

## **Palmer Township, Northampton County**

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

**January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 2PM, Upper-Level Conference Room, 3 Weller Place**

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

- a.** Present: Robert A. Lammi, Robert Blanchfield, Kendall M. Mitchell, Matthew Gunther, Craig Swinsburg, David Pyle, Ryan Cummings, George White, Luke Gibson, Scott Kistler, James Farley, Philip Godbout, and Zach Trexler.
- b.** Absent: Lee Stinnett
- c.** The meeting was called to order at 2:00PM.
- d.** Blanchfield stated that he had one litigation item for executive session after the meeting.

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

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

##### **i. Schoeneck Creek Update & Presentation**

- 1.** Maura Hayden, HRG, gave a presentation to the Authority outlining the improvements to Schoeneck Creek. She explained the different types of structures and where they would be placed that are being proposed for this project, which include rock revetments, root wads and log vanes. She explained how these different structures would impact the stream and how they would help reduce the impact of storms of various intensity. She then laid out what types of buffers would be planted along the stream to help with flooding. Hayden stated that the estimated cost for the project is somewhere between \$1.8 and \$2.3 million. She said the next steps are going to be submitting the Chapter 105 joint permit to PA DEP, coordinating with the surrounding utility companies, and working on the funding strategy and construction timeline. Blanchfield asked what happens during the erosion testing portion of the project, which is projected to take upwards of 12 months to complete. Hayden said that the erosion testing is not tied to the construction permits, so both of those things can continue on at the same time. The only thing that it affects is the MS4 credits, which cannot be applied for until the testing is complete. She said once the testing is complete, it will take about a week to determine the amount of credit we can receive. White said the bank pins can stay until we begin construction. Blanchfield stated that there is a basic engineering charge of \$99,500.00 and a supplement charge of \$15,000.00 and asked how far into the project those two bills would get them, and Joshua Sheetz of HRG told him that it would

get them to project bidding. No other expenditures should be expected prior to construction.

2. Bellis asked which type of structure would be the most sustainable and last against multiple floods a year, and Hayden stated that rock revetments are the most stable solution, but that we would not be able to receive and MS4 credits for their installation. With that in mind, she said we won't use them unless we have to. White said that both the log vanes and root wads would also last against floods, but that we want to use the log vanes most frequently. Hayden stated that log vanes are expected to withstand up to a 10-year flood. She explained that, while the logs are natural, they are fortified into the stream. Sheetz stated that once everything is stabilized, it becomes a natural feature of the stream.

## **ii. Wedgewood Update & Presentation**

1. Blanchfield announced that the temporary repairs were completed around the holidays by the Township Public Works Department. Joshua Sheetz, HRG, presented the engineering construction plans for the project. He said that they are proposing a completely new storm sewer system from the discharge point all the way up to Mountain View Avenue. We are proposing to substantially expand the collection network by increasing the number of inlets and spurs and adding curbing in specific places. He stated that the biggest improvement to the system will be that none of the water will be discharged from the system until it gets below Chain Dam. Sheetz said the phasing of the construction project is up for discussion and pointed out that doing it all at once would be the most cost-effective option. He said the biggest obstacle right now is dealing with all of the existing utilities in the area, which are mainly water, gas, and sanitary sewer lines. He said the option that would address some of the issues quicker is to phase the project and begin work on the lower end first. White said the lower half of the project, Phase 1, is pretty much ready to go to bid. Sheetz stated that the estimate for the total project cost is \$4.2 million, with the lower half costing about \$1.3 million. White said it would be cheaper to do the whole project all at once, but there would be a delay in construction of about a year due to gas line relocation. Blanchfield asked Kistler if the temporary repairs would last another year, and he stated that he believes they will. Swinsburg asked if it made any sense to do the intersection of Wedgewood and Old Orchard first so that it can handle what is coming down Old Orchard. Cummings

and Sheetz said that there is not too much to gain from doing this. Blanchfield asked what the timeline would look like if we did phase 1 first, and Pyle said the next PENNVEST opening would be in May, which would mean that construction being able to start around November/December. Kistler stated that getting phase 1 done as soon as possible would be ideal from a safety perspective. Pyle said that originally, we were looking into entering into PENNVEST in November 2025, which would allow us to begin construction in the Spring of 2026. Kistler asked if the whole project would be ready to go by November 2025. White said you would save about a year by splitting the projects into Phase 1 and 2. Lammi suggested to the Authority to remember the expense of the project and all the obligations for other projects that they are working on. Swinsburg stated that Phase 1 is much more important than Phase 2. Kistler suggested adding additional inlets to the chokepoint to hold the project over until Phase 2 is ready to go. Blanchfield stated that the Board all believes completing Phase 1 is a priority, and that we can look at a possible submittal to PENNVEST in May of 2025 and construction beginning in 2026. White stated that construction may not begin in November, but we can at least begin ordering materials for the project if we secure the funding. Cummings said we will keep pushing forward with the utility companies in the meantime.

