

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Stormwater Authority Workshop Meeting Minutes**

**May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 2PM, Upper-Level Conference Room, 3 Weller Place**

**1. Roll Call**

- a.** Present: Robert Blanchfield, Robert A. Lammi, Kendall M. Mitchell, Matthew Gunther, Craig Swinsburg, Scott Kistler, Jamie Paetzell, George White, Ryan Cummings, David Pyle, Tyler Herb, Luke Gibson and Zach Trexler.
- b.** Blanchfield announced that an Executive Session was held prior to the meeting to discuss legal matters and that no action was taken.
- c.** The meeting was called to order at 2:12PM.

**2. Public Comment**

- a.** None at this time.

**3. Discussion Items**

**a. HRG Project Updates**

**i. PRP Project Updates**

**1. Fox Run Retrofit SCM**

- a.** Cummings said for the Lehigh River, you will need 98,000 pounds of sediment reduction per year. The Hobson Street project will be maximized at 88,000 pounds, which is a big chunk. To get the remaining amount completed, we will need to complete the Stones Crossing & Old Orchard Basin projects. These will generate about 18,000 pounds of sediment reduction which will get us to roughly 105,000 pounds of sediment reduction. Cummings said, although not final, there is going to be some kind of conversion in the next permit cycle that would allow for extra credits in sediment reduction to be converted into volume credits. Herb confirmed and said it is a contentious topic around the State. Blanchfield asked if it is treated water or contained water, and Herb said both as the regulations consider contained water as a treatment to the water. Herb stated that any project as part of the PRP requirements that is currently being worked on that meets the aspects of the volume side of the future permit can be used to minimize the amount of impervious area that needs to be treated within the Township. Cummings said that in essence, we will be reducing the requirements on the future permit. Gunther asked if this has been confirmed, and Cummings said it is still a draft permit, but as we move closer to finalizing the

designs of the projects, we should have a much clearer vision of what the next permit requirements will be. He said if any design needed to change as a result of the new permit requirements, it would be very minimal. Lammi asked if the work being done in the basins now will be thrown away, and Cummings said anything we do now will be applicable to the next permit terms. Gunther asked if we would need to scope out any potential future changes to the basins and Cummings said it is based on review, so the changes that would be occurring would be minimal. Kistler asked for confirmation of the timeline for the projects to be designed, and Cummings said it would take 4 months for design and permitting, 9-12 months for the permits to be approved, and then about 6 months for the PennVEST procedure, so if you signed next week it would result in the projects being completed just prior to the permit expiration. Kistler said that any new information that comes out between now and then can be incorporated into the design of the projects instead of starting over completely and stalling the process. Cummings said we are doing our best to complete the current permit requirements while also anticipating what is coming in the next permit cycle. Blanchfield asked if the field engineering at Old Orchard Park would determine if it will result in a basin or something subsurface, and Cummings confirmed and said it would be coordinated with the Athletic Association, the Environmental Steering Committee, and various regulatory agencies. He said it will really come down to what the Township wants to see considering it is a park.

- b.** Cummings said for the Schoeneck Creek, you are required to reduce sediment by about 69,000 pounds per year. He said we have made it through all of the calculations regarding the PRP amendment, and we found that we are lowering the sediment amount by about 20,000 pounds per year, which allowed us to eliminate at least 2 projects. He said the impervious area is lower than the County average, and the areas where we already have basins in place that are treating stormwater have higher impervious areas than the County average. Cummings said with the proposed projects being completed, we would clear the requirements

by roughly 8,000 pounds. He said we are still hoping that calculations will come back higher for the Schoeneck Creek, but if we wait for the results to finalize, we will run out of time before the permit expires to complete any additional projects we may need. He said we hope to eliminate the Parkview Estates project if calculations come back favorable. Gunther asked if the project would then be tabled until the next permit cycle, and Cummings said his recommendation would be to design and permit the Parkview project so we are ready to build it if we need to, and then we can table construction if we don't end up needing it. He said it will be much cheaper to design and permit this project now than it would be 5 years from now. Cummings said as of right now, we will need to complete the Schoeneck Creek, Fox Run, and Parkview estates in order to meet the current permit requirements, but we are hopeful that we can eliminate the Parkview project when the data comes back from Schoeneck Creek in a few months. Blanchfield asked if it taken into consideration the fact that there hasn't been much erosion because we have been in a drought, and Cummings confirmed but said not as much as you think. He said we are thinking about doing a survey after the Summer internally to compare the results. Cummings said if we push these off another month, we will miss the PennVEST window and subsequently miss the permit deadline which could hurt your chances for collaboration with neighbors. Gunther asked if we are set up to have our permit cycle match up with Bethlehem Township, and Cummings said we do not have that answer yet. Herb agreed and said we don't have the framework yet from the State to begin having these conversations.

