

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

**December 20, 2023, 5:00PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room**

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. Roll call**

- a. Present: Kendall M. Mitchell, Robert Blanchfield, Craig Swinsburg, and Robert Lammi.
- b. Also present: Paige Strasko, James Farley, Scott Kistler, Jamie Paetzell, Thomas Adams, Philip Godbout, Steve Gallagher, Lee Stinnett, David Pyle, and George White.
- c. Absent: Ann Marie Panella
- d. The meeting was called to order at 5:06PM.

**3. Public Comment**

- a. Blanchfield discussed that the BOS approved the management and lease agreements, the five-year budget, and the compensation for Authority members.
- b. Blanchfield asked for Strasko's input on resident communications following a recent storm event. Strasko summarized emails she received regarding flooding on Washington Street and Scotty Drive. Strasko, Blanchfield, and Lammi discussed updating the information sharing process, the Township's municipal engineer on-site to observe the stormwater flow on Washington Street, recent Conservation District notice of violations for the nearby elementary school construction, and concerns of the way the drainage system was designed. Lammi described stormwater flow on Washington Street and Hay Terrace as a resident in the neighborhood.

**4. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 15, and December 11, 2023**

- a. Lammi made a motion to approve the November 15 minutes and Mitchell seconded. The minutes were passed by unanimous voice vote.
- b. Mitchell made a motion to approve the December 11 minutes and Lammi seconded the motion. The minutes were passed by unanimous voice vote.

**5. Reports**

**a. Solicitor**

- i. Stinnett had nothing to report on for Authority members.
- ii. Blanchfield asked Stinnett and Farley about budget advertisement requirements for the Authority that were previously discussed at the committee meeting. Stinnett and Farley both confirmed that the Authority did not have the same advertisement requirements to follow as the Township, and that it was sufficient to approve the budget during a regular meeting and to follow the Management Agreement requirements.
- iii. Blanchfield asked Stinnett about the status of the EIN number. Stinnett and Strasko stated that the application was submitted to the IRS, and they are waiting to receive an update or EIN from the IRS.

**b. MS4**

- i. Strasko summarized recent MS4 activity including an illicit discharge that has been ongoing at Auto Zone, summary of history for the incident, a recent site visit to Auto Zone and her findings. Blanchfield asked about enforcement process and Strasko explained that she has been working with the Township solicitor to resolve the matter because the Township is still responsible for its' MS4 permit and enforcement of violations. Strasko had no further updates.

**6. Committee Reports**

**a. Engineering**

**i. Action Items**

- ii. Blanchfield asked for updates on the FEMA Building Resilient Communities Grant and Pyle stated that the application was submitted on December 15, and discussed a rough timeline following submission. Pyle also stated that he uploaded the application pdf to SharePoint.
- iii. Blanchfield asked for an update on a meeting scheduled with PennDOT about the 25<sup>th</sup> Street Culvert project. White summarized the virtual meeting and what HRG was planning on replacing in the area including a box culvert and sidewalk.
- iv. Blanchfield also asked about the Bayard Street project assignment and if White had heard anything from Bethlehem Township. White summarized discussions with Bethlehem Township regarding the FEMA grant and explained that they have not discussed Bayard Street yet.
- v. Blanchfield asked if the issues with HRG's billing cycle had been resolved and White explained they would be a month behind on payments for approval at monthly meetings. Farley confirmed the Township will continue to pay invoices to move projects forward. Blanchfield asked clarifying questions about action items for billing and agreements.
- vi. White also updated the Authority on the status of Wedgewood Avenue, and the MS4 program communications with Strasko.

**b. Finance**

**i. Action Items**

**ii. Embassy Bank**

1. Blanchfield summarized the discussion from the workshop meeting and the main points from the Embassy Bank presentation. Farley explained that they still cannot open a bank account until there is an EIN number for the Authority.
2. Lammi made a motion that the Authority retain Embassy Bank as their financial institution and Mitchell seconded. There were no comments on the motion, and it passed by unanimous voice vote.
3. Farley also discussed background work that he and Pyle have been doing to update the billing system with the new parcel information that had not previously received a utility bill. Swinsburg discussed

issues with billing for Bethlehem Township and non-profit properties that they missed in their stormwater utility billing. Farley and Swinsburg discussed Palmer's process moving forward and the learning curve of new parcels being billed.

## **7. Township Staff Comments**

- a. Blanchfield asked Kistler for an update on the storm from December 17 and 18. Kistler summarized rainfall amount from his weather gauge, which roads were closed due to stormwater flow and why, how long the roads were closed for, system checks where storm damage occurred in July, velocity of recent storm flows, and his determination that Wedgewood needs to remain a project priority, his check on the Meadow Avenue system, updates for 25<sup>th</sup> Street, and confusion on PennDOT's end about the 25th Street Project. Kistler also stated that he should have an update on equipment that he was looking to purchase for the stormwater program and a brief explanation of equipment type to meet MS4 requirements.
- b. Township staff had no other comments.