**iii. Storm Sewer Inventory Update & Presentation**

1. White stated that over 400 structures have been located already, and that all of the data is available on the existing GIS database that is accessible to the Township. He said there are 2 guys out there every day and they are looking to double that in the coming weeks.

**iv. Kingwood Street Status**

1. Blanchfield stated that the emergency repairs have been completed and that the area will be stable for the winter.

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

1. White stated that the design is ready to be resubmitted to PennDOT, and that they are waiting for PennDOT to get back to them in order to proceed.

**vi. Old Nazareth Rd Update – Engineering Progress**

1. Blanchfield stated that we have received the designs from HRG as well as comments from both the Township Engineer, Carroll, and Entech. He said the anticipated bid date is still February 10<sup>th</sup>. Cummings said they will be handing over the easements to the

Township soon. Blanchfield stated that we are looking at early February to hold a meeting with residents in the area to discuss all the project details. Godbout said the meeting will be advertised and letters will be sent to all residents.

**vii. Hobson Street Detention Basin Update & Presentation**

1. Cummings stated that monitoring is still ongoing at the site and will continue for several months. Cumings said that this basin is so important because over 450 acres of water are coming into it. He said they are proposing to retrofit the existing basin and install a 3 celled system. He stated the existing basin is lined and we will keep it that way, and that we will meet with the Geotechnical engineer to discuss what the proper liner would be. The existing liner will likely be removed when the site is excavated. He said with the way it is set up right now, we are getting about 61,000 pounds of sediment reduction per year. He said we do have the option to use the survey land cover option to bump this up to 67,500 pounds of sediment reduction, which is what we hope to proceed with. Cummings said the only other caveat is a low-lying area on Milford Street, where they are looking to place a small retainage structure in order to pool about a foot of water, with a small outlet at the bottom to dewater the area. This will bump up the sediment reduction up to 87,000 pounds per year if the DEP buys into it. Kistler asked how long it would take to dewater, and Cummings said it would be designed to occur in 24-72 hours, and Kistler noted that there are residential properties on both sides of this area. Cummings said this is only exploratory at this point and no plans have been designed. He said they are aiming to bring a final design proposal in February.

**viii. Capital Improvement Plan Presentation**

1. Pyle displayed the draft capital improvement plan for their thoughts and comments. He said the first page covers what the storm sewer system encompasses. The second page begins to look at the top priority projects and their respective timelines. He said that in the front and center are the projects that are required to be completed. He said this will eventually be a working document that the Authority can make decision based off of. Another section of the plan will be a section designated to projects that are completed. He said eventually we can also include before and after pictures of the projects. The next few pages will be project specific, where it digs into general descriptions of the projects as

far as why it is helping and how it is helping along with pictures. He said we want these pages to be able to be printed and mailed to residents as project descriptions and invitations to attend public meetings. He said we also want to discuss the timelines and funding of all of the projects within the plan. These pages will aid in the decision-making process. Pyle asked if the Authority wanted to include the next section, which is a dot plot display of which assets of the storm sewer system are being affected and improved on a project-by-project basis. Gunther liked the layout, and Blanchfield liked the dot plot idea for each project, so long as it is not too much work on the backend. Lammi said that he liked the idea, but not necessarily for every single project that is being completed. Lammi asked if the assessment of the 81 total projects would be discussed. Pyle said it is not currently included in the plan, but that they felt it was too much to include in the plan. Pyle suggested that project cost has a large impact on what projects get done on a year-to-year basis. Blanchfield suggested that how projects are ranked is also shared within the plan so that the public can understand how decisions are made. Cummings said the main factors in the priority matrix are flood mitigation, public impacts, residents affect, feasibility of project, project timeline, operational requirements, and Township priority.

