a webinar tomorrow at 1pm, and that the cost to attend can be reimbursed if submitted to Farley.
3. Blanchfield asked if there was any response to the letter HRG sent to the DEP, and Cummings said it will be a few months before they hear anything back.

**x. Bethlehem Township Intermunicipal Agreement**

1. Gibson said he has had trouble getting in touch with the Township Solicitor, and he asked Gunther if he could recirculate the information to him as a reminder. Gibson said it needs to be approved at a Township meeting by the Supervisors. Gunther and Blanchfield stated that this will be good to get this going.

**b. Fox Run Retrofit SCM Project Assignment**

- i. Blanchfield stated that the total for all four of these projects comes out to \$378,000.00, without any construction costs. Blanchfield said it is his opinion to put a temporary pause on all four of the projects to wait for and see further details about the new DEP permit and its requirements. He said he would rather see the money spent on projects that can be done quicker. White said these are projects that are required under the current permit, so waiting for the next permit cycle is not in the best interest of the Authority. Cummings said that once we get the data back from the Schoeneck Creek project we will have a better understanding of which of these four projects would need to be completed in order to meet the permit requirements. He

said if you shelf these projects and potentially miss a PennVEST window, you run the risk of not completing the projects by 2028 which is when the current permit expires. Blanchfield asked what would happen if we don't have the projects constructed by the time the permit expires considering there are other municipalities not doing anything. Gunther said it would be beneficial to get some feedback from the DEP regarding our permit cycle and the progress we have made. Cummings said that they have been told the EPA will soon be going through the municipalities that are not meeting their requirements. Gunther asked if any municipalities are currently meeting their permit requirements, and Cummings said almost all of their clients are in compliance or very close to it. Lammi asked Cummings what the timeline would be for spending the \$378,000.00, and Cummings said we would hope to be done with final design and submitting permits over the next 6 months, so by October we would spend about 75% of the costs, with the remaining being spent in late 2026 or early 2027. Lammi said we would be close to running out of money around September or October if we proceed with these projects. Lammi said he is also concerned about sinkholes in these basins. Cummings said we always try to utilize the best practices when completing our designs. Lammi asked what would happen if we held these projects until 2026, and Cummings said we would not be able to complete them by the end of the permit in 2028. Blanchfield asked if all four projects need to be approved at the same time, and Cummings said you will definitely need Stones Crossing and Old Orchard for the Lehigh, and you will need Fox Run for the Schoeneck. Ideally, we can eliminate the Parkview project, but we won't know until the data comes back from the Schoeneck project. Pyle said we would be able to submit the first PennVEST request for reimbursement once construction would begin to reimburse all of the Engineering costs associated with the project. Swinsburg asked if it would be bid as one contract for all four projects, and Cummings said it could be bid as one in order to reduce the costs. Lammi said let's wait until the Authority meeting next week to decide how we want to proceed.

- c. Old Orchard Park SCM Project Assignment**
  - i. See above section.
- d. Parkview Estates SCM Project Assignment**
  - i. See above section.
- e. Stones Crossing SCM Project Assignment**
  - i. See above section.
- f. GIS Upgrade Package – Scope & 2 iPad Request**

- i. Gunther said this will allow us to remain compliant with outfall inspection requirements, which need to be met every year as part of our reporting requirements. Gunther said he will have a memo prepared for review for next week's meeting with the goals and associated costs such as hardware and software as well as training. Blanchfield asked if this is the same software that Kistler's Department uses, and he confirmed. Kistler said the devices cost about \$1,500.00 a piece and cost about \$45.00 per month for the cellular service fees per device. Kistler said we upgrade the units roughly every 3 years. Blanchfield asked Gunther to narrow down the pricing so it can be voted on at the meeting next week. Kistler said once Gunther figures out what he wants, Paetzell will help get everything ordered and put together.

**g. New Construction Fee Generation Process**

- i. Gunther said there has been a few areas in the Township where new houses are being built, and they are not being charged the Stormwater fee. As of right now, we do not have a process in place to handle this right now. Pyle said we could do a whole area update, or we could handle it on an individual basis. We could set up a process where once a CO is issued, Stormwater would be notified so they could ensure the account is set up for Stormwater fee billing. Farley agreed that the CO should be the trigger, and then we can simply look at the plot plan to determine the fee tier that the property is placed in. Pyle said we also have to think about permits that come in for structures or patios that could potentially increase a property's impervious area calculation and tier fee. Pyle said he would recommend updating this data semiannually.

