

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP**

The Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township met in regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, April 9, 2008 at 8:00 PM in the Springfield Township Building for the purpose of transacting the general business of the Township. All members of the Board were present with the exception of Mr. Standish. Mr. Harbison presided. Mr. Harbison noted that the Board of Commissioners held a brief executive session just prior to the business meeting.

Mr. Harbison asked for a moment of silence honoring the service men and women who have placed themselves in harm's way in order to help preserve our safety.

Mr. Harbison led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion (Schaum-Peirce) carried unanimously dispensing with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting and approving same as written and recorded in the official minute book of the Township.

Mr. Harbison noted that Mr. Standish was unable to attend the meeting due to a business obligation. Mr. Harbison noted that past Commissioner Jane Roberts was in attendance at the meeting.

Special Reports

At the March 12, 2008 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, Mr. Michael Harkins, 1799 Willow Grove Avenue, addressed the Board with his concerns regarding an anticipated lighting nuisance related to the installation of a large overhead sign on the route 309 expressway which is directly adjacent to his residence. The Township contacted PennDOT who responded by suggesting that they did not believe the illumination of a highway sign would create a nuisance but that they would revisit the issue after the sign has been lit, if indeed a lighting nuisance exists.

Mr. Harbison introduced Chris Stanford, of Michael Baker Jr., Inc., engineers, and Andrew Hamilton, of Carter van Dyke and Associates, planners, to discuss the Bethlehem Pike streetscape improvement project. Mr. Stanford began by stating that a group of residents, business owners, and representatives of Springfield and Whitmarsh Townships has been meeting to create a comprehensive Bethlehem Pike streetscape plan. One purpose of the plan is to create corridor-wide streetscape improvements, providing details introduced via the Flourtown Erdenheim Enhancement Association Vision Plan. The second purpose is to create a construction bid packet when the corridor plan is completed. The work is being conducted in conjunction with an \$800,000 grant received by Springfield Township through the efforts of Congresswoman Schwartz. Mr. Hamilton stated that the project will help set color themes along the corridor, introduce pedestrian lighting, install pedestrian amenities, trees, crosswalks and the like. The effort has

already made an impact with traffic signal upgrades, improvements at the Flourtown Shopping Center, the Harleysville National Bank and in Whitemarsh Township at the planned Bank of America. It was noted that the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission was in the process of a traffic calming study and the results of that study can also be incorporated into the streetscape improvement project. The professionals indicated their goal of beginning construction during the Summer of 2009. Six project goals were discussed related to creating a sense of place in Flourtown and Erdenheim, and providing for improvements to encourage pedestrian activity along the Bethlehem Pike corridor. Various improvements were discussed, including the spacing of lights, trees, a cobblestone amenity strip adjacent to the sidewalk, crosswalks, and the use of landscaping to create visual barriers. Mr. Hamilton discussed the impact vehicles have on the corridor and the use of buildings and landscaping to help narrow the visual feel of Bethlehem Pike to help slow traffic. The Township is in the process of creating a Town Center ordinance that will also help balance the existing conditions with the future goals. Mr. Stanford noted that the total project cost for all the improvements is \$5.2 million, \$1 million of which the Township has had allocated. The study will also help identify other grant opportunities. Ms. Peirce asked for assurance that the Committee had seen earlier sketch plans of pocket parks and other planned improvements to date. Mr. Gillies inquired as to how the cobblestone amenity area adjacent to the curb will be stabilized. The professionals indicated that the area will be stabilized with gravel that will remain porous to help with tree growth in the area.

Mr. Harbison read a prepared statement pertaining to the position of the Board of Commissioners on the disposition of the Hugg report, the investigation into the Axford/Treml child sexual abuse complaint. Mr. Harbison thanked the public for their interest concerning this very important and sensitive matter. He also thanked the Tremls and their family and friends who have come forward to voice their comments and concerns. He noted that the Board and staff addressed the concern not only as elected officials but as citizens, parents and neighbors. While there were some differences on how to investigate the Axford/Treml complaint, it was not a question of *if* an administrative review would be conducted. The goal of the investigation was to improve the Township policies and procedures that would further protect our children from abuse, and educate employees, parents and children themselves concerning possible child abuse. The Board of Commissioners concluded that all Township parties involved when the complaint was made in the early 1990s acted in a way they perceived would be in the best interest of the Township. The Boards sought and received guidance from law enforcement and legal advice on the matters before them. Since that time, there have been significant legal advances on how allegations of child abuse must be addressed. All members of the Board had an opportunity to review and comment on the Hugg report and the recommendations of the report have been released to the public. The recommendations focused on three key areas: (1) revisions in the permitting process for use of Township parks, (2) records retention practices for matters before prior Boards, and (3) process by which legal matters addressed by one board would be communicated to subsequent boards. The current Board believes that due diligence was employed initially and most recently concerning the complaint and stand united to lead the Township to a safer and more secure community.

