

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**  
**Stormwater Authority Meeting Minutes**

**May 15, 2024, 5PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room**

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Robert Blanchfield, Kendall M. Mitchell, Robert Lammi, Craig Swinsburg, David Pyle, Luke Gibson, George White, Philip Godbout and Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Ann Marie Panella
- c. The meeting was called to order at 5:00PM.

**3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 17, 2024, Kingwood Meeting on April 24, 2024, and May 7, 2024**

- a. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes from April 17, 2024, and Swinsburg seconded. The minutes passed by voice vote and Lammi abstained since he was not in attendance at the April 17 meeting.
- b. Lammi made a motion to approve the minutes of the Kingwood Meeting on April 24, 2024, and Swinsburg seconded. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.
- c. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes from May 7, 2024, and Lammi seconded the motion. The minutes were passed unanimously by voice vote.

**4. Public Comment, Other Communications**

- a. Strasko made a comment on behalf of Pat McPhearson 214 Oxford Drive and her idea of using money collected or saved from residential diversion meters for stormwater projects. Palmer Township staff and Swinsburg discussed how money is collected for the water company and the specified usage those funds have.
- b. Amanda discussed Bethlehem Township construction near Route 33 upstream from Meadow Avenue. Amanda discussed a planning commission meeting from the previous night, a sinkhole presentation from Shawn Casey, and asked what PTSA is doing regarding sinkholes in the area? White stated that the PTSA members hired Shawn Casey as a consultant for sinkholes and geotechnical expertise.
- c. Josephine Galloway- 2125 Stocker Mill Road
  - i. Galloway stated that she was keeping up with minutes posted on the Township website and asked if any new ideas had been discussed. Galloway discussed the commonalities of resident issues, residents in tier 4 and changes to the fee structure as well as financial changes. Galloway also asked if there are any considerations or changes coming now that three months have passed.



- e. Tina Walton- 209 Brentwood Ave
  - i. Walton reiterated a previous question and asked how long HRG is contracted with the PTSA. Blanchfield stated that there is an annual review of the program that includes reviewing the consultants retained for the Authority.
  - ii. Walton also discussed how the property maintenance codes and weeds ordinances for the Township need to be updated, she discussed how the zoning department drove by her home and sent her a notice for grass when she is trying to turn her yard into a native meadow not only for stormwater management, but also to grow medicinal plants for her and her family. Walton discussed the lack of noxious weeds in her yard, described how she sent an email to the Board of Supervisors (BoS), and asked why the Township is holding a rain barrel seminar if there are no credits available for the stormwater fee. Blanchfield stated that rain barrels are still a good practice for the environment, but the PTSA cannot manage everything.
  - iii. Walton then discussed the rate at which the fee was started, how the PTSA should have taken more time to plan out the program, that there are no solid answers to questions, there is conflicting information, and she wants more thought put into the program and the property surveys. Walton also stated that meadows were not discussed, and she is concerned about what is being discussed.
- f. Kevin Dotts- 1164 Stones Crossing Road
  - i. Dotts commented that he believes there was time and effort put into the MS4 mandate but does not believe that residents are being taken into account, the fee is unfair, the pending West Chester case may make the whole fee pointless, he discussed his significant amount of open land and that he doesn't want to do anything if it will be overturned, he would rather have a property tax increase. Dotts asked about car washing practices and Strasko and White explained changes to the stormwater management ordinance and new updates for car washing and that it would be difficult to enforce residential car washing.
  - ii. Dotts stated the responsible parties need to be held responsible, how the previous supervisors were asleep at the wheel. Blanchfield stated that stormwater issues have been longstanding since before the 90s. Dotts questioned how long it will take and that the fee process and goals are not realistic. Gibson clarified the West Chester court case for Dotts and other residents. Lammi also commented and Dotts described a scenario of installing swales with perforated pipes and asked if the credit would be negated if it is determined to be a tax. Blanchfield stated that it should not change the credit, but he cannot speak with certainty until it happens.

- g. Galloway commented again about other resident questions that have not been answered, how she is puzzled by the timing of the fee and the rate, how there have not been rumblings in any of the surrounding communities, that she hopes the PTSA members were expecting this kind of response, how the members are giving shrugs in response to questions, why the bill was sent out and that it was too much and too fast at one time.
- h. Walton commented again about her profession as a nurse, that she is required to follow best practices put in place in the healthcare field and asked how the Authority members would feel if their nurse shrugged their shoulders at a medical question. Blanchfield stated that the PTSA members are doing the best they can and the PTSA members and Township staff cannot manage all 10,000 homes in the Township.