- c. Blanchfield said we have four project assignments in front of us that have a total cost of \$378,250.00 to get us to construction. Blanchfield said we could be forced to pause other projects in order to complete these, but that it is time to approve them and move forward and the rest of the Authority agreed. Blanchfield suggested putting all four projects on the agenda for approval at next week's meeting. Gunther asked if the intent is to bid the projects all together as one, and Cummings confirmed. Lammi asked if the

same bundling of project could be used for PennVEST as well, and Cummings confirmed that as the goal. Kistler noted that HRG stepped up by providing all the details needed to come to this decision and said that we are all appreciative of them doing so. Cummings said HRG will work with the Geotech Engineer to get a quote for all four projects as well. He said it will probably be a couple thousand dollars and the Authority will either have to vote to approve the cost or Gunther will have to approve it himself.

**2. Old Orchard Park SCM**

- a. See above section.

**3. Parkview Estates PRP SCM**

- a. See above section.

**4. Stones Crossing PRP SCM**

- a. See above section.

**ii. Pollution Reduction Plan Amendment**

- 1. Cummings said we revised all the internal calculations, and the next step is ensuring all the mapping is updated. He said that our initial permit is getting a complete overhaul since we rushed to complete it at its inception. Cummings said it will be a clean slate and that this will drag out over the next year.

**iii. Old Nazareth Road Update – Progress**

- 1. White said our Engineers met out in the field with most of the utility companies. He said the electric company was not able to be present due to the storms out West. White said some minor tweaks to the alignment were requested by the contractor to further the distance from the utility poles and that HRG does not see that as a problem. He said there is one easement that will need to be addressed. He said these minor jobs make everyone a little more comfortable. Gunther asked if these changes affect the hydraulics at all, and Cummings said it is negligible and that you won't see any change. Gunther asked if there would be any conflicts with tying all the angles in together and Cummings said no because it is precast and standard for the manufacturer. Cummings said they are exploring possibly utilizing smaller sections due to ease of installation and that it will not affect the cost. Cummings confirmed that none of these changes will affect the cost of the project and that they will actually speed up the construction. He said we don't want to move forward until we confirm everything

with the electric company. Cummings said the PennVEST meeting will occur July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the letter of preclosure will be submitted August 8<sup>th</sup>, and the Notice to Proceed will be submitted shortly after that, and then Doli can submit. He said when we originally bid for this, the lead time was 4 months, and it is now 6-7 months which is out of anyone's control. White said it very well could go back down. Cummings said although the lead time could be longer, the duration of construction would remain the same. Gunther said he has one remaining easement to get signed off on and he sent a second notice to them already. Gunther said he will share them with HRG once they all get signed off on by the Township. Lammi asked if the \$500,000.00 addition to PennVEST had been resolved, and Cummings said it will be resolved at the July 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Cummings said we are still waiting on final cost estimates. Gunther asked if an updated cost amount was needed for the resolution to apply for PennVEST and Cummings confirmed. Gunther asked if HRG had any recommendation as to when the resident meeting should be held and Cummings said late summer since we want to wait until after the Notice to Proceed is sent to Doli. He said the earliest would be September and even October is possible since we want a schedule from Doli.

#### **iv. Schoeneck Creek Update**

1. Blanchfield said he saw a new estimate of \$1.1 million. White said our team looked at some alternative designs and this is what they came up with. Cummings said it is around \$1.2 million, which is the WRPP grant amount, not the total construction cost since the grant only allows for a 5% contingency within its estimate. Gunther said we are looking to get this submitted by the end of the month. And White said HRG is helping in any way they can to get it submitted. Blanchfield questioned the additional \$4,000.00 to help with the submission, and Cummings said it is time and materials, so if we only spend \$2,000.00 that is all we will bill you for. Gunther said this cost will allow HRG to send all the information needed to finish applying for the WRPP grant.