Paul and Coleen Treml, 6015 Kingdom Court, Murrysville, PA, thanked the Board of Commissioners for their investigation into their complaint of alleged child sexual abuse. They further stated that they hoped by providing this information in 1994 it would have helped the community with similar complaints. They are not convinced that effort benefited the community, but now feel that the current effort has benefited the community. Their principal goal has been to assure the safety of all children. The Tremls noted they had reviewed the draft Park and Recreation Policy and believe the community is much closer to a good policy to help reduce exposure to child abuse. The Tremls believe that the recommendations in the Hugg report will prove useful, and noted education and awareness are paramount in helping to reduce child sexual abuse. The Tremls thanked the Board, both past and present, for their efforts, and thanked their friends and family for their recent support.

Ann Yula, 30 Whitemarsh Avenue, indicated that she has been following the Axford/Treml complaint and that most of her comments had been previously made this evening, and would not repeat same. She did review statistics from the year 2006 on reports of child sexual abuse and those substantiated. Ms. Yula suggested it is vitally important that all understand the path of reporting an allegation of child sexual abuse.

Dan Helwig, Realtor, Bethlehem Pike, stated that as a business person he has been involved with the Flourtown Erdenheim Enhancement Association and various other committees that have been working on improvements along Bethlehem Pike. Mr. Helwig shared with the Board of Commissioners a dozen or so photographs identifying physical challenges to the Township's ability to reach its goals as set forth by FEEA and the Bethlehem Pike Streetscape Improvement Project. In conclusion, Mr. Helwig stated his support of the concept of improving Bethlehem Pike, but objects to the interest of the committees that wish to place improvements directly adjacent to the street and sidewalk which he believes will actually harm the pedestrian atmosphere along Bethlehem Pike.

Mr. Harbison, Chairman of Internal Affairs and Environmental Resources Committees, reported:

Motion (Harbison-Peirce) carried unanimously to approve the March check reconciliation in the amount of \$530,651.42 and the April bill listing in the amount of \$732,552.98.

Mr. Harbison opened discussions on the outstanding invoice from Jonathan Hugg, Esq., related to the Axford/Treml complaint. Mr. Harbison noted that the total invoices to date were valued at \$25,825.09, and Mr. Hugg estimated the cost of the project to be \$20,000. Mr. Hugg recently lowered the total invoices to \$24,600. Motion (Schaum-Gillies) vote, 5-1, Peirce opposed, to pay the Hugg invoices not to exceed \$21,000. Mr. Gillies also asked that Mr. Hugg provide more detail on the current invoice that was authorized for payment. In her opposition, Ms. Peirce stated that the invoices received were professional invoices, and she appreciated the reduction by Mr. Hugg, but she believed the Township is responsible for the cost of the professional services provided.

Mr. Harbison announced that during the month of March Springfield Township residents recycled 196 tons of materials with a householder participation rate of 76.3%. The net savings for the month was \$3,234.19.

The Board of Commissioners, in cooperation with the Township Environmental Advisory Commission and the Park and Recreation Advisory Committee, has been making an effort to introduce the recycling of waste materials that are generated at Township parks. The current process which utilizes a Township household recycling container is not working well. Therefore, the Commissioners have authorized the purchase of several recycling containers that are molded in the shape of a drink bottle, are clearly labeled For Recyclables Only, and contain a small hole encouraging park users to only deposit recyclables in the container.

Mr. Harbison announced that the Township Environmental Advisory Commission was sponsoring a seminar on April 26, in the Springfield Township Building on sustainable lawns and home garden practices.