**5. Reports**

**a. Solicitor**

- i. Gibson reported that his office was in the process of reviewing the contract documents for the Kingwood Street improvement project.

**b. MS4**

- i. Strasko reported that 157 appeals have been processed, she is currently working on completing 25 outfall inspections by the end of June, employee training for MS4 will be scheduled in June, and she published a street sweeper article in the most recent Township quarterly newsletter for MS4 education requirements.

**6. Committee Reports**

**a. Engineering**

**i. Action Items**

1. Blanchfield summarized the Kingwood project special meeting where PTSA members approved the low bid for Kobalt Construction, that contract documents were sent to the solicitor, and they are currently under review. Blanchfield asked Gibson about the timing of the contract review and Gibson stated that ideally it would be done within the week.
2. Blanchfield asked White about any updates for the Lower Nazareth land development upstream from Meadow Avenue. White stated there are no updates yet. Blanchfield asked about a joint meeting with Bethlehem Township to discuss the development and White stated that HRG is working on arranging a meeting with the Bethlehem Township Municipal Authority (BTMA) to discuss the Bayard Street project area.
3. White summarized the May Engineering Report discussing the MS4 permit administration, employee training and outfall

inspections. White stated that for the 25<sup>th</sup> Street culvert, HRG is responding to PennDOT's comments, the Kingwood project will begin in June, HRG is scheduling a joint meeting with BTMA for Bayard Street, the Meadow Avenue Swale is currently under design, and HRG is looking to improve the headwall and waiting on approvals from state agencies and landowners. For the Old Nazareth Road project, subsurface utility exploration (SUE) is being scheduled, HRG is working on easement mapping and contacting property owners, the target date is to review in July to submit for PENNVEST funding by July 31<sup>st</sup> for their August submissions.

4. Lammi asked about the timing of receiving funds from PENNVEST for the August application. Pyle and White explained that the PTSA would receive an answer about approval in October, then there are contract documents, and it takes approximately six to nine months after the approval to receive a notice to proceed. Lammi asked when debt service for the funds start, and Pyle stated that debt service does not start until construction for the project is complete. PTSA members and HRG staff discussed clarifying questions about PENNVEST process, payments for the project and payback requirements and timeline.
5. White summarized that the Wedgewood project final design is in progress, HRG completed a Schoeneck Creek field view today and assessed PRP requirements, the Hobson Street survey is complete and base mapping has started.
6. Pyle stated that for the Capital Improvement Plan HRG staff has begun analyzing projects for priority groupings, they will start with the top 20 recommendations to focus on. Lammi asked how the projects will be categorized. Pyle explained that location could have a factor, safety and health is a large component, grant qualifying factors, then the PTSA members will decide based on resident input. Pyle and White also explained that HRG is building a matrix to include cost, public safety, emergency access, and other determining project factors.
7. White discussed a proposed template for stormwater concern reporting using a flow chart discussed during the workshop meeting. HRG staff and Township staff also briefly discussed Bethel Memorial Baptist Church, comparing grading plans and determining a recommendation for sinkhole remediation.

**b. Finance**

**i. Action Items**

1. Blanchfield updated on financials for James Farley who was not present.

**7. Township Staff Comments**

- a. There were no other staff reports.

**8. Old Business**

**a. Township Invoice Approval**

- i. Strasko stated that Farley was looking for formal approval on the first Township invoice. Lammi stated that the Authority members had to keep in mind what was involved with the invoice including previous work and July storm damage in 2023. Lammi also explained that the funds owed would be split over four quarters and by the end of the year the Township will be paid back for start up costs and storm damage. Lammi explained more of the reasoning behind the invoice, that it is currently 27% of the annual budget, and they are not only paying the Township back, but also paying for outside services.
- ii. Lammi made a motion to approve the Township invoice and Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.
- iii. Godbout also briefly discussed the Kingwood Street project, and the sum of the project so far.

**b. Approval of Stormwater Receipts**

- i. Strasko stated that Farley was looking for approval of receivables for the Authority and wanted the acknowledgement of monies received to begin the transfer of funds to the Authority's bank account and reported that through the end of April, the Authority collected over \$1 Million dollars.
- ii. Lammi made a motion to approve the receivables and Swinsburg seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

**9. For the Good of the Order**

- a. There was nothing additional for the good of the order.

**10. Next meeting: June 20, 2024**

**11. Adjournment**

- a. Mitchell made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Swinsburg seconded. The meeting adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 6:11PM.