

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
WORKSHOP MEETING  
MARCH 10, 2011

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for an Informational Workshop Meeting on Thursday, March 10, 2011, in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m., followed by a pledge to the flag.

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Waks, Joseph Bartlett, Edward McBride (arrived late), Bill Jenaway, and Erika Spott. Also present were: Ron Wagenmann, Township Manager; Joseph Pizonka, Township Solicitor; Dan Russell, Director, Parks & Recreation; Detective Les Glauner; Judy Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; and Angela Caramenico, Assistant to Township Manager.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS:

Vice Chairman Jenaway reported on an executive session dealing with various township matters.

DISCUSSIONS:

COMMUNITY CENTER – BALLARD KING & ASSOCIATES

Mr. Dan Russell, Director, Parks & Recreation, stated that when the community center was last discussed at a Board of Supervisors meeting the consultants left seeking guidelines on how to proceed. Specifically they needed guidance on the site location and program options so that the project may be finalized by providing a full operational plan, business plan, and site concept for a public presentation to the Board. Mr. Russell indicated that Jim Bogrette and Martin Kimmel, from Kimmel Bogrette were in attendance to answer any questions.

The Board discussed various scenarios in determining how the new center might be built. There was some agreement on the Heuser Park property, no outdoor pool, and a smaller overall concept. A model that brings in the most money was preferred.

During the discussion Mr. Waks noted that it makes sense to take the idea of an outdoor swimming pool off the table in view of the public/private partnership and the competitive swimming pool that is already available at the school.

Mrs. Spott agreed that Heuser Park would be the best location as it is compatible with the current uses of that area and will provide a stopping off point for what is hoped will be the construction of the Valley Forge to Heuser Park bike trail. Mrs. Spott raised the potential of possibly partnering with people who run concession stands so that those on the trail would have an option to stop for light refreshments. While favoring an indoor aquatic center of some type, Mrs. Spott agrees that a competitive pool is not needed because of the availability of the pool at the school and she does not see the need for an outdoor pool in view of the potential at Gold's Gym.

Mr. Jenaway favored looking further for a site that can be adapted in a reasonable period of time. He commented that while Heuser Park would be the ideal setting from a land availability standpoint, he was concerned about a possible five-year construction time table and noted the immediate issues related to the senior center and other functions related to park and recreation. With regard to park and recreation, Mr. Jenaway commented that part of the business model could possibly include the movement of that staff into the new facility which would negate the expense incurred of personnel to manage the facility on a regular basis.

Mr. Jenaway asked for clarification about the township's involvement in the middle school pool. Mr. Wagenmann responded that the township holds title to the pool since educational funding was not available at the state level. He explained that the township took possession of the gym and the pool during the time frame of the school improvement project. State Senator Williams subsequently obtained a grant for the rehab of the gymnasium.

Mr. Jenaway asked if the township or the school district owns the pool and gym. Mr. Wagenmann responded that the township still owns these facilities, but the school district has primary use for school purposes.

Mr. McBride arrived at the meeting and wanted to go on record that the Board has not vetted the high priority/high cost issues such as the need for updating the township building. He commented on the success in purchasing the open space around Gold's Gym without the building. Mr. McBride emphasized that the Board needs to analyze the priorities of the township. He said a community center at Heuser Park is at the other end of town for some people. While using an existing building would save money, no matter what is done will cost millions and there is a need to come up with a consensus as to what the priority is. Mr. McBride asked if the priority is to do something with the township building or something else. He said that the swimming pool [at Gold's Gym] is a recent example of working things out in a good common sense business fashion without using tax dollars to build or operate. Mr. McBride indicated that he does not want tax dollars spent on the community center as tax dollars should be used

for core township services. He believes it would be a mistake to go too far with a development project that is going to cost so much money.

Mr. Jenaway stated that this discussion is about guidance on the final steps for the consultant report and they asked for input about site locations and program options for the community center. He summarized the supervisors' comments so far and indicated that some favored the balanced recovery and some high cost recovery and if the township were to build a new one the consensus was that Heuser Park would make the most sense. Mr. Jenaway noted that he raised the issue of alternative locations and a public/private partnership where instead of modifying the township building and incurring the expense there some township functions could be moved over to that building as some other communities have done.

