

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Stormwater Authority Workshop Meeting Minutes

March 11th, 2025, 2PM, Upper-Level Conference Room, 3 Weller Place

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Robert A. Lammi, Kendall M. Mitchell, Matthew Gunther, Craig Swinsburg, Scott Kistler, Jamie Paetzell, James Farley, Rebecca Frederickson, Philip Godbout, George White, Ryan Cummings, David Pyle, Luke Gibson and Zach Trexler.
- b. Absent: Robert Blanchfield
- c. The meeting was called to order at 2:00PM.

2. Discussion Items

a. HRG Project Updates

i. Schoeneck Creek Update

- 1. White said we are currently reworking some of the grading calculations for this project. White said that due to the amount of excess fill this project will generate, we plan on bringing the bottom of the streambed up some to reduce the amount of leftover fill, which will reduce the cost of removing all of the fill. Mitchell asked if raising the streambed will cause more flooding, and White said no because we will contain the limits of the floodplain the same. Gunther said he also has a potential lead on someone who might be taking some of the fill materials depending on timing and access.
- 2. White stated that Maura Hayden, one of the project engineers for this site, is leaving HRG and we are now transitioning to our next engineer to switch over the bank pin monitoring. Gunther said he will be visiting the site tomorrow with Hayden to meet the new project engineers. Mitchell asked if the pins would need to be redone with the streambed being raised, and White said no.
- 3. White said we have some good design ideas to reduce the overall cost of the project, with the internal redesign of the project being done in-house.
- 4. Discussion was held regarding the sinkholes that have opened up within the creek, and Kistler provided details regarding the location, size, and remediation for the sinkholes.

ii. Wedgewood Update

- 1. White stated that the last SUE testing was completed last week, so all utility testing has been completed, and we are waiting on a final report from the subcontractor.

iii. Storm Sewer Inventory Update

1. White said approximately 5,200 structures have been located to date, with the inlet count up to over 3,600. He said we should be completed within the next week and there will be another week of follow-up work after that. The GIS database will continue to be wrapped up as well which holds all of the data and mapping capabilities. White said we are currently over budget, but in the spring, we expect to get back on track by utilizing lower rate engineers.
2. Gunther said he spoke with one of the field engineers for this project, and he asked him how far over Municipal boundaries we should be going. Gunther said he instructed the engineer to not go more than one manhole past the boundary. The engineer also asked if structures on private property should be mapped, and White said we plan on mapping everything because it could be useful in the future, but we will not video the structures on private property.
3. Kistler said we are currently completing our annual analysis of the sanitary sewer system, and Godbout is requesting that we begin using the GIS database to begin inputting the sanitary sewer system information into it. Kistler asked if the program is ready for this information yet, and White said no, it is still being developed and finalized on our end. Gunther asked if there will be one system that holds all storm and sanitary sewer information, and White said this database will hold both as separate layers. White said once we finalize the database, it will be handed over to the Township as their property.

iv. Kingwood Street Status

1. Gibson said there is no real update at this time. Gunther said there is an upcoming meeting with me and Kistler with Barker and Barker to go over the project. Gunther said we will discuss what we are looking for as well as our expectations. Kistler said he was impressed with their list of qualifications. He said they did some work in Palmer Township, where UGI did some upgrades and Barker and Barker did the restoration and milling and overlay, and I was happy with the work. Kistler asked if Kobalt has signed a contract with Barker and Barker to complete this project, and Gibson said no, it is contingent on the meeting tomorrow.

v. 25th Street Update

1. White said we are still waiting on PennDOT to authorize the SUE work within the right of way. He said the updated construction cost

estimate for this project is approximately \$400,000.00. White said we have been discussing internally getting funding for this project through the PA Small Waters and Sewer Grant program.

2. Pyle said this project is a good candidate for this grant program. The grant is up to \$500,000.00 with a 15% match requirement. He said the application would need to be submitted by the end of April. Pyle said we have all the necessary information in order to apply for this grant already completed. Pyle said once the application is submitted, it could take up to a year to get a decision, which would mean that construction for this project would take place around the Spring and Summer of 2026. Pyle said this is a great project for this grant program due to the safety concerns as shown by the 2023 storm, but it could also be used for the Wedgewood project as a backup if desired. Swinsburg said this would only cover a portion of the Wedgewood project, so we would still need to look to PENNVEST to cover the remaining costs. The Authority agreed the grant would better serve as funding for this project rather than the Wedgewood project. Gunther asked if we could apply for funding for both projects through this program, and Cummings said you would be competing against yourself. Kistler asked if a proposal would need to be approved by this Authority in order to go after this grant, and Pyle said a project assignment was sent over with a total cost of \$4,900.00 and we could include this grant in that assignment. Lammi said there should be a separate project assignment so that we can keep track of it. Swinsburg said we can vote on this next week.
3. Lammi said we have \$500,000.00 budgeted this year to complete this project, not next year. Farley said if we receive the grant in the full amount, we will have to pay \$75,000.00 as match. Farley informed the Authority that the Township is holding escrow reserve money for 25th Street Storm Sewer upgrades and repairs that were received when the apartment buildings went in. The total amount being held is about \$73,000.00, which would cover the cost of the match. Cummings said it is very uncommon to receive the full grant amount. Mitchell asked if we could do the project and get reimbursed from this grant, and Cummings said no, the project has to be shovel ready in order to qualify for this program.