#### **v. Wedgewood Update**

1. Blanchfield said the last update we received is that the design is about 60% complete. White said we are now at 80% and we have a site walk setup for Thursday. Blanchfield asked if the current cost estimate of \$4.3 million is the most up to date and White confirmed. Cummings said that included everything except for

easements and utility relocations because we do not have that information yet. Gunther said this is one of the projects that could get pushed to allow for the four PRP projects to be completed, citing that Kistler has stated that the temporary repairs are still holding up well. White said as of right now, we are looking at the November PennVEST application window, so we still have time to continue talking through the project. Kistler said we always said we would design and permit this project as one, but we always agreed to construct the project in two phases, the first being from Wedgewood down to the river and the second being the upper section as funding and conditions demanded. Kistler said there are some safety concerns relating to the section where the water comes pouring out. Kistler said he will always push for the lower section to be prioritized. He said the failure in 2023 was a below ground failure rather than an above ground failure. Swinsburg asked if we had discussed adding inlets to the upper section, and Kistler said the only inlets he requested were on Chain Dam Road to redirect the one stormwater flow from underneath a resident's garage. Cummings said we can talk through all of this during our site walk on Thursday.

**vi. Hobson Street Detention Basin Update**

1. Cummings said we are moving forward with the final design right now and April was the last month for monitoring. He said we are now in the calibration stage where we are updating our design and model accordingly. Cumming said he hopes to have the permit submitted by mid-July. He said we could get a permit within six months, but the average timeframe is 9-12 months. He said once we receive the permit, we will begin looking at the PennVEST timeframe for that submission. He said this project should be done and constructed prior to the permit expiring. Gunther asked if HRG was in coordination with the DEP and Cummings confirmed. Kistle stated that this will be a huge impact job once it is completed that is really needed. White said that all down 25<sup>th</sup> Street will see improvements. Cummings said not only is this an MS4 project, but it is also a flood mitigation project. Cummings reminded everyone that the trail improvement plan was removed from the project design and that the area would be graded in case future improvements are made. He said the conservation would not approve a permit with additional impervious area.

**vii. Capital Improvement Plan**

1. Pyle stated that currently we still have \$40,000.00 left in the budget for this project to be completed. We will discuss with Gunther and Swinsburg what they want as far as additional services. Pyle said we will be incorporating the four PRP projects into the plan as well as a possible public presentation of the Capital Improvement Plan. He said we could also present to the Township Board of Supervisors. He said this money could also roll over to phase two which is taking the condition assessment projects and incorporating them into the Plan. Gunther said it sounds like a good plan moving forward and Swinsburg agreed. Blanchfield suggested rolling this presentation into the annual budget presentation to the Supervisors in early 2026.

**viii. Storm Sewer Inventory/Assessment Project**

1. White said we have completed our inventory work, and our team identified close to 6,800 structures and just under 5,400 pipes. He said these numbers go beyond what is owned by the Township. White said we provided a draft map to Public Works and the Township with a tutorial on how to update the map and all of its features. He said we still have a lot of information to input into the map before it is complete. White said the next step is to go out and begin assessing the condition of all municipally owned and maintained structures which will be done with a 360-degree camera that enters each grate and pipe and fills in blanks as far as diameter and type of pipes. He said we will have a team in the field all summer continuing to update this data and build the complete database. Blanchfield asked HRG to bring a picture of the map to a meeting so everyone can see what it actually looks like. Blanchfield confirmed with White that the assessment work would not be done on any infrastructure not owned by the Township. White asked Kistler if he liked what he sees so far and he agreed. Kistler said that both him and the Sewer Department have looked through it and have already come up with some great ideas. He said they will be working with Entech for communication purposes. He said they will continue to clean it up and turn it into something that will be most beneficial for his department. White said this summer we will be identifying the watersheds for each of the systems so we can figure out what is downstream. He said we will have a better understanding of where the water is coming from and where it is headed.