Mr. Waks indicated that everyone recognizes the space issues in the township building and if moving in the direction of a new structure he pointed out that moving such functions as the library and park and recreation should be considered. He said it would be a way of giving the new facility popular and customer based features and would free up space for the township.

Mr. McBride reiterated that he does not want tax dollars expended on the center and does not want to take a bond issue.

Mrs. Spott asked if this would be the case even if the township receives revenue from the center and it is additive to the budget.

Mr. McBride pointed out that there will be tax increases from the school district probably for the near future. He emphasized that our core business is running a township and some other entity should run a community center.

Mrs. Spott said there are people in the population who believe that a core function of the township is park and recreation.

Mr. McBride stated that other than those who came to the meeting he has not been approached by anyone who wants to see a community center built and they appreciate the position of not using tax dollars for this purpose.

The consultant indicated that for a modest additional cost they could certainly add additional scenarios to the study and indicate what it would look like and how it would perform. He noted that one of the reasons they counseled against rental or purchase of existing sites is because of the cost recovery basis. At Heuser there is no site cost whereas if the township would decide on another site it would start out financially behind.

Mr. Waks asked if we knew how Mr. Frye is doing with the swimming club membership since that might be indicative of the demand. Mr. Jenaway responded that he spoke with Mr. Frye recently and was informed that two days after his Facebook page was posted Mr. Frye received 100 membership requests.

While the consultant is prepared to provide additional options he recommended that the township consider focusing on one model since the study is very detailed and complex.

Mr. McBride expressed concern that in running certain functions in the community center it might start out with one half FTE and then be drawn into full equivalency. He pointed out that the wages and benefits of township employees are significantly different than the YMCA pays.

The consultant stated that what they have seen in most cases is a programmed revenue facility where the bulk of the employees are part-time.

Mr. Jenaway asked the supervisors what guidance for program options should be provided the consultants. A high cost recovery model was preferred with one supervisor favoring somewhere between balanced and high cost recovery. Mr. Jenaway stated he wanted the numbers on the two sites discussed.

Mr. Wagenmann asked how quickly the consultant could have a proposal prepared and they responded within a day or two.

Mr. Wagenmann indicated that the Board could review the numbers and consider this matter at next week's Board of Supervisors meeting.

Mr. McBride asked for clarification on what next week's vote would involve. Mr. Wagenmann responded that in order to include more than one site in the study an amendment to the proposal is required and it will cost additional money. He said the original proposal only called for the consultants to prepare a business plan for one site.

Mr. McBride asked if this would be part of the grant money. Mrs. Spott responded that the grant covers one site. Mr. Wagenmann stated that the Board would have to decide on what the proposal involves and where the money would be drawn from.

The consultant indicated that it would be a very small incremental increase to the original figure. Mr. Wagenmann emphasized that the Board of Supervisors would need to see the number in order to continue further discussion and consideration.

#### PRESENTATION RE: SKATE PARK

Police Officer Les Glauner stated that there is a need to recognize skateboarding as a sport in itself. Prior to outlining a plan for a skate park in Upper Merion Township, Officer Glauner discussed the misconceptions about this growing recreational activity and its participants. Mr. Russell pointed out that skateboarding is not just recognized as a sport, but it is also a leisure time activity and a form of exercise to enable participants to stay in shape. Officer Glauner estimates that over 100 kids and adults currently skateboard in Upper Merion Township and some are actually trying to go professional.

Officer Glauner stated that a skate park will help foster a sense of belonging among youth and foster a sense of empowerment among those who have been relegated to recreating in unsafe and at times illegal places for far too long. The idea of a skate park is to provide a safe location and to adapt a part of the grounds near the township building for this purpose. The park would not be staffed; however a security camera that is already in place could be pointed toward the proposed park. The park would be fenced and rules for the park would be clearly posted. A unique feature of this proposal is that the park would be designed in part by the users. The modular skate park equipment would be positioned on a concrete pad and the system can be taken apart and redesigned on a regular basis. The cost would be in the range of \$150,000 plus design and engineering costs; the money would be raised by fundraisers, corporate sponsors and donations. It is estimated that it will take about a year to raise the funds. The skate park would be a partnership with the park and recreation department, the police department, the school district, the businesses and the youth in the community.