Motion (Harbison-Schaum) carried unanimously to adopt Resolution No. 1178, a resolution establishing a policy compliant with PA Act 3 of 2008, the Open Records Act. Mr. Heller noted that in the past the public was required to prove that the documents were of public record, and the new Open Records Act assumes that all records are open, unless specifically exempt. He expressed his pleasure with the new Act, but believes the State could open the process further.

Mr. Schaum, Chairman of Public Safety Committee, had no report.

Mr. Gillies, Chairman of Library Committee, had no report.

Mr. Gillies, on behalf of Mr. Standish, Chairman of Public Works Committee, reported:

Motion (Gillies-Heller) carried unanimously to accept a letter from the President of Smith Construction Company, dated March 20, 2008, requesting an extension of the existing contract for phase II of the Black Horse Inn Renovation Project from April 16, 2008 to May 30, 2008. There are no costs associated with the extension, and the purpose is to provide an opportunity for warmer temperatures to warm the walls at the Black Horse Inn in order to enhance the application of stucco.

Mr. Gillies asked for a status report on the updating of the Township webpage. Mr. Harbison indicated that the Township is in the process of a complete overhaul of the webpage, which is not completed at this time. Mr. Gillies asked to discuss the posting of information from the Township on webpages maintained by individual commissioners. Mr. Hoffman addressed the question by stating that any Township document that is of public record can be posted on any website, but he also warned that non-public

documents should not be distributed by Commissioners on their websites. With regard to an earlier question as to the use of Township personnel to assist individual Commissioners with their websites, Mr. Hoffman indicated that as long as there are no pecuniary benefits, this assistance could be provided and noted that the Board of Commissioners may wish to establish a policy to cover the extent of the assistance provided. Mr. Harbison opined that it was not appropriate for one Township Commissioner to manage information issued by the other Commissioners. Mr. Gillies stated that he did not think it was appropriate for Township staff to write materials for individual commissioners, but the individuals could write their own materials if desired. Both Ms. Peirce and Mr. Dailey agreed that it is important to move forward with the updating of the Township webpage. Mr. Heller suggested that he did not believe his current webpage is politically oriented, and he indeed makes a strong effort to place issues before the community via the website. Specific in that regard is an attempt to identify and keep a distinction between all the studies taking place along Bethlehem Pike.

Ms. Peirce, Chairwoman of Cultural Resources Committee, had not report.

Ms. Peirce reported on a recent meeting involving the US Postal Service, representatives from Congresswoman Schwartz' office, Commissioner Dailey and Ms. Peirce related to current changes at the Flourtown Post Office. The Commissioners expressed their concern that there were less services at the Flourtown Post Office. The Postal Service provided an explanation on how services differ, but they do not believe there were less services at Flourtown following their relocation in the Flourtown Shopping Center. An exception is that the US Postal Service is removing all vending machines from their offices, but is making the stamps available at local stores. The Postal Service is working with the Township and local residents with regard to drop-off service, certified mail, and similar services. The US Postal Service has a 15 year lease in the Flourtown Shopping Center, and therefore, does not believe their location will change.

Ms. Peirce also reminded residents that most American families are eligible for the Federal Economic Stimulus Package, however, in order to be eligible one must file a 2007 IRS tax return. Assistance in filing the IRS returns is available through the IRS, AARP, and Congresswoman Schwartz' office.

Mr. Dailey, Chairman of Zoning Committee, reported:

Mr. Dailey announced that the Zoning Hearing Board is scheduled to meet on Monday, April 21, 2008 at 7:00 PM in the Springfield Township Building. Mr. Dailey summarized the Zoning Hearing Board Agenda.

Mr. Heller, Chairman of Community Development Committee, reported:

Motion (Heller-Peirce) carried unanimously to award a contract to Michael Baker, Jr., Inc., engineers, for Baker to provide construction inspection services related to planned improvements as a part of the Flourtown Erdenheim Community

Gateways Project, consistent with their proposal dated February 1, 2008 for a price not to exceed \$26,731.50.

Motion (Heller-Schaum) carried unanimously to adopt Resolution No. 1175, a resolution endorsing an application to the Montgomery County Community Development Block Grant Program for a project known as the Oreland Pedestrian Streetscape Improvements Project Phase III.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald E. Berger, Jr.
Secretary