**ix. 25<sup>th</sup> Street Culvert Update**

1. Gunther said he will be working with Godbout to get some of the easements finalized and White said we got everything together for the Small Water & Sewer grant application and got it submitted. White said we are waiting on PennDOT to allow us to do the final SUE testing.

**b. Resolution to Apply: WRPP Grant – Schoeneck Creek Rehabilitation**

- i. Cummings said some of our other clients have set up a process where the Stormwater Director is given authorization to make decisions within a certain threshold so if there is a pinch in terms of time business can be taken care of. Gibson said this is common practice among other municipalities and authorities and that a Resolution should be passed to make it official. Cummings said he doubts we would need anything more than \$20,000.00. The Authority agreed that Gunther would need approval from one other board member before taking any action. Blanchfield said we will get a draft Resolution and discuss it further in the future.

**c. Township Initiated Project Assignment – Request for Comments**

- i. Lammi said there are projects that are not run through HRG, so this is a policy that would apply to Township initiated projects. Lammi said Kistler already discussed some guidelines for the policy and talked about certain projects that would be exempt from the policy. Lammi said he will share the policy with the Authority for comments and then it will be put up for adoption at a future meeting.

**d. Financial Planning Discussion**

- i. Blanchfield said we already had this discussion when talking about the four PRP projects. He reiterated that some projects may need to be pushed back in order to prioritize the PRP projects. White said hopefully we will get some grants to help offset some of the costs.

**e. Township Staff Reports/Comments**

**i. Finance**

1. Blanchfield said we have our monthly bills in the amount of \$146,359.81 that will need to be approved next week. He said there is a Morning Call bill here for \$1204.00 that was for an advertisement. Blanchfield asked if we have to advertise in a written format with the high costs associated with doing so, and Gibson confirmed that they are required to. Godbout said the only way to reduce the cost is to reduce the number of characters in the advertisement while still providing all the necessary information.
2. Blanchfield said the Authority needs to authorize Portnoff to collect delinquent accounts through an agreement that is separate from the Township's. He said a draft has been sent out and he will

provide it to Gibson for his review. Gibson said he hopes to have it ready for approval by next week's meeting.

**ii. Public Works**

1. Blanchfield stated there was some flooding that occurred on Swanson Street during the last rainstorm and that Kistler was on site taking pictures. He said water was coming down Val Vista due to the swale not being big enough. He said there was no structural damage to anyone's property.

**iii. Public Services**

1. Blanchfield said the April report has not been shared yet and Paetzell said she put it into SharePoint just before coming to the meeting today.
2. Godbout said as part of the Livable Landscapes grant, we are closing out we did a riparian buffer cleanup and repair and the second phase will be conducted on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. He said no PRP credits will be claimed for this activity.
3. Godbout said people have been asking about the white plastic pipes around the water and that they are protecting native plantings that were planted as part of the riparian buffer. He said there are roughly 500 stems that were planted along 300 feet of streambank.
4. Gunther said we should also discuss the WRPP and Livable Landscapes grants for the Fox Run Open Space project along the Schoeneck. Godbout said this is a similar project and Cummings said it is already built into the PRP.

**iv. Stormwater/MS4**

1. Blanchfield asked if there was any update on the Management Agreement that was sent to the Township and Gibson said it has been sent but he does not know where it currently stands. Gunther said the Township Solicitor should have everything he needs and that he will have to follow up with him.
2. Blanchfield said there is now someone at the Conservation District that can help the DeWalt's through their process of receiving their credit.
3. Blanchfield said a representative from Glenmoor was here at the last meeting but did not get a chance to speak. He asked Gunther if they got in touch with him, and Gunther confirmed that he and Pyle requested documents from them that they are still waiting to receive. Pyle said once we receive the documents requested, we will update the review.

4. Township Supervisor Charles Bellis III asked if there was any update on the resident from Northwood Avenue and Gunther said he has been communicating with PennDOT to develop a plan for how to handle these concerns moving forward. White said he has been on site during rain events, and the water does not reach the catch basin.

#### **4. Adjournment**

- a. Mitchell 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 3:45PM. Blanchfield announced that an Executive Session would be held immediately following the meeting to discuss legal matters and that no action would be taken.