

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
JOINT MEETING
MAY 3, 2010

The Board of Supervisors of Upper Merion Township met for a Joint Meeting on Monday, May 3, 2009, in the Board Room, in the Township Building in King of Prussia. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by a pledge to the flag.

MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY BOARD:

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Waks, Bill Jenaway, Joseph Bartlett, and Erika Spott. Also present were: Ronald Wagenmann, Township Manager; H. David Rassbach, Chairperson; Howard M. Hoffman, Vice Chairperson; Gerald Denick, Secretary; William Carroll, Jeffrey Pasquale, James Kravitz, Ed Higgins, Public Information Officer; Don Herbert, TV Services Coordinator, Judith A. Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager.

DISCUSSIONS:

Chairperson H. David Rassbach discussed the franchise base that the township receives from Comcast and Verizon. In comparing totals for the last two years, he reported an increase of 4 percent. The competition between Comcast and Verizon is progressing. Last year Verizon had 12.3 percent of the total whereas this year it is 21.9 percent. Expectations are for an equilibrium to be reached when Verizon's buildout is completed in five or six years.

Mr. Ed Higgins, Public Information Officer, provided a sampling of the various television offerings produced by UMGA-TV. He pointed out the programs that were dropped because of budget reductions and also the ones that will be restored on a limited basis. Despite the cuts Upper Merion Township was able to maintain quality programming and won five awards from PSATS including three for television, first, second and third places and also first place for the Annual Report.

Mr. Rassbach discussed the evolution of the E-Newsletter that began in 2007 and then introduced Jim Kravits who provided the highlights of the successful promotion effort. He described the various promotion efforts including flyers, UMGA-TV commercials and the use of the Upper Merion Area School District Direct Connect system that reached all the households of school children in the school district. A raffle was conducted by the Media Communications Advisory Board to increase the subscriber base and the winners were announced at a recent Board of Supervisors meeting. The promotion doubled the number of

people receiving this newsletter. Efforts are ongoing to obtain new subscribers including sign up opportunities at the upcoming Farmers Market.

Mr. Rassbach said that the Economic and Community Development Committee and Media Communications Advisory Board collaborated last year to advance the idea of the redesign of the Upper Merion Township website. He pointed out that this is an example of successful collaboration of the advisory boards that can be very beneficial to the township.

Howard Hoffman, Vice Chairman, provided an update of the website redesign that went out for public bid. He reported that the successful vendor is Civic Plus with over a decade of experience developing websites for cities, counties and government associations from around the country.

Mr. Hoffman said the Media Communications Advisory Board is now preparing content in collaboration with ECDC. One of ECDC's main goals is to use the website as a means of driving business expansion. Another goal of the township is to have the website eventually be a vehicle for e-commerce. The "go live" date is currently set for July.

Mr. Higgins discussed Comcast franchise negotiations. He noted that the Cohen Law Group was hired as part of an Ad Hoc consortium of a dozen communities to deal with basic franchise requirements. One of the minor details to be worked out is the length of the contract and another is how much free internet they are willing to provide and the amount of any grants. This basic agreement is just a template that will have to be customized for Upper Merion Township. The Board of Supervisors will be asked to have a public hearing some time in June.

Mrs. Spott initiated a brief discussion on video streaming of programs. Mr. Don Herbert, UMGA-TV producer, responded that the township is currently streaming live on the internet 24/7.

Mrs. Spott asked about archiving events such as Concert Under the Stars. Mr. Herbert responded that currently only the Board of Supervisors meetings are archived. He said other approaches to expand the library with the new website are under consideration and that it has more to do with the storage space than bandwidth.

Mrs. Spott asked if there is a way to find out the scope of the television viewership. Mr. Higgins responded that every two years a citizens survey is conducted and the percentage of viewing households is high. He reported that in 2007 supervisor meeting viewership was 47% and in 2009 that figure jumped to 60%.

Mrs. Spott asked if any consideration has been given to contacting other townships to inquire if they would be interested in paying a license fee to Upper Merion Township for some of our more popular programs with broader appeal. Mr. Higgins responded that for about three years Upper Merion was a member of a group with approximately six municipalities, mostly contiguous to Upper Merion, and this was discussed. He said that while everyone is willing to export, there is no one willing to import. Mr. Higgins also pointed out that he is not aware of anyone nearby that produces the quality that Upper Merion allows on the air.

Mrs. Spott asked if this has been discussed with other township managers. Mr. Higgins responded in the affirmative and indicated the last time contact was made was early last year and there was no interest.

