

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Stormwater Authority Committee Meeting Minutes**

**June 11, 2024, 2PM, 3 Weller Pl, Upper-Level Municipal Training Room**

**1. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Robert A. Lammi, Robert Blanchfield, Craig Swinsburg, Kendall M. Mitchell, James Farley, Jamie Paetzell, Paige Strasko, George White, David Pyle, and Luke Gibson.
- b. Virtual attendees: new member Matthew Gunther, Ryan Cummings and Bruce Hulshizer.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 2:01PM.

**2. Discussion Items**

**a. Appeal and Credit Update**

- i. Strasko updated the group that she has responded to 236 appeals so far, 65 of them have been approved, and credits for the farmers are still being discussed and finalized. Strasko and Pyle also discussed an education credit applied for by a church, if they have a Sunday school program or not, and how the education credit is set up in the Credit and Appeals Manual. Strasko also briefly discussed an article she was sent regarding Pennsylvania working to pass legislation that would require state agencies to pay local stormwater fees.
- ii. PTSA members discussed fees for credit applications and when to change the amount or hold off on charging for credit applications. Gibson stated if PTSA members wanted to make that change, they would have to update the Rules and Regulations they are currently operating under. Blanchfield stated that the Authority members should revisit changing credit application fees in September or October with the annual review of the program.
- iii. Strasko, Pyle, Gibson, and PTSA members also discussed credits for Anthony Ramunni who owns property that Jeffrey Raub farms, needing a formal agreement between Raub and Ramunni to finalize the credit, and if a template agreement should be created for future use with credit applications. Gibson stated that his office would work on a template agreement for the farmers to both sign. Strasko and Pyle discussed other issues with credit applications and supplementary information that is needed.

**b. Low Income/Fixed Income Program**

- i. Strasko provided background information including a letter from a Palmer resident regarding his low-income status and the rate at which the Authority is billing compared to surrounding communities. PTSA

members, Gibson, and HRG staff discussed low-income programs in other areas including Pittsburg and the City of Bethlehem, percentages of credit for low-income residents, and where their policies are found.

- ii. Gibson stated that his view is that the fee is for a utility, and it would be legally difficult to justify a low-income program. Gibson and PTSA members discussed how to manage a low-income program, if there were any state programs available, programs Township staff have already investigated, and if Township staff could refer residents to state agencies or representative's offices for utility payment assistance. Township staff discussed publicizing a contact page for low-income or fixed-income residents and where it would be available.
- iii. PTSA members agreed that they are not able to manage a low-income program at this time.

**c. Palmer School Stormwater**

- i. White provided an update on a recent field meeting at the Palmer Elementary School with himself, an HRG intern, Strasko, Kent Baird, Justin Stottlar with Carroll Engineering, and Shawn Casey with CMT Services. White summarized the current condition of the basin, what was discussed for possible remediation, the need for the water to be pumped from the basin to reduce water leaving the bubbler inlet, where water should be routed based on field views and discussion, and that Baird and Stottlar are working with the school on recommendations and next steps since the project is still in the maintenance period.
- ii. White also stated once the system is functional, they will re-evaluate to determine if additional drainage is needed, and briefly discussed the depth needed for a gravity flow storm sewer pipe from the basin.
- iii. PTSA members asked how to remove silt with an underground system and White explained that there are maintenance plans for the basin, pre-treatment for water and inspection ports with cleanouts if anything were to happen. White also discussed pumping the basin out until it is empty to keep the capacity high, and re-evaluating the system once the pump arrives and is in place.
- iv. PTSA members briefly discussed supply chain issues and Gunther suggested having the school order two pumps in case they need another.

**d. Billing Information Flyer**

- i. Pyle updated the group about the proposed billing communication flyer and that he needs numbers from last year from Public Works of any stormwater maintenance activities to compare with to show residents what their stormwater fee is being used for. Pyle also stated that he was hopeful to have Kingwood Street construction photos to include in the flyer and

asked about timing needed for the flyer to be completed. Farley stated that bills will be created on August 1, and the flyer will need to be completed and sent to the billing service by July 1, 2024. PTSA members and Township staff discussed how residents have many questions about where the stormwater money is going.

- ii. Blanchfield suggested continuing to include a billing flyer update for the next few cycles, that he and Strasko are still working on establishing the Authority's Facebook page.

