

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Stormwater Authority Workshop Meeting Minutes

December 10th, 2024, 2PM, Upper-Level Conference Room, 3 Weller Place

1. Roll Call

- a.** Present: Robert A. Lammi, Robert Blanchfield, Kendall M. Mitchell, Matthew Gunther, David Pyle, Ryan Cummings, Luke Gibson, Scott Kistler, James Farley, Philip Godbout, and Zach Trexler.
- b.** Absent: Craig Swinsburg, George White and Lee Stinnett.
- c.** The meeting started at 2:00PM.
- d.** PTSA Transition
 - i.** Blanchfield announced that Paige Strasko has moved on to another job and that Zach Trexler would be fulfilling some of her duties. He also announced that Matt Gunther will be assuming the new role of Director of Stormwater and MS4 and that he will be starting on January 6th.
 - ii.** Blanchfield asked Gibson if there was any contact made with 809 Stones Crossing and Gibson said he was planning on talking to Paige about it, but it got lost in the shuffle. He said he will move it to the top of the list. Blanchfield mentioned that another loose end that needs to be followed up on is Dewalt farms and their appeal that they submitted. Blanchfield stated that the Glenmoor HOA needs to be responded to. Lastly, Blanchfield mentioned that the Earth Stewards of Palmer have requested to be put on the December 18th Agenda. Josephine Galloway, 2125 Stocker Mill Road asked if Matt Gunther's position is a paid position and Blanchfield confirmed.
 - iii.** Cummings stated that with all of Paige's duties under MS4 requirements, he is assuming that it will all be addressed when Gunther begins his new role. Cummings informed the Authority that HRG is able to handle everything that Paige had been doing in the meantime so that nothing falls to far behind. Blanchfield suggested that HRG continues to remind everyone of deadlines and tasks that need to be handled as everything gets worked out. Cummings said that the current MS4 permit ends in the summer and continued to summarize some of the permit requirements. Cummings suggested regrouping in January to continue figuring everything out.

2. Public Comment

- a.** 360 Wedgewood Drive
 - i.** Claudia Gutierrez, 360 Wedgewood Drive spoke about the concerns she has about her property. She mentioned that the issues were fixed after some large storms came through in 2023, but with all the rain lately the

issues are beginning to arise again. She stated that there is a large tree that is going to fall on her home if it storms too heavily. She requested that the land that has been washed away from storm damage could be replaced to help stabilize the tree. Kistler asked if she would be okay if the tree was removed if it was found to be dead and she said yes, that would be fantastic. Kistler reminded her that all the work that had been done to her property already was only temporary, and that the long-term solution is to get everything underground. Kistler said that the more difficult task is replacing the Earth that had washed away due to the nature of the land and the difficulty of accessing the area. Kistler suggested waiting for the final solution due to the difficult nature of any additional temporary fixes. Cummings stated that HRG is about 60% of the way through the design right now. He said that they are hoping to have more answers regarding phase 1 of the project by the end of this week. He said they are hoping to get funding from PennVest in February of 2025 for phase one, but it will more than likely fall to May. He said if that happens, construction would begin in 2026. Gutierrez stated that she did not want to live this way until 2026. Kistler asked what direction the Authority wants to proceed in. Kistler said that he would like to reposition the rocks and then concrete the rocks into place to prevent them from becoming dislodged in the future. Gutierrez suggested that if the land was restored, the tree would not have to be removed. Kistler asked if the tree would ultimately be removed in any phase of the final project. Cummings stated that he does not believe that removing the tree is a part of any future plans. Kistler stated that he will not remove the tree and Blanchfield agreed. Kistler told Gutierrez that this is not a promise that to be the end all be all solution, but that he will make every attempt to stabilize the land in the meantime. Gutierrez agreed and understood and thanked everyone for the time.

3. Discussion Items

a. HRG Project Updates

i. Storm Sewer Inventory Update

1. Cummings said that HRG currently has one crew in the field working on this right now. He said it will be ongoing throughout the end of the month and then a second crew will be joining them in January. Blanchfield asked if there was any priority for certain areas of the Township to get done first, and Cummings said they are working from bottom to top. Kistler asked to confirm if sections of the main crossings under the bike path and southern section's heading towards the river would be included in the future

and Cummings confirmed. Godbout stated that when this is completed it becomes immensely useful to everyone.

ii. Kingwood Street Construction

1. Blanchfield stated that during the third week of the month, Palmer Public Works began to work on this project in lieu of the contractor. They started restoring lawns and driveway tie ins. Kistler said that all yards have been restored at this point and that the paving contractor came in and did prep work in preparation of putting a cap over the road to get us through to Spring until they can finalize the paving work. He said that the project will most likely be wrapped up for the winter by the middle of next week.
2. Gibson stated that we provided notice to the contractor and that the notice was received and now expired, so the Authority is now within their rights to terminate the contract. Kistler asked if he is clear to purchase a section of pipe and schedule installation. Gibson stated that they have not heard from the contractor or their insurance company to this point, but that they are sending a second notice and will be able to provide another update at the next meeting. Lammi suggested that this part of the project will get done whether the Authority or the contractor pays for it, so we should just go ahead and purchase the pipe and schedule the work. Kistler said he will move forward.
3. Cummings said that HRG is requesting any costs to the Township or the Authority for materials and work done be shared with them. Kistler said he will send them anything from when they took over the project.