Mr. Rassbach commented that because of the current economic downturn this inquiry can be revisited. Mr. Higgins said this could be done but indicated that we should trade with a government access station so that this Board controls the programming, not a public access station where there is no control.

Mrs. Spott pointed out that possibilities exist for good promotion for the township at such well attended events as Upper Merion's successful Earth Day celebration. She commented that the Farmers Market has its own website and there have been discussions about considering the technology to click on interviews to generate interest not only for the Farmers Market, but also Upper Merion in general. Mr. Higgins responded that difficulties exist since Upper Merion is a "dot org" and a non profit and as a result certain restrictions exist for commercial entities, unlike for a "dot com" without these restrictions.

Mrs. Spott clarified that she is not referring to advertising, but positive interviews.

Mr. Waks indicated that Mrs. Spott might be referring to a link that would go directly from the township's new website to a venue like U-Tube. Mr. Higgins responded that a webinar will be held on May 14 that deals with social networking. He indicated that he has not favored such a network in the past and pointed out that the entire township is unable to access any of the social networks from township computers. Mr. Higgins indicated that the problem is that the use of this material on U-Tube or similar social networkings does not provide a context that is conducive to appropriate government actions, but these are the kinds of things being reviewed.

Mr. Rassbach said that care will be exercised as to how we approach these kinds of issues in moving forward and integrated with various media options with the new website.

Mrs. Spott commented that for interviews that are already being broadcast on UMGA a safe mechanism should be identified to capsulize on that so that it can be rebroadcast for those who do not have cable or if they do have cable they would have the option to view it at their leisure.

Mr. Jenaway commented that although viewership of supervisors meetings is approximately 60% there are still people who say, "I did not hear" or "I did not know." He asked that something be put into the thought process for the future to determine if we need anything else in the form of a cost effective integrated communications plan that might get to selected groups who may not consistently watch TV or go online.

Mr. Rassbach commented that there is a whole group of publications by the township's public information office that goes out monthly and quarterly to a select number of people that might be expanded. He pointed out that the E-Newsletter was meant to use new technology and at the same time reduce cost. There is a balance to be made for printing cost vs. more green and also connect with as many township residents as possible. This is the challenge to be met.

LIBRARY BOARD

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Waks, Bill Jenaway, Joseph Bartlett, and Erika Spott. Also present were: Ronald Wagenmann, Township Manager; Judith A. Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Karl Helicher, Library Director; Helene B. Thorpe, Vice Chairman; Marianne Hooper, Adult Programming; Jeanne Kauffman, Head of Children Services; David Bristowe, Secretary; Michael Duris; Aleta Cantwell Duey; Tracy Pasquale.

Ms. Helene B. Thorpe, Vice Chairman, appreciates the funding approved by the Board of Supervisors that has enabled the Library to reopen on Sundays and to go back to original hours on a daily basis.

Mr. Karl Helicher, Library Director, reiterated the challenge at the Library that is the same that all libraries are facing during the current recession to meet the increasing needs of the population who are looking for jobs or taking advantage of inexpensive or free programs. He said that compared to most libraries during this time Upper Merion is doing very well. .

Jeanne Kauffman, Head of Children Services, provided an update on the Children's Department and efforts to maintain and improve these programs during this economic downturn. She noted the contributions of the business community and discussed the purchase of a low vision reader that is now available to senior citizens and visually impaired. Ms. Kauffman reported that last year the Childrens Department sponsored 441 special programs involving approximately 18,000 people; circulation of books continues to increase surpassing even the adult use of the library. She said that the Fine Endowment enables many special programs that otherwise would not be possible.

Ms. Kauffman discussed the outreach to local daycare centers and nursery schools. Library staff visited 35 classes and concentrated on the six skills getting children ready to read. The storytellers have modeled an effective way to share stories and encourage literacy skills in children. She also discussed the enhancements to many reading programs and services as well as numerous education events. She noted that Supervisor Greg Waks was a guest reader and Supervisor Bill Jenaway will be participating in a story time during Fire Prevention Month in October.

Ms. Kauffman outlined a wide array of other different kinds of successful activities that have been offered by the library.

Ms. Kauffman discussed the Science in the Summer Program sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline. She noted that this year's theme is bioscience and microscopes will be made available to the children for examining plants and animal cells. During the round of school visits next week reading medals will be awarded to students who have earned them during the previous summer and highlights of summer programs will be announced.