**h. Grant Application for Schoeneck Creek (WRPP)**

- i. Gunther said Pyle approached him with this grant opportunity for the Schoeneck Creek project. Gunther suggested that Township Staff would be able to apply for this grant without the use of HRG. Pyle said there are some technical exhibits as part of the grant application package that HRG would need to prepare regardless of who is applying for the grant. The total cost for the grant package is \$8,500.00, of which about half is the technical assistance. Gunther said he will follow up with Township staff to ensure they are able to handle the grant application, and Pyle reminded everyone the grant is due by the end of May.

**i. Recommendation of Award – Old Nazareth Road**

- i. Blanchfield stated that bids were opened on March 24<sup>th</sup> for the project, with the lowest bid coming in at \$3.4 million dollars and the highest reaching \$4.1 million. Cummings said Doli Construction was the low bidder. Cummings said we will need to go to PennVEST for additional

funds in July. He said the original Notice to Proceed was projected to go out on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, but it is now being pushed back to August 16<sup>th</sup>. He said the estimated settlement date with PennVEST is set for September 24<sup>th</sup>, and Applications for payment coming in around November. Kistler asked if construction would be ongoing through the Winter, and Cummings confirmed. Cummings said a public meeting will be held after the Notice to Proceed is issued to inform residents of the construction schedule and other aspects of the project. He said we will meet with the Fire & Police Departments, the Public Works Department, and public transportation to make sure they are aware and to see if anything needs to be added. Gunther said he is still working on easements for the affected property owners. Swinsburg asked if the easement was for the Authority or the Township, and Gunther said it is for both. Cummings said the Recommendation of Award will be voted on at the May meeting. He said we will also be doing a site walk through with the contractor to ensure they understand the scope of the project. Gibson said his firm reviewed all the bids and that everything is in order.

**j. PennVEST Additional Funds – July Settlement Meeting Request**

- i. Cummings said we already covered this topic in a previous section. Farley said there are some debt schedules that were requested by Mary that he is working on getting to her.
- ii. Blanchfield stated he received the proposal from HRG in the amount of \$32,750.00. Pyle said there is some additional cost due to the Township being \$17,250.00. Pyle asked if the Township would cover that portion if the Authority will be responsible for both. Farley asked why the Township would be responsible to any portion of the proposal, and Pyle said it is because the Township is the cosigner on the loan. Farley suggested reaching out to the Township solicitor to discuss it with him, and Gibson agreed. Blanchfield said this will need to be approved at next week's meeting.

**k. Old Nazareth Road Communication Plan – S.O.P. & Flow Chart**

- i. Gunther said he discussed with Cummings developing a standard operating procedure so resident questions can be answered consistently. Gunther said he will continue to develop the procedure, and Blanchfield said it should be given to the residents at the special meeting later this year. Cummings said he will discuss with Gunther producing periodic updates for residents on the construction.

**l. Washington Street Discharge from Palmer Elementary**

- i. Lammi said he was in the area last week and noticed the irrigation going on. He said they are emptying the basin to gain access to the next arm. He

said we will have to see how it continues to work. Gunther asked if there needed to be any enforcement, and Blanchfield and Lammi said not at this time. Lammi recommended calling the Facilities Director to discuss it with him first.

**m. Township Staff Reports/Comments**

**i. Finance**

1. Lammi said that the revised budget will be on the agenda next week for approval.
2. Farley said that the transfer of collected funds would be up for approval at next week's meeting for monies collected in the first quarter.
3. Farley stated that first quarter expenditures would be presented to them at next week's meeting in the amount of \$384,479.16.
4. Gunther noted a specific invoice totaling \$1,247.00 for training of HRG employees and asked HRG to remove the bill citing it as a cost of doing business. White agreed to remove the invoice.

**ii. Public Works**

1. No report at this time.

**iii. Public Services**

1. No report at this time.

**iv. Stormwater/MS4**

1. No report at this time.

**3. Public Comment**

- a. None at this time.

**4. Adjournment**

- a. Lammi made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Gunther seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 4:21PM.