iii. 25th Street Update

1. Cummings stated that they are working on the final design right now as well as the PennDot resubmission. He said they are also working on a cost estimate and bid documents currently. He said they will follow the same process as what is occurring on Old Nazareth Road. Gunther asked if the comments received from PennDot were in regard to the HOP or the design and Cummings said the HOP.
2. Blanchfield asked if there were any outstanding easement issues that had to be handled. Cummings said they are still working through them. Godbout asked Cummings to send them the updated design.

3. Lammi asked when they are expected to start construction and Cummings stated that it all depends on the HOP. Right now, it is in PennDot's hands.

iv. Old Nazareth Road Update- Engineering Progress

1. Blanchfield announced that Swinsburg and himself met Carroll Engineering, the Township Engineer, to make sure that the project meets all of Palmer's standards. Blanchfield said that he received a statement of hourly rates and that he pushed for a not to exceed, which came in at around \$2,500.00. He said he believes that HRG will be sending preliminary engineering to Carroll. He said they will review the plans, conduct at least one site visit and they will create a review memo. He said this expenditure will need to be approved at next week's meeting.
2. Blanchfield asked if Godbout would be handling the details for the Engineer's request for contractors' bonds dated November 26th, and Godbout confirmed. Cummings asked Godbout to send it to George White and copy him on the email.
3. Blanchfield said they received from PennVest a retainer agreement for supplement one. Pyle said this is a cost estimate for Brooke to continue to manage the PennVest side of the project through to the end. Blanchfield asked if there is a fee as part of it that is paid to PennVest. Pyle said there is a PennVest settlement fee of \$16,000.00 which does not go to them, but it is for a settlement meeting to come up with the legal documents related to the project. Lammi stated that he would like to see Farley be a part of the settlement process. Blanchfield stated that this is something that will come up at the next meeting and needs to be voted on. It is project assignment supplement one for the total cost of \$47,300.00. Pyle suggested anyone with specific questions email him.
4. Lammi asked about details of the project regarding a pipe size, and Cummings suggested the plans have been revised since then.
5. Kistler asked where things stand since their site visit and their ask to include some of Westgate Drive and Cummings said the survey and base mapping has been completed and is currently being reviewed in house. Kistler asked if this will be included in the main project or if it will be an add on and Cummings said it will be bid as part of the whole project. Kistler reminded the Authority that there is a resident who has been battling stormwater issues for quite some time. He said this is a perfect opportunity to try to relieve this resident who has been asking for it for a number of

years. Cummings said that the process is moving along and that they expect to get plans to Carroll Engineering by the end of the week or early next week.

v. Schoeneck Creek Update

1. Cummings stated that we are still moving along with the design and that they are working on cost estimates and preliminary designs. He said they were receiving help from a Penn State Master Watershed Steward, but that the student got sick, and everything paused so there is no update he can provide right now. He said it will not impact the design part of the project.

vi. Wedgewood Update

1. Blanchfield stated that this issue was already discussed and taken care of under public comment section.

vii. Hobson Street Detention Basin Update

1. Cummings said that the flood monitors have been installed and that they usually receive live updates. He said they will have a full slate of concepts to present to the Authority in January.

viii. Capital Improvement Plan

1. Pyle apologized for being slowed down on this project. He said it is getting kicked into gear working with Bob and Craig. He said for each of the projects, they are looking at which grants would be best suited for funding and tips with how and when to apply. Pyle said they are close to finalizing this and will be soon looking for comments from the Authority. He said they are targeting the end of January for this plan. Blanchfield stated that they will be doing a lot of planning based on this plan, so it is imperative that we get it right.

b. Bethlehem Township Intermunicipal Agreement

- i. Gibson said there is no update at this time. He said he was working with Bruce from HRG to get some input who was able to make a few minor tweaks to make it more in line with what Bethlehem would likely say.

c. 2025 Budget – Presentation to BOS, January

- i. Blanchfield stated that this was going to be done in December, but that it would be better to wait until January so that the closeout for the end of the year could be included. He said we can also include the Capital Improvement Plan and other expenditures.

d. Township Staff Reports/Comments

i. Finance

1. Farley stated that the accounts payable are straightforward as usual. Going through the fourth quarter billing, Farley said there

will be some things that hang over into 2025. He said they will be included in the first quarterly billing of 2025. Farley summarized that he removed Paige's hours and included other administrative staff and their estimated hours. Farley also said that this is the last installment of startup costs and storm events with one exception which is HRG bills from March through May which totals \$257,221.20. Farley said he will leave it up to the Authority as far as how they want to pay the Township. Lammi said he will discuss it with Jim. Farley suggested waiting until as late as possible to transfer funds from the stormwater bills. He also suggested doing a recount of all revenues through the fourth quarter and transferring them at the same time.