**b. Bethlehem Township Intermunicipal Agreement**

- i. White summarized that Gibson and his team drafted the agreement. Gibson said that the agreement was reworked a little bit, and that it will now incorporate a task order for each project. Gibson said that HRG is currently working on the first task order. Farley asked who goes for the funding for these projects, and Gibson said it will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

**c. 2025 Budget – Presentation to BOS, January**

- i. Blanchfield stated that the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will cover the 2025 budget, fees and expenses for 2024, and the capital plan. Lammi said we will also summarize all the activities from 2024.

**d. 2024 Audit Discussion**

- i. Lammi stated that he met with Farley to discuss working with the Township Auditors, SEK, who are located in Harrisburg. He said this will need to be approved at the next meeting. The plan would be to begin the audit in February, and it would be completed around April or May. The final report would need to be submitted to DCED by June 20<sup>th</sup>. The audit fee is \$11,750.00 with a one-time setup fee of \$1,500.00, for a total of

\$13,250.00. Lammi said the auditors will look at various documents and agreements that the Authority has as well as financials and internal controls. Farley told Gibson that there is not an account set up for the Authority with the DCED, and that one would need to be made. Farley asked if the Authority would be exempt from the tax report because it is not a tax, and Gibson agreed.

**e. Open Records Policy**

- i. Lammi stated that he took the Township's current policy and converted into a policy that the Authority can use. He said the policy was revised by Gibson, and that it is ready to be approved at the next meeting. Lammi said the second part will be to appoint an Open Records Officer, which just has to be one of the five Authority members. Blanchfield stated that he believes the Officer should be Gunther, since most record requests come into the Township anyway. Blanchfield said the policy will be up for approval Wednesday night and the appointment can be made then.

**f. Township Staff Reports/Comments**

**i. Finance**

1. Blanchfield asked if someone is keeping track of all of Public Works' costs for Kingwood Street, and Gibson said that HRG is tracking everything. Blanchfield said we will review these expenses at the next meeting, and they will be up for approval.
2. Farley again brought up the set up costs that the Authority owes the Township that total \$257,221.20. He asked the Authority if they wanted to pay it all at once or spread it out over the year. Lammi said we discussed spreading it out over 4 quarters and all agreed.
3. Farley said the final numbers from Public Works came in for the month of December, and that they will be included in the first quarter billing for 2025.
4. Lammi asked if Farley had an estimate on total revenues for the end of the year, and Farley said he can share the number with him and transfer it this week. Blanchfield suggested keeping it clean and including it with 2025 first quarter transfers.

**ii. Public Works**

1. None at this time.

**iii. Public Services**

1. Godbout said the cost for the Stones Crossing emergency repair will show up in the first quarter of 2025 in Public Works monthly spreadsheet. He said the project was started last Tuesday and completed on Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. The site is clean and there are some outstanding seeding tasks that need to be completed when

the weather allows. Pyle asked if projects like this should be included in the Capital Improvement Plan, and Godbout said absolutely.

**g. Sinkhole Presentation – Northampton County Conservation District**

- i.** The Conservation District gave a sinkhole presentation to the Trout Association in Souderton that was well received. Blanchfield said that he asked if the same presentation could be given to this Authority at a separate meeting that could involve the surrounding communities. He said he is going to try and put something together in the March/April timeframe, and asked if we could get credits for it. Cummings said he thinks we could.

**3. Public Comment**

**a. Robert Fehnel- 2049 Stocker Mill Road**

- i.** Fehnel asked if the final budget is ready yet, and Blanchfield said it has been finalized and that he can send it to him. Farley said that it is official once the Authority approves it at a public meeting.
- ii.** Fehnel suggested that all 81 projects should be made visible so that residents know their concerns are heard and they can hopefully understand that there is a lot to do. All agreed that this would be a great idea. Blanchfield said it could be linked to the Capital Improvement Plan.

- b.** Kistler relayed the message of a resident who had to leave the meeting early. The resident lives on Dunkle Street and is concerned about an area on his property that is an overgrown riprap area. The resident stated that he will not pay the stormwater fees until the weeds are trimmed, but the Township keeps telling him that the weeds are part of the riprap and that they should remain in place to help filter the water. Kistler stated that he directed the resident to reach out to Gunther to further discuss.

**4. Adjournment**

- a.** Lammi made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 4:32PM.