This summer's reading program theme focuses on "Make a Splash – Read." All things related to water and sea creatures will be examined. Workshops are planned as well.

A Public Service Announcement will be aired to promote summer reading and will feature the Junior Friends of the Library.

Ms. Marianne Hooper discussed the Adult and teen programs. She noted that there is a new logo due largely to Don Herbert and the Library's partnership with Panera Bread.

Ms. Hooper said that while the reference and inter-library loan remains a standby of the library, more reference is online with library staff guiding patrons with data bases. She noted the loss of state funding in this area.

This fall there will be a four week classroom series made possible through the Fine Endowment for people looking for employment resources.

Ms. Hooper discussed the community partnership and outreach with the Senior Center and various activities offered including Friday Flicks and ESL classes.

Ms. Hooper commented on the Friends of Black History which continues to be a very popular event. She noted that other scheduled events include a fall Jazz Night, an Open Mike Night for young adults, Atwater and Donnelly a folk duo based in New England, Third annual Upper Merion Art Show, plus craft programs, movie nights, and book discussions.

Adults and teens also have summer reading. Ms. Hooper pointed out that this is the sixth year for Page Turners. This year the adults can “Water your Mind” and young adults in grades 7 through 12 can “Make Waves at your Library.” This is where the library partners with businesses in the community and a number of businesses have donated prizes. Mr. Hooper noted that a few programs will be offered in conjunction with the Farmers Market.

Mr. Helicher stated that the use of the Library continues to grow and he noted that total use in 2008 (the first full year of the recession) compared with 2007 the previous year overall library use increased 6.8% and for children 9.4%. In 2009 library circulation increased by 500 items. Mr. Helicher noted that while it is a small number it is very significant since that is the year that the library’s budget took the first 25% cut. He pointed out that any increase at all in circulation when the library withstands such a cutback indicates effectiveness in reaching people in other ways.

Mr. Helicher reported that so far this year circulation for children is up 3% overall. He recalled that when he first came on board in 1979 there were 3,000 library loans a year and this year 65,000 library loans are anticipated. He also noted that there were 32 adult programs in 2008 attended by 1,600 people and in 2009 there were 57 programs attended by 1,973, in 2008 there were 441 programs with an attendance of 18,000; in 2009 there were 536 programs with an attendance of 20,500 people. He attributes these figures to a combination of a very creative staff and the invaluable support from the Fine Endowment.

Mr. Bartlett stated that he has observed the impressive adult and child traffic laden with books coming to and from the library and commended the work of the library staff.

Mr. Jenaway asked if there is a way the residents of the township can help make the library even better either with specific donations or specific types of

materials in demand. Mr. Helicher said the library must be proactive to determine ahead of time what the public wants and also to be flexible enough to be reactive. He said that the support of Fine Endowment has been invaluable and he would ask township to continue to keep the library staff informed of their needs and wants.

Mr. Waks asked if the library needs more space. Mr. Helicher responded that the library has increased activities dramatically since opening. He pointed out that libraries are becoming more and more a community center where people can go not for just socializing but also for socialization and space is required to do the activities discussed this evening.

TRANSPORTATION/GENERAL AUTHORITY

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present were: Greg Waks, Bill Jenaway, Joseph Bartlett, and Erika Spott. Also present were: Ronald Wagenmann, Township Manager and Executive Secretary of the Authority; Judith A. Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Mike Santillo, Chairman, Upper Merion Transportation Authority, Tad Hershey, Treasurer; Marvin Meneeley, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer.

DISCUSSIONS:

In his capacity as Executive Secretary, Transportation Authority, Ronald Wagenmann, Township Manager, gave an update on the projects that the Transportation Authority is working on.

Mr. Wagenmann began with the \$12 million South Gulph Road/I-76 Ramp project. He explained that since the project was ready to go out to bid and met the time frame under the stimulus program, PennDOT moved this project forward and it is now under construction. When completed there will be a new westbound off ramp that will come off the expressway and tie directly into Henderson Road. The current on ramp that is located in the area of Crooked Lane will be relocated and become the new on ramp at the end of Henderson and South Gulph Road. PennDOT anticipates that the contractor will complete most of the roadway construction in the mid to late 2011 time frame. The contract runs through to 2012 due to the landscaping and berm construction and the contractor must abide by the guarantees on this particular aspect of the project.