vi. Old Nazareth Rd Update – Engineering Progress

1. Cummings said the project is currently out to bid, with bid opening scheduled for March 24th at 10am, and questions close on March

17th at 4pm. Gunther said that easements went out to affected property owners, and he is working with residents to get them returned to the Township as soon as possible.

vii. Hobson Street Detention Basin Update

1. White said the addendum was approved last month to continue with the final design and permitting, and Cummings said the plans are currently being developed along with the permitting documents. He said we are aiming for early to midsummer for permit submission. White said the work done to this basin should also provide some relief to the 25th street area.

viii. Capital Improvement Plan

1. Pyle said we are currently looking at funding opportunities for the project listed in the plan that we will strategically be going after. He said we are also continuing to develop the working list of projects across the Township. Gunther asked for a timeline for when we would be able to share this with the residents, and Pyle said the finals draft provided last month could already be given to residents or shared on the website but reminded him that it is a working document that will continue to be developed over time. Lammi said the final draft we have right now is only for the large projects already being worked on and nothing else. Kistler said he would like another opportunity to review the plan once it is cleaned up, and Gunther said it will probably be another few months until it is ready to go. Pyle said it will probably be sooner than that. Swinsburg said when it is finalized, we can discuss as an Authority how we want it to be published. Lammi stated there was a section of the website where residents could submit pictures and complaints and asked if a list was being developed of everything that was received. Gunther said he would investigate to see if he could find any sort of system like this in place. Pyle said he thinks it comes through to the stormwater email.

ix. MS4 Credits

1. Cummings said we are continuing to work through the PRP updates. As of right now, we still need to complete additional projects to meet the permit requirements that expire in 2028. Today we are presenting the next 4 project assignments we are looking at.
2. The first is Old Orchard Park. Cummings said we met with the Shade Tree Commission and the Athletic Association, and our project overlaps with the Shade Tree project well, and we may be able to incorporate some of their plantings into our project. We are

exploring either a rain garden or some kind of sub-surface facility to store water. We will complete the survey, work with Geotech Engineer, complete the permitting process and then jump into the designs, of which we will provide three. Cummings said this assignment will get us through bidding. Cummings said the goal is to bid for all four of these retrofits as one project which will help with the cost. He said that hopefully we can shelf one or more of these projects until a later time, but it will depend on how much credit we receive for the Schoeneck project. For this project, we are estimating the cost to be \$99,500 to complete the design, permitting efforts and bidding.

3. The second project is the basin retrofit at Stones Crossing. He said the scope is the same as the Old Orchard Park project. Cummings said initially we were planning on retrofitting the swale, but since it is now rock armored, we are no longer considering it. For this project, we are estimating the cost to be \$86,500 to complete the design, permitting efforts and bidding.
4. The third project is the Fox Run basin and swale. He said the scope is the same as the Old Orchard Park project again. Cummings said there will be some coordination with the Athletic Association for this project. For this project, we are estimating the cost to be \$99,750 to complete the design, permitting efforts and bidding.
5. The fourth project is the Parkview Estates retrofit. Cummings said hopefully we can table this project due to its complications. This project has the same scope as the others as well. For this project, we are estimating the cost to be \$89,500 to complete the design, permitting efforts and bidding.
6. Lammi asked if all of this engineering work would be completed this year, and Cummings said the goal would be to have all the work done within the next 6-8 months. Lammi said the 2025 budget is going to be tight covering all of these expenses. Cummings said the construction timing for these projects is dependent upon when we would have the permits in hand.
7. Gunther stated that the Township would like to receive 3D exported files for survey basemaps for all projects moving forward, and Cummings stated they can be provided for all future projects and also for projects already completed or completed. Cummings said whatever we design is your property.
8. Lammi asked if these projects are being done because of the permit renewal in 2028, and Cummings said they need to be complete

because of the permit that expires in 2028, which is the current permit. Cummings said that right now, Palmer Township is currently not on the same schedule as your neighbors, and being on the same cycle can prove very beneficial. He said this is something to look into moving forward if desired. Some discussion was then held regarding the neighboring municipalities and their stormwater programs.

9. Cummings said in May, there is another grant opportunity closing that does not compete with the Small Water and Sewer grant that would be a great fit for these retrofits. Cummings said each of these projects will most likely cost somewhere between \$400,000.00 and \$700,000.00. He said this grant is also an award of up to \$500,000.00 and is called the Flood Mitigation Program, which also carries a 15% matching contribution. Cummings said the applications are due by the 31st of May. White said we will request approval of these retainer agreements at next week's meeting.

x. Bethlehem Township Intermunicipal Agreement

1. Gibson said there is no real update on this, but he has been going back and forth with the Township Solicitor. It just needs to be approved by all parties at this point. White said once approved, we can start working on cross border drainage issues.

