

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Stormwater Authority Committee Meeting Minutes

February 13, 2024, 2:00PM, 3 Weller Pl, Upper-Level Municipal Training Room

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Robert Blanchfield, Kendall M. Mitchell, Robert A. Lammi, James Farley, Craig Swinsburg, and Paige Strasko. Virtual attendees: David Pyle, George White, Luke Gibson, Jamie Paetzell, Ryan Cummings, Philip Godbout, and Bruce Hulshizer
- b. Absent: Scott Kistler and Ann Marie Panella
- c. The meeting started at 1:59PM.

2. Discussion items

a. PENNVEST funding discussion

i. PENNVEST Funding Timeline

- 1. Pyle discussed HRG’s experience and history with the PENNVEST funding program noting that HRG has been submitting application’s to PENNVEST since 1990, and funds won by HRG for clients since then and just in 2024.
- 2. Lammi asked why the process took almost two years. Committee members, HRG and Township staff discussed how the timeline for funding was built into the budget, and that there are other cash projects that the Authority will be starting in the next few months. Authority members also discussed paying for HRG’s services upfront prior to receiving PENNVEST or grant funding, and HRG stated those payment aspects were also included in the approved budget.
- 3. HRG also discussed that Palmer is ahead of the curve because priority projects have already been identified and funding can be applied for sooner than if the Authority still had to determine projects that need to be funded. Pyle also discussed condition assessments for existing infrastructure, a rough timeline of PENNVEST submissions for Meadow Avenue Phase One, Wedgewood repairs, and the first phase of Pollutant Reduction Plan (PRP) projects.
- 4. Hulshizer explained the process that Bethlehem Township followed and how it worked for their projects.
- 5. Lammi asked about how the Section 219 funding fit into the budget and Strasko explained that the funding was not guaranteed yet and the possible grant still needed to go through Congress, and they had not established the funding guidelines yet.
- 6. Blanchfield asked Strasko to discuss the email that was received from a PENNVEST representative for the Authority. Strasko

explained that Rebecca Hayden, who is a PENNVEST reviewer had sent an email to the Township administration offering to meet with Authority members to answer any questions they may have about the program. Strasko stated that it would be worthwhile getting to know her but was unsure if she could offer any new information for Authority members. HRG also explained that Authority members and representatives will have to meet with PENNVEST officials in April prior to submitting their application.

7. Blanchfield also asked for more information on FEMA low interest loans that were recently discussed among Township staff. Farley explained that there was a FEMA representative present at a Board of Supervisors meeting that discussed zero to low interest loans for small businesses affected by the storms in the summer, but Farley's understanding was that the Township may not be able to apply for the loans, the Authority would have needed an approved project to apply for, and the open period ended in December 2023. Farley and HRG reiterated that PENNVEST would be the best funding option moving forward.

b. HRG Project Updates

i. Meadow Avenue Swale Proposal

1. White summarized the public meeting for Meadow Avenue and asked if any Authority members had any questions. Blanchfield asked what the next steps are to move forward, and White explained that HRG will be looking Authority approval at the next meeting to accept their recommendations for remediation and begin moving forward with phase one.
2. Lammi asked about hydraulics calculations for the 25-year storm and if these calculations would be beneficial considering the increased storm intensity and frequency. White explained that current Township ordinances only require designs to the 25-year storm and that HRG does feasibility studies to ensure that the system is the largest it can possibly be within reason and construction constraints of the area, and that drainage is modeled multiple ways to find the best mitigation methods.
3. Lammi also asked about plan submission process. White and Strasko discussed that HRG would submit plans to the Township and Authority, and Township staff would review in detail to inform Authority members of any changes.
4. Authority members, HRG, Township staff and Gibson discussed the need for easements in various phases of the Meadow Avenue project and HRG clarified that easements will need to be in hand to settle with PENNVEST but not to apply. HRG and Authority members also discussed timing to obtain easements, and if there

are backup plans if property owners will not work with the Authority for construction and drainage easements.