## **8. New Business**

### **a. Rates, Rules, and Regulations Resolution**

- i. Blanchfield summarized discussions during the December workshop meeting and asked if the discrepancy between the riparian buffer setbacks in the Rates, Rules and Regulations and the Zoning Ordinance had been corrected. Blanchfield, Lammi, Stinnett, and Strasko discussed current provisions in the Zoning Ordinance, and what the setback was changed to.
- ii. Blanchfield and Stinnett discussed and clarified other items that were discussed and changed during the December workshop meeting. Mitchell asked clarifying questions of Stinnett on changes and discussed discrepancies that could cause issues with developers. Strasko stated that any applicants must follow the more stringent ordinance regulations and Stinnett explained the reasoning to align with the new Stormwater Management Ordinance over the Zoning Ordinance.

### **i. Credits and Appeals Manual**

- ii. Blanchfield stated that the Authority needed to discuss the Credit and Appeals Manual because it was an appendix to the Rates, Rules, and Regulations document that would be passed by resolution. Blanchfield summarized what the Credit and Appeals manual is, what provisions are included in the document, and standardized forms for applicants to fill out when applying for a credit or making an appeal. Lammi clarified that the only item removed was the rain barrel credit, and Pyle confirmed.
- iii. Lammi made a motion to approve the resolution for the Rates, Rules, and Regulations and Swinsburg seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

### **b. Rates Resolution**

- i. Blanchfield summarized by stating the resolution is to adopt uniform fee rates for residents. There were no questions or comments.

- ii. Mitchell made a motion to approve the Rate resolution and Swinsburg seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.
- c. **Meadow Avenue Presentation**
  - i. White gave a presentation on the findings of the drainage study for Meadow Avenue and the surrounding streets that included details regarding pipe size, choke points in the system, new mapping technology that illustrates where and how flooding occurs, each phase of a three step approach, inter-municipal cooperation, proposed locations to install new stormwater infrastructure, how new infrastructure would reduce flow into the current system, clearing existing Township easements, negotiations with landowners, overall timeline, budgeting for the projects, total costs, and that the Township needs to schedule a date for Meadow Avenue residents to attend the same public presentation.
  - ii. Stinnett and White discussed landowner negotiations and paper streets with Authority members in more detail. Stinnett stated that he would research paper street provisions for Townships, and White discussed the current condition of the paper street they were proposing to use to install stormwater pipe. Township staff and White discussed other possibilities for location of new infrastructure, construction issues with residents, and existing utilities and easements in the area.
- d. **Bayard Street Project Assignment**
  - i. Blanchfield asked White to summarize what HRG is looking for with this assignment. White discussed drainage issues in the area and explained that the retainer is for HRG to get approval to move forward with a drainage study for the area and begin communicating with Bethlehem Township about a joint approach. Blanchfield summarized the timeline and cost of the project.
  - ii. Swinsburg made a motion to approve the Bayard Street project assignment for HRG, and Lammi seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.
- e. **Kingwood CO/CA**
  - i. HRG staff and Township staff discussed Authority review of design plans, what the plans encompass, project costs, typical process HRG follows for construction projects, timing for bid documents, when the project will start in 2024, percentage of engineering costs over the total project costs, other authorization steps the Authority will follow prior to the start of the project such as bid advertisement, project review timing for Township staff, and Township activities for the project prior to Authority formation.
  - ii. Blanchfield summarized by stating that the Kingwood Street residents were told that there would be progress on their street and construction in 2024 and the Authority did not intend to slow progress on this project.
  - iii. Mitchell made a motion to approve the Kingwood CO/CA assignment and Swinsburg seconded. Swinsburg clarified that HRG would be full time

construction inspectors for the project and White confirmed. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

**f. Federal Funding-Section 219 funding program**

- i.** Strasko stated that the Township was contacted by Susan Wild's office regarding funds that were earmarked for a joint project between Palmer, Stockertown, and Tatamy in 2007. Strasko was informed by one of Wild's representatives and a member of the Army Corps of Engineers that the project was originally for stormwater control measures related to sinkholes.
- ii.** Strasko also discussed funding requirements, match requirements, rough timeline to submit documents to receive funding, total award amount discussed of ten million dollars, Army Corps of Engineers designing the project, and history of the project as she understood it since no documentation related to the project application could be found on file.
- iii.** Authority members asked clarifying questions that HRG staff and Township staff discussed. White mentioned that they have other clients on the funding list as well. Strasko stated that she was working on organizing a meeting between Palmer, Tatamy, and Stockertown to determine if they had any interest in pursuing a joint project, or if Palmer would reapply for funding on its own. Strasko also stated that she would update the SharePoint with documents she received from the Army Corps of Engineers and update the Authority as she received more information.

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

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

**10. Next meeting: January 17, 2024**

**11. Adjournment**

- a.** Lammi made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mitchell seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 7:37PM.