b. Old Nazareth Rd – Supplement #1 Discussion

- i. White said this was tabled last week so further discussion can be had about the construction administration and observation section. White said we received questions from the Authority regarding phase 8, which is construction observation. White said we currently have this estimated at \$235,000.00, which is a very large number. White said this is based on worst case scenario based on the Kingwood issues. He said this is based on having a senior professional on site 8 hours a day during construction, which is also a worst-case scenario of 9 month. White said hopefully we can get a good contractor which would allow this cost to be reduced because we would not have to rely on our most experienced engineers to be on site every day. White said he is confident that we can bring this number down, and we are looking for this to be approved at next week's meeting. Swinsburg asked if everyone was okay with this plan of starting heavy on the inspection and observation front, and Gunther confirmed that it is a good plan.
- ii. Farley stated that our bid packages need to include language requiring bidders to disclose any past or ongoing litigation within their bid package.

He said this will help keep bad contractors off the project, and Cummings said he would check, but he is pretty sure it is included already. Gunther said it could be included in an addendum if it is not.

c. 2025 Budget Review

- i. Lammi said the 2025 budget was approved by the Authority, but with the gap expenses being added as an expense, it still needs to be paid. Also, there was the additional cost of the auditor of \$13,500. Lammi said with these changes, the expenses would outweigh the revenues, which is unacceptable, so he made some changes to balance the budget. Lammi said the changes need to be approved at next week's meeting, which Gibson confirmed is required.

d. Sinkhole Presentation – 3/25/25

- i. Gunther said this will be held March 25th, and invitations were sent to surrounding municipalities with multiple RSVP's having been received already. Mitchell asked if a lot of people would be coming, and Gunther said he already has about 25.

e. ESC Earth Day Celebration – Approval for signs

- i. Swinsburg confirmed that this approval would come at next week's meeting, but it is about \$60 for signs to be made for the Earth Day event with the Authority letterhead on it.

f. Management Agreement – Adjustments for Vehicle Ownership

- i. Gibson stated we are working on an addendum to the management agreement that was created with the Township 2 years ago to outline purchasing equipment for stormwater usage only. He said the procedure will be the Authority requests the purchase of a specific type of equipment, the Township completes the purchase, and then the Authority reimburses the Township for those funds. Gibson said after the purchase is made, the equipment would remain titled in the Township name, and the Township would be required to insure the vehicle and complete any necessary maintenance. Lammi agreed with the changes. Farley stated that an amortization schedule would be shared with the Authority if available, and that proof of payment would be provided to the Authority as payments are made. He said once the equipment reached end of life on the loan, but still remains in service, the Township would not charge any rate or fees to the Authority. Farley suggested putting into the addendum language regarding the sale of the equipment being sent to the Authority if it is sold. Lammi said he will have to adjust the budget to reflect this change because this will not be a debt service.
- ii. Kistler asked for clarification regarding the maintenance of the equipment, and Farley said any maintenance costs can just be a part of the Public

Works monthly schedule, and the same would apply if a third-party vendor would be involved as well. Kistler also confirmed that he would not be charging for usage from the start.

- iii. Kistler asked if language needed to be added about a situation where he would be using this equipment as a backup to the sanitary sewer equipment if needed, and Farley said it would just be handled as credit on their monthly invoice. Gunther asked how the rate would be determined, and Kistler said the rate is determined by the FEMA table. Gibson asked Farley if he had any concerns creating a debt obligation for this, and he said no because he does not see what the risk is. Farley said the only risk the Township would be taking on is if the Authority dissolved, but at that point the Township is still responsible to meet all the same MS4 requirements.

g. Township Staff Reports/Comments

i. Finance

- 1. Farley said we have the monthly list of account payable bills for the Authority to be approved at the meeting next week, and next month we will be bringing you the quarterly package. Farley said you will notice a decrease in administrative staff hours, but that same staff also had wage increases.

ii. Public Works

- 1. Kistler said the Township started the annual inlet inspection at the beginning of February, and all of the inlets throughout the Township were inspected. Kistler said around 350 inlets were identified as needing cleaning and another 350 need repairs of various degree. Kistler said training on the new vacuum truck was held last Wednesday, and the truck was in the field the next day doing cleaning and flushing work. Kistler said we are cleaning on average about 28-32 inlets per day, pulling out about 4 cubic yards of debris per day. Kistler said the old truck averaged about 12-15 inlets per day.

iii. Public Services

- 1. White informed Godbout that the GIS database at this time was not ready for Scott to input data from the sanitary sewer side. Godbout asked Kistler if the information was being recorded so it is ready to be input when the database is ready, and he confirmed. White said they will work with Entech on their end.
- 2. Godbout spoke about an exchange with a resident about drainage improvements within Fox Run Park. Godbout explained the project to the resident and where everything was currently standing.

iv. Stormwater/MS4

1. Gunther said he will be on the project site of Schoeneck Creek tomorrow with HRG, and that he had a conversation with Pyle today about systems and processes for him to use for appeals and credits going forward. Gunther said he also discussed with Cummings aspects of the MS4 permit and requirements. Gunther said we will be looking into getting 1 or 2 iPads to utilize the software moving forward.

3. Public Comment

- a. None at this time.

4. 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 3:40PM.