5. HRG staff also discussed plans for the swale in Lower Nazareth that drains toward Meadow Avenue. Plans included defining and stabilizing the swale and removing vegetation to ensure that the swale functions properly. HRG staff mentioned that the current property owner has an active NPDES permit, HRG already had a meeting with Conservation District staff to discuss the project, that the Authority would be added as a co-permittee to the existing NPDES permit while the work was being done, but once the site is stabilized to 70%, the Authority can be removed from the permit.
6. Authority members had clarifying questions related to what 70% stabilization looks like, if there were any other easements that would need to be obtained for this project, and what needs to be done at the Authority's end. Strasko confirmed that this proposal would be added to the monthly meeting agenda.

ii. Meadow Avenue Phase 1 Recommendations

1. White stated that he was renaming the project Old Nazareth Road Drainage Improvements following comments from the public at the January 30 meeting.
2. White discussed the various aspects of the project proposal including phases of construction, the need for a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory study to ensure there are not endangered species that may be affected by construction activities, easements needed, conceptual pipe layouts for the 25-year storm, exemption from NPDES since the work is considered road maintenance activity, that the final design and bidding would be prepared for an August submission to PENNVEST. White also discussed the need for a survey of the area to better understand costs, the current estimate for the project is \$250,000, and he will submit a proposal on SharePoint prior to next week's meeting.
3. Pyle mentioned that to stay on track to submit to PENNVEST in August, the Authority needed to vote next week. Authority members agreed and discussed the public visibility of the project and the need to spread the news using social media, the Township newsletter, and the Township website.
4. Authority members asked about the PRP value of the project, but Cummings confirmed that there are currently no sediment reductions required in the Bushkill watershed.

iii. Fox Run

1. Strasko stated that this was asked to be added to bring Authority members up to date on what this project was for.

2. White and Cummings explained that the Township asked HRG to look at drainage in Fox Run because the developer did not finish installing a swale or piping between two neighbors. Godbout confirmed that Township staff will be bidding and administering this project.
3. Lammi asked who would be paying for the project. Farley stated that the last he had checked, the Township was still holding funds from the developer's account for the project.

iv. Wedgewood Proposal

1. White and Cummings discussed that this proposal would be for final repairs to Wedgewood Drive following temporary repairs from flash flooding damage in July 2023. White also explained that this project was originally established under the Township, and discussed proposed tributary collection system installation and design, what the issues with the current system design are, how construction can be done in two phases, increasing capacity, erosion potential on the slopes below Wedgewood Drive and above Chain Dam Road, grading needed for culverts to drain, expanding the survey area, being under the acre threshold for an NPDES permit, assumptions for surveys and current cost estimates.
2. Cummings and White discussed the current cost estimate is \$139,000 including the need for a consultant to complete subsurface utility locations and other expenses that may arise during the project.
3. Authority members, HRG staff, Township staff and Gibson discussed who would be taking the lead on obtaining easements and Township staff and Authority members stated that they would have a discussion with other Township officials to determine who would be appropriate to obtain needed easements.
4. Blanchfield asked what is expected of the Authority and White stated they are looking for proposal approval at the February meeting.

v. PRP projects

1. Cummings discussed requirements for the different watersheds in Palmer Township, that there are currently no reduction requirements for the Bushkill, but there are for Schoeneck Creek and Lehigh River since they are impacted by sediment. The Lehigh River watershed is required to have a reduction of 110,000 pounds of sediment and the Schoeneck has a reduction of 85,000 pounds of sediment. Cummings briefly discussed six potential projects in the Lehigh River watershed that will help meet the PRP requirements and stated that they needed to visit the sites to

determine the feasibility of work, and that there would be more details for projects to share with Authority members in March.

2. Cummings also discussed possible permit changes in the coming years to move away from sediment reduction and thereby reducing the amount of credit for stream restoration projects.
3. Cummings also briefly mentioned that Kingwood Street construction bids are being finalized and submitted to the Township soon and discussed Authority members approving bid release in February to ensure the project is completed within the proposed timeframe.

vi. Draft Capital Improvement Plan

1. Pyle summarized past discussions of a capital improvement plan, what it would look like, and how it would help Authority members complete long term project planning for the future. Pyle also discussed the list of 80 projects that Tom Adams previously compiled, projects being grouped into different priority levels, how the Authority and Township staff could rank priority projects using various criteria and what factors are important in prioritization, and that having a long-term plan may help the Authority receive more funding in the future. Pyle also briefly discussed that a cost estimate would be provided once they could accurately estimate how many engineering hours the capital improvement plan will take, and that these project assignments are usually done on a time and materials basis.
2. Authority members discussed the timing of capital improvement plan completion if they push off the project assignment until March or April. Pyle thought that the plan would be completed by the end of the year if the Authority approves the project assignment within the next month.
3. Blanchfield asked about any other project updates and White stated that the Engineer's Report was on SharePoint for the Authority to review.