Officer Glauner reported that the Radnor and Upper Providence skate parks have been highly successful.

If Upper Merion were to build a skate park it would have very minimal impact on township insurance costs. It was noted that it would be more expensive to insure an athletic field or basketball court than it would be a skateboard park.

Officer Glauner stated that the park itself would be 100 feet by 60 feet and he envisions it as a simple, basic place to skateboard and have fun.

Mr. Russell noted that the Park and Recreation Department would insist on full compliance that all participants wear helmets and if there are violations a padlock would be placed on the fence with signage indicating that the park would reopen when participants are committed to the responsibility of wearing the helmets. Officer Glauner said the kids will eventually police themselves.

A question was raised from the group if helmets are free. Mr. Russell responded that there are grant programs wherein the township can provide helmets for children as has been done with the camps.

Mr. McBride asked about the recommendation of the Park Board. Mr. Russell responded that the Park Board would support the skate park if the kids agree to wear the helmets. Mr. Russell indicated that he and Officer Glauner wanted to present this idea to the Board of Supervisors to show that there is a commitment from the children and that the people who want this built will conduct a fundraising campaign.

A question was asked about the timing. Officer Glauner responded that estimates are that it will take about a year to raise the funds. He said the only action requested from the Board of Supervisors is for approval to use Upper Merion's non profit foundation to help with fundraising. Mr. Russell noted that this foundation has been used for donations to the farmers market and the concerts as well.

Mr. Jenaway asked if there is any problem with this [the foundation] from the county's standpoint. Mr. Wagenmann responded in the negative and said that it just needs to be designated as to what it is, placed in the books, assured that it was given for this purpose and then it can be kept separate.

Mr. Jenaway recommended that Mr. Russell talk to someone in planning and public works and find out what kind of stormwater issues might develop here with a 6,000 square foot impervious surface. Mr. Russell agreed to check it out.

Mr. Waks commented about the positive aspect of this project since there are very low ongoing operational costs once the fundraising is done.

Officer Glauner pointed out that as part of the pricing the vendor providing the equipment also takes care of maintenance and would come out twice a year to check everything.

Mr. McBride stated that before the Board of Supervisors takes action to approve the foundation a memo of understanding should be drawn up to approve the foundation, provide the land use, and check the water runoff. Mr. Wagenmann responded that Mr. Pizonka can draw up a Memo of Understanding

and this can be covered by simply saying the design of the facility will comply with all applicable ordinances and storm drainage. He said this should be signed with a key group of skateboard enthusiasts, provide them with an identity and then sign the agreement with this group.

#### UPPER MERION SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPOSED USAGE POLICY

Mr. Russell stated that in his discussions with Fred Remelius, Director of Operations, Upper Merion Area School District, he was informed that the school district is proposing a usage fee schedule for the Park and Recreation Department. The school district is looking at ways to maximize their facility usage and generate some revenue to help meet their multi-million dollar budget deficit for their 2011-2012 school year. Mr. Russell said that the Park and Recreation Department relies heavily on the school district for their programs and he indicated that over 90% of their activities take place there. Detailed information was distributed to the supervisors outlining the activities that take place at the school district and the usage by season. Mr. Russell discussed the proposed facility fee and how it would impact the Park and Recreation Department. He summarized that the school district is asking for a share in the revenue for any program such as sport camps, after school programs or any type of weekly summer day camp program that utilizes an outside contractor that is hired on a percentage basis. In the example of the current practice, Mr. Russell explained that if 10 children signed up for a program at \$40 a child resulting in a generated revenue of \$400, the instructor would receive 80% and park and recreation would take in 20%. The school district is recommending that they share in the 20%. Mr. Russell emphasized that this would greatly impact his department from a revenue standpoint.

A discussion ensued about the reason the school district is proposing this usage policy and how this might be counterproductive as far as certain township services now provided free of charge.

The Board would like to discuss this matter with the school administration and a meeting will be set up with Dr. Jamula, Fred Remelius, Mr. McBride and Dan Russell.