2. Farley stated that he spoke with SEK, the Township Auditor, about setting up a meeting between them and the Authority.
3. Lammi stated that he spoke to George White from HRG about getting more details put onto the invoices and that he has already made the adjustment.

ii. Public Works

1. Lammie asked Kistler if the cost he provided for November included the work on Kingwood and Kistler confirmed it did.

iii. Public Services

1. Godbout stated that he got quotes for the stormwater repairs at 1440 Stones Crossing. He informed the Authority that the Township will be proceeding with the project as repairs. Blanchfield asked if it will be done in house or if a contractor will be brought in, and Godbout said it requires a contractor which will be the lowest bidder. He said nothing has been authorized yet. He asked the Authority how they want to handle this repair as well as future projects that are not capable of being completed in house, but that fall under the bidding threshold. Kistler said this will be handled the same as if we were doing it in house. Blanchfield asked when the work will be done, and Godbout said more information can be provided at the next meeting. Gunther confirmed that Godbout received three quotes for the work to be done.

4. 2025 Meeting Dates

- a. Blanchfield summarized the projected meeting dates for 2025, which are the second Tuesday at 2 PM for the workshop meeting and the third Wednesday at 5PM for the Authority meeting. He said there were two dates that needed to be changed which are January and October where the Authority meetings were

moved to the 4th Wednesday of the month at 5 PM. Trexler stated that the November 11th workshop meeting fell on a Holiday, so it was moved to November 12th. Blanchfield said that these will be voted on next week.

5. Public Comment

- a. Pyle said that he uploaded the updated credit manual to SharePoint. He said it contained new language for specific credits. He asked the Authority to give it a review so that it can be uploaded to the Township website. Blanchfield suggested adding this item to the agenda for the next meeting.
- b. Josephine Galloway- 2125 Stocker Mill Road
 - i. Galloway asked if the budget will be made publicly available in January. Farley stated that it will be once it is officially approved. Galloway stated that the budget was already approved, and Farley said it should then be put on the website. Kistler asked if the budget should be presented to the Board of Supervisors prior to being published on the website. Lammi asked if the Township budget is on the website, and Farley said the tentative budget is, but it is not official until the Supervisors approve it next week. Galloway asked if the budget would include all aspects of revenues and Farley confirmed. Galloway asked if there any funds brought into the Authority from the Township, and Farley said no. Galloway then asked what happened to all the money the Township used to pay towards stormwater repairs and projects. Kistler stated that the Township was doing a lot of this work, and Farley said that we were spending reserve money to cover all of the cost. Galloway asked if there was any extra funding in the Township budget now that the Authority is operating independently, and Godbout said no, the Township was not budgeting for the stormwater work in the past. Kistler said that the Township used to operate in a reactive way, but that now we can operate in a more proactive manner.
 - ii. Galloway reminded the Authority that there are still a lot of concerned residents in the Township. She said that people have stopped showing up at meetings because they have lost faith in anything changing. Kistler said that there is no leftover money at the end of the year, all of the money that is brought in through the fee is being spent on projects across the Township. He said this is what the fee is based on, it was not pulled out of thin air. It is based on how much work needs to be done. Galloway asked if the fee would be reexamined in the future as the project list dwindles. Lammi said that it will be a lot longer than a couple of years. He said the current list holds 81 projects. He said the next 10 projects cost about \$33 million dollars. Lammi said his goal right now is to keep the fee where it is and not increase it. He said the plan shows that after so many years, the

fee will probably need to increase in order to cover the cost. Galloway suggested that residents were strung along in the beginning about the possibility of reviewing the fee structure. Farley said it was reviewed, and Lammi stated that no one really knew the answer when the Authority was starting up. Farley said everyone on this Authority is here for the right reason, they just want to help fix the issues in the Township. Galloway said the timing of everything is and was very harsh. Lammi stated that other Townships that are not addressing the stormwater issue now are kicking the can down the road. Galloway asked if the Authority could keep an eye on all of the mandates currently in place to monitor if anything changes. Kistler said that the Township resisted the mandates for almost 15 years, until we were going to receive a huge fine.

- c. Robert Fehnel- 2049 Stocker Mill Road
 - i. Fehnel said that there should be more transparency as far as the budget is concerned and mentioned that the Township website does not have a lot of things on it that should be publicly available. Fehnel said that the Authority's budget has already been approved and that the Board of Supervisors cannot change it in any way, so there should not be any issue with putting it on the website. Lammi said that he guarantees it will be done next year.
- d. Township Supervisor Charles Bellis III asked if there would be any safeguards put into place in the future to prevent the Township and Authority from having similar issues to the ones we saw on Kingwood with Kobalt. Blanchfield said that we will. Gunther said that a list was generated with updated standards and requirements as a part of all bid packets.

6. Adjournment

- a. Lammi made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Gunther seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 3:49PM.