c. Discussion of Geotech engineering consultant

- i. White discussed Shawn Casey from CMT services that is currently contracted with Palmer Township as the Geotech consultant. White discussed having the Authority sign a Master Services Agreement with Casey so that HRG is authorized for utilizing his services when needed for stormwater work. White discussed introducing Casey to the Authority members, possibly at the March workshop meeting, and clarified that the Authority would be contracting Casey's services not HRG. Authority members agreed to meet with Casey at the March workshop meeting.

d. Website Invoice

- i. Strasko explained that she misunderstood the price quoted for the website updates, that the estimated \$300 was for an addition of one webpage, there were two pages added as well as other tabs and information, and the invoice total was roughly \$2,000.
- ii. Blanchfield stated that the cost was worthwhile to have exactly what the Authority was looking for. Authority members agreed and Strasko stated that she would add an item to the upcoming agenda for official approval of the website invoice from NA Studios since the Authority had originally approved a do not exceed limit.

e. GIS Updates

- i. Strasko briefly summarized that she and Godbout attended meetings with HRG, Public Works, and Entech engineering to discuss and understand what the Township currently has for a GIS database, what is lacking, who the users are, various layers that different departments may be interested in using and maintaining, that HRG will be working with Township staff on storm sewer GIS updates, and Strasko was recently shown where stormwater concern reports are stored on the Township's GIS database.

f. Spreadsheet for data tracking

- i. Strasko stated that this item was included on the agenda to discuss the spreadsheet that Kistler had uploaded to SharePoint that tracks man hours, rates, equipment used, and materials needed to complete stormwater jobs. Farley explained that this spreadsheet would be used as a backup for the quarterly invoice to the Authority and that it would be updated to include an administrative tab that would log other employees' hours such as himself and Strasko when completing stormwater administration.
- ii. Farley asked Gibson about the status of the EIN number from the IRS, and Gibson stated that there was nothing new yet and that more information was submitted to the IRS on February 2.
- iii. Farley also discussed Dallas Data updates with the Authority members, that their staff are working on updating the bill statements with stormwater information and he is hoping for a draft of the bill by the end of the week. Farley also discussed express bill pay customers and online payments, where funds will go until the Authority receives an EIN number to establish its own bank account, that existing utility accounts should not have any problems with the stormwater fee addition, but that there may be some issues with the new accounts that are established for other lots that do not already receive a utility bill. Farley discussed the timing of when staff wanted to have bills mailed, and when payment would be due.

g. Section 219 Funding Update

- i. Strasko gave the group a brief update that she had another meeting with Tatamy to talk about more specific project details, that she was bringing HRG in to help manage the timeline of funding, she recently submitted the

letter of intent and explained that the letter of intent is to show the Army Corps of Engineers that there is a real project with a non-federal entity that understands they need to cost share a portion of the project. Strasko also explained that this is still very much a competitive process and that this funding is not guaranteed, but they have been authorized to apply. Lastly, Strasko explained that there are still unknowns moving forward because the requirements for funding have not been decided on yet, and that Congress is responsible for appropriating and approving funding, so the Authority will have to wait until 2025 to receive any money to account for the fiscal year and financial cycle of Congress. Strasko finished by stating that she was working on scheduling a meeting between the other two municipalities, their engineers, and HRG staff to determine project details, and how money will be split among the three municipalities.

3. Public Comment

- a. There was no one present from the public to comment.
- b. White discussed HRG wanting to have a third-party review of land development plans that are submitted to the Township for a regional drainage review that would include PRP potential, and possible flood mitigation measures.
- c. Authority members asked who would be paying for HRG's review, and White explained that it would most likely be added to the developer's fees when applying and submitting the plans.
- d. Authority members asked that Strasko discuss with Township staff and the Township manager to determine if HRG can have a third-party review of plans.

4. Adjournment

- a. The meeting ended at 4:31PM.