**e. HRG Project Updates**

**i. Kingwood Street Construction**

- 1. White stated that he submitted the June Engineering Report on SharePoint, and the Kingwood Street project contractor is currently staking the limit of disturbance. Cummings added that they are finishing up the review of submissions from the contractor, there were no comments on the traffic control plan submitted, the pre-cast pipe is estimated to be delivered in about three weeks, and PTSA members and Township staff discussed a social media post about the adjacent section of the bike path being closed.

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

- 1. White stated that HRG resubmitted the PennDOT application and that their comments were split between stormwater and encroachment work for the project.

**iii. Old Nazareth Road Update**

- 1. White stated that HRG is working on utility encroachments, currently no new information for the project other than having to shift the subsurface utility exploration (SUE). Cummings explained that they were not expecting the SUE to complete a level B assessment which entails locating the utilities in question, that this assessment is necessary for more accurate information in the crowded roadway, and it will cost about 15 to 20,000 dollars over the original estimate.
- 2. HRG staff and PTSA members also discussed tracking expenses for PENNVEST, application and design timing that may be impacted by SUE boring schedule, and possibly needing to replace the sewer line and relocating it to the middle of the street.
- 3. PTSA members asked about a PENNVEST meeting in June. Pyle explained that each application requires a meeting with PENNVEST prior to submission, that PENNVEST agents make sure all permits are in hand, they double check the parameters of the project, and why it is needed.

4. PTSA members asked who from HRG would be present. Pyle stated that it would be Brooke Semanchik that previously presented to the Authority, Pyle, the engineer for the project, and the project manager, usually two members of the Authority and Strasko and Farley would be in attendance. PTSA members also asked about the scope of the project for PENNVEST, and if they need to know the estimate for the entire project. White explained that they are looking to maximize the capacity of the storm system at the end of the drainage, PENNVEST is only interested in the phase of the project being applied for, and that the meeting with PENNVEST representatives is scheduled for June 17, 2024.

**iv. Meadow Avenue Drainage Swale**

1. White updated the group that HRG is reaching out to the property owner for access to the area, once it is finished, they will present it to the Authority and the Northampton County Conservation District (NCCD). Cummings stated that they are still waiting for the property owner to respond and once they do, HRG will bring preliminary plans hopefully next month.

**v. Schoeneck Creek Update**

1. White stated that the project manager for the Schoeneck Creek restoration project is Joshua Sheetz, he is working on scheduling a meeting with Township staff and Authority members to understand what they want to include in the project and explain the restoration process. PTSA members discussed that this project would be great to share photos of with the residents.

**vi. Other Updates**

1. Blanchfield asked about an update for Bethel Memorial Baptist Church. White explained that the church has an outfall that was flooding Maple Lane, the church recently repaired the basin corner, and the grading was not up to par and the stormwater essentially flows right out of the basin. HRG submitted a letter, the church will need a standard rip-rap channel, the outlet needs to be rebuilt, and that the plans call for a four-inch pipe for the outlet. White discussed the PTSA members sending a letter to the Township to forward onto the church for the needed repairs. HRG staff, Township staff, and PTSA members discussed the difficulty of having the church complete any repairs since a previous engineer most likely signed off on the plans, looking through planning records for inspection reports, installing a four-inch restrictor, and that this case should be the Township's responsibility, questions for

the Township's solicitor, PTSA possibly having a say if the church submitted a credit application, and that until a credit application is received, PTSA will move responsibility to the Township to forward and share with the Board of Supervisors.

2. Blanchfield also asked about the development in Lower Nazareth. White explained that Bethlehem and their engineers are not in a place to release plans, that they are going back through land approvals due to expirations, and that the suggested basin is still a possibility for the original area. PTSA members and HRG staff briefly discussed how this project fits in with the PTSA's responsibilities, and if there should be a joint meeting with Bethlehem Township regarding the project. Cummings stated that he is waiting on Bethlehem Township staff to respond to a meeting about Bayard Street and that should open the door to communications between the two Township's and Authorities.

**f. Section 219 Funding Update**

- i. Strasko stated that Senator Casey's office received the funding request, and the state representatives are not waiting for any other information from the Township for this funding. Strasko is waiting to hear back on updates of funding and next steps to continue working with HRG through the application and funding process.

**3. Public Comment**

- a. Farley commented that they collected an additional \$291,000 for the first billing cycle, and he is waiting for checks to be delivered and will need PTSA member signatures for the checks.

**4. Adjournment**

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 3:23PM.