#### CONCERT SERIES SPONSORSHIP PROPOSAL

The Park and Recreation Department is seeking to hire an outside consultant to raise funds from sponsors. The consultant is Tom Blomstorm, the former Park and Recreation Director at Radnor and this item will be placed on the next business meeting agenda.

UPDATE – UPPER MERION SWIM & TENNIS CLUB

Mr. Wagenmann provided an update on the Upper Merion Swim and Tennis Club and he indicated that the indemnification has been signed and the Township Solicitor is working on additional necessary paperwork so that work can begin on the site. The plan is to open on Memorial Day.

UPDATE – STORMWATER COALITION STEERING COMMITTEE

Mr. Wagenmann provided an update on the Stormwater Coalition Steering Committee which is fighting unfunded mandates from the federal and state government. He said that local government sees the regulations as too onerous.

2011 JOINT MEETING DATES

The 2011 joint meeting dates were discussed and revised.

BOARD POLICIES RE: VEHICLE & FLEET POLICY/USE OF TOWNSHIP OWNED/LEASED VEHICLES

Mr. Jenaway expressed concern about the visibility of the township logo on township vehicles that are out of the township 75% of the week. Mr. Wagenmann provided a breakdown of the marked vehicles that are used for fire and rescue and public works.

A discussion ensued about the usage of the vehicles, pros and cons of the logo, alternatives to the logo and removing the logo.

Mrs. Spott referred to Mr. Jenaway's previous suggestion that off-duty vehicles that are taken home outside the township be parked instead at the nearest township owned property.

Mr. McBride said he had a problem with that philosophy for two reasons: (1) It is going to take more time to get to wherever the vehicle is stored and (2) it would be a change to what these people perceive as a benefit from the township. Mr. McBride said if this particular policy is considered it should be done when their compensation is renewed. Until then, Mr. McBride suggested taking the decals off; see if that works or if there is any problem.

Mr. Waks commented that it would make it harder to function here in their job at Upper Merion. Mr. Wagenmann disagreed and does not think it would make an impact.



Mr. Bartlett had no problem with taking a vehicle home outside the township with a logo.

Mr. McBride said if someone takes the logos off in the shop they will compound the doors and you would not even know the logos were ever there. Mr. Wagenmann said this can be evaluated.

Mr. Jenaway suggested trying this on the least impacting vehicle.

#### BOARD POLICIES RE: APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & AUTHORITIES

Mr. McBride suggested a change in procedure for the liaison [Mr. McBride currently serves as liaison] to the Zoning Hearing Board and suggested that the liaison sit in the audience since the perception of the current placement at the head table is that the liaison is part of the deliberations which is not the case.

Mr. Waks agreed that this change makes a lot of sense and asked if anything has to be in writing, and he was advised that no policy is necessary and that this can be adopted as a practice.

All supervisors were in agreement.

#### TRICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE MEETING – APRIL 7, 2011 OR APRIL 28, 2011 AT 6:30 P.M.

It was decided that the Tricentennial Committee would meet on April 7, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. McBride indicated that after the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting with the initial group, there will be continual outreach on the website and UMGA for volunteers with an emphasis on marketing and event planners.

#### ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

#### CONGRATS AND GOOD NEWS ON BUDGET

Mr. McBride reported that due to the watchful eyes and attention to detail of staff no reserves were needed of the \$1.9 million. Mr. Waks noted that not only were reserves not used, but an extra \$450,000 in savings was realized. Mr. Wagenmann stated that he will come back with recommendations on the furlough payback.

ALLENDALE ROAD BRIDGE LOAN

Mr. Wagenmann discussed the Allendale Road Bridge loan and said that the Board of Supervisors will have a vote at the business meeting on March 17, 2011 to grant permission to make application for a grant for 80% reimbursement of the project. He said that the reimbursement process involves waiting until it is put on a bridge bill through the state legislature. Mr. Wagenmann explained that until then PennDOT has a public infrastructure bank from which the township can borrow money at an interest rate of 1.625%. This loan will enable the project to move ahead through design and construction and when the grant money comes in that particular loan will be reimbursed.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

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RONALD G. WAGENMANN  
SECRETARY-TREASURER/  
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:

Minute Entered: