

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Stormwater Authority Meeting Minutes

November 20, 2024, 5:00PM, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room, 3 Weller Place

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

- a. Present: Robert Blanchfield, Craig Swinsburg, Robert A. Lammi, Kendall M. Mitchell, Matthew Gunther, Ryan Cummings, George White, Luke Gibson, Scott Kistler, James Farley, and Paige Strasko.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 16, 2024, and November 12, 2024.

- a. Lammi made a motion to approve the minutes from October 16, 2024, and Gunther seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.
- b. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes from November 12, 2024, and Lammi seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. Public Comment, Other Communications

- a. Robert Fehnel- 2049 Stocker Mill Road
 - i. Fehnel commented that there was no budget posted in the agenda packet, that David Pyle had not responded yet to his request for information regarding how many properties are in each tier, and asked how the budget was created. Blanchfield provided Fehnel with a paper copy of the budget.
- b. Pat McPhearson- 214 Oxford Drive
 - i. McPhearson discussed math figures and calculations she did with tier information and property information she heard at past meetings and that she was hoping for a reduction in the fee in 2025. Blanchfield clarified that there will be no reduction in the fee and McPhearson asked for an explanation, discussed how the fee is not equitable, asked how apartments are being charged, discussed property categories, having set fees for types of businesses and residential properties every quarter, how tier four fees are higher than the Township taxes she is paying, fees for surrounding Townships, how there are more homes being built to charge, building in a stormwater fee for developers, that the Authority cannot go back and charge existing residents, that heating her home is her priority, and that she will only pay what she thinks is fair for stormwater.
- c. Fehnel asked where the revenue was shown on the budget because he could only see expenses. Lammi and Blanchfield stated that the income was roughly five million dollars, Fehnel and Farley discussed revenue estimates, and that there are 9,100 parcels in the Township. Fehnel, Farley, White, and McPhearson discussed the number of businesses in the Township, how utilities are broken down, square footage of impervious breakdown, and residents not being able to raise income the way a business can raise the price of goods.

- d. Charlotte Assisse- 3317 Bridlepath Road
 - i. Assisse explained that she previously filed two appeals, she is paying about \$400 per year, she is still working, Strasko and Pyle came to her property and did not change her fee, she called the state and they gave her a different definition of impervious area, how she has two decks, one of simulated brick, she brought photos of her property to share with the Authority, the fee is not justified, how erosion occurs every year on her property, that she has done everything to improve her property, and she submitted the photos and file to the Authority board members.
- e. Steve Dewalt- 1270 Tatamy Road
 - i. Dewalt asked about stormwater credit for farmers. Authority board members explained that there is specific paperwork for farmers required from the County for manure management and nutrient management. Dewalt discussed that part of his farm is leased to Gary Fehnel and he should have applied on his behalf. Blanchfield asked Strasko to follow up with Gary Fehnel for location information regarding Dewalt's farm and that the Authority will do what they can to assist.
 - ii. Dewalt and Authority members also discussed past flooding problems on the Schoeneck Creek, drainage areas, where Dewalt's property is located, and that gravel is currently considered an impervious surface.
 - iii. Authority members and Dewalt further discussed farm requirements, the size of Dewalt's property, relative number of animals on the property, and acreage used for pasture.
- f. McPhearson asked if the Authority members decided to be fair that they send a notice to Township residents and Blanchfield stated that there would be notice sent out if there were any changes made to the fee.

5. Reports

a. Solicitor

- i. Gibson had nothing additional to report.

b. MS4

- i. Strasko stated that she gave the annual report presentation to the Board of Supervisors on Monday, November 18, 2024, and that the slides from the presentation were available on the Township website. Strasko also shared with the group that she recently submitted her two weeks' notice and her last official day would be December 2, 2024, and she would be starting with Northampton County Conservation District.

6. Committee Reports

a. Engineering

i. Action Items

1. White discussed the November Engineering report that includes a tentative schedule for the Old Nazareth Road project, HRG is expecting to bid the project in early January, give a notice to proceed in April and have a preliminary discussion of materials for Old Nazareth Road in the next few weeks. White also talked about pricing for concrete pipes lowering, capacity differences between concrete and plastic piping that was originally planned for, and Kistler's suggestion for expanding the project area to include West Gate Road.
2. Blanchfield, Kistler, and White briefly discussed a new schedule for Kingwood Street, Public Works taking over the yard restoration behind the curb for the project, driveway tie ins, paving seal coat, and finalizing road work before snowfall this winter.
3. Authority members asked clarifying questions about manholes, materials and expenses, and discussed settlement.

b. Finance

i. Action Items

1. Farley stated that he had invoices for approval under New Business on the agenda, that they are holding payment requests from Kobalt, discussed the modified cash basis for accounting, and that the Authority would receive the full bill for the rest of the calendar year in December minus December charges from Public Works.
2. Authority members and Farley also discussed the estimated cost for the annual audit in 2025, confirming auditor attendance to the December workshop meeting, and sending year to date information to the auditors.

7. Township Staff Comments

- a. Kistler had nothing additional. Strasko updated that Philip Godbout will be out for a period to take care of family, and Blanchfield asked that everyone keep Strasko copied on communications until her last day.

8. New Business

a. 2025 Budget Review and Approval

- i. Lammi summarized past meetings with HRG, Township staff and Authority members, discussed fees by line item, that the Authority receives many services from Palmer Township, that they are working to establish an emergency fund of \$200,000 for instances of emergency storm damage similar to July of 2023, summarized costs for utility implementation, operation and administrative costs, capital project planning, PENNVEST reimbursement in the future, building a storage

building for stormwater equipment, and three capital projects planned for 2025.

- ii. Lammi made a motion to approve the 2025 budget and Mitchell seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.
- iii. Lammi and Blanchfield briefly discussed presenting the budget to the Board of Supervisors at their meeting on December 2nd, 2024, summarizing the payments made to the Township over 2024, and holding off on approving the five-year plan from HRG. Farley did not have any additional comments.

b. Invoice Packet Approval

- i. Blanchfield summarized the invoice charges from each vendor including \$4,622.50 from the solicitor, \$1,980.00 from the geotechnical consultant CMT, and \$73,899.89 from HRG.
- ii. Lammi asked that HRG identify invoices for subsurface utility exploration on future bills. White stated that they have not received the invoices for the SUE work yet, but they will be included for payment in the future.
- iii. Lammi made a motion to approve the invoices presented and Swinsburg seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

c. Storm Sewer Inventory and Assessment Project Assignment

- i. Blanchfield summarized that this assignment is estimated at \$360,000. Blanchfield also discussed his initial idea of spacing out the inventory over the next few years to reduce costs and asked Kistler to weigh in for the other Authority members. Kistler discussed how important the inventory and assessment are for a functional system, as well as for the Public Works Department, and that he is urging for HRG to move forward. Kistler also stated that he does not want to delay the work, that the inventory should have been completed first, and that the work was already budgeted for.
- ii. Authority members asked clarifying questions about if HRG would manage the data collected, and how Public Works would have access to mapping data. Kistler and White discussed that the GIS layer would need to mesh with the sanitary sewer information already available, training and support for Public Works, and that the next MS4 Coordinator needs to be included in training since they will also be managing the system. Authority members, Township staff, and HRG also discussed the procedure for inventory and assessment, lifting manholes, new employees for Public Works, and if any of the necessary equipment for assessment was proprietary.
- iii. Mitchell made a motion to approve the project assignment and Swinsburg seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote and the project

assignment was approved. Gunther asked about having RFPs for this type of work in the future and Blanchfield stated that there was no reason why the Authority could not consider it.

d. Bethlehem Township Intermunicipal Agreement

- i. Blanchfield gave a summary of the agreement and Lammi shared comments and corrections on pages two and four that Gibson stated he would update.
- ii. Gunther made a motion to approve the agreement with the discussed changes, and Lammi seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote and the agreement was approved to be sent to Bethlehem Township with changes.

e. Earth Stewards Presentation

- i. Strasko stated that Charles Bellis asked her to add this as an agenda item for discussion in relation to the Palmer Pride cleanup event he has been planning with the Earth Stewards. Blanchfield summarized the work that the Earth Stewards do for the Township, that their goals align with the Authority's goals of water quality, and they could possibly partner for projects in the future.

9. For the Good of the Order

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

10. Next meeting: December 18, 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 adjourned at 6:11PM.