The next project Mr. Wagenmann discussed was the Henderson Road project and indicated that the Authority is moving ahead and in the process of negotiating rights of way with a number of property owners and once completed it

will go out to bid. Using the diagram Mr. Wagenmann pointed out the starting and ending points of the two additional lanes in each direction. It will basically be a one year construction cycle at an estimated project cost of about \$2.9 million. Mr. Wagenmann explained that the Authority is accomplishing this with a public infrastructure loan through PennDOT that will have to be repaid over a ten year period with a fixed interest rate of 2.5%.

Mr. Wagenmann stated that the other part of this project is referred to as the South Henderson portion that has been submitted to the county for consideration in the event the county moves ahead with the Jump Start Two Program. There is no construction schedule.

The next project Mr. Wagenmann discussed is the replacement of the narrow P&W bridge that is located on East Church Road. The project is currently under design and the Authority is in the process of negotiating some rights of way. Once the project gets through the design phase it will go out to bid late this year or early next year. Once in construction the bridge would be closed for approximately two years or two construction seasons and the detour would be Crooked Lane to Yerkes and back down to Henderson.

The next project is on South Gulph Road between Church Road and the new signal on Long Road. It would cost about \$2.6 million and would bring two lanes in a southerly direction from the King of Prussia Mall towards Church Road down to Brooks Road that would provide a right turn lane onto Brooks and then a straight through lane. There would also be widening on South Gulph Road that would allow for the two lanes on Brooks itself, a dual left turn lane onto South Gulph Road and then a merge back into one lane coming up the hill toward Long Road. The right of way has been acquired from the cemetery. Although the project has not gone to final design, the Authority has received approval for another infrastructure loan from the State of Pennsylvania to do this particular project. It is hoped that once the Henderson Road project goes out to bid and under construction then the engineer for the Authority can proceed with the final design with the idea to have it out to bid sometime in 2011. Only one construction season would be required for this particular project since there are no major structures that would need to be constructed.

Mr. Wagenmann discussed the River Crossing Project, a project that calls for the replacement of the current 422 bridge across the river. He explained that a new bridge would be constructed downstream four lanes wide and the traffic would then be diverted over onto that bridge. The old bridge needs to be torn completely down because it does not meet the current seismic construction requirements. A totally new eight-lane bridge would be constructed.

Utilizing a diagram, Mr. Wagenmann pointed out the work that PennDOT would do. He explained that the first phase to go to construction would be the Trooper Road interchange which is currently a limited interchange with egress only going westbound and ingress coming eastbound. Once the project is completed there will be a full directional interchange with the ability to get on and off going east and westbound. This is currently under design by PennDOT and because of the Santorum earmark that was provided for the River Crossings Project, there is money there to construct at least that portion of the project. The other part of the project concerns the bridge across the river and then the interchange in Upper Merion needs to be modified to a single point urban interchange. Mr. Wagenmann explained that the problem with the two features that he just described is that there is design money, but no construction money available.

Utilizing a color-coded diagram, Mr. Wagenmann discussed the projects the Authority is working on through partnerships and stakeholders.

Mr. Bartlett asked for clarification about the old existing 422 bridge not meeting current seismic standards. Mr. Wagenmann responded that today's standards for bridge construction require that they have to be able to withstand certain forces, physical activity and shaking. He explained that this is an older designed bridge that does not meet the particular requirements driven by some of the bridge collapse events that occurred in California and Minnesota.

Mr. Santillo commented on the success and vision of the Transportation Authority and emphasized that these projects are funded without taxpayer funds.

Mr. Jenaway commented that it is a testament to the organization of the Authority in being "shovel ready" when the money became available to do the Henderson Road project. He said it is critical to have the township positioned to be able to take advantage of these opportunities, particularly with the expansion of the entire area down US 422 with Pottstown; these kinds of initiatives are going to play an even bigger role in the western end of the township.

Mr. Waks pointed out how invaluable it is to have Authority members with a tremendous amount of knowledge and institutional memory who have been with the Authority for so long.

SHADE TREE & BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION

ROLL CALL:

Supervisors present: Greg Waks, Bill Jenaway, Joseph Bartlett, and Erika Spott. Others present were: Ronald G. Wagenmann, Township Manager, Judith A. Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Barbara Van Clief, temporary Chairman; Dr. David Krasner, Vice Chairman; Michael Countis; Bob Dempsey; Jay Kowal, Township Liaison.

DISCUSSIONS:

Mr. Jay Kowal, Township Liaison, indicated that with all the new members on board this is basically a new commission. He noted that the beautification awards will be discussed at their next meeting. The commission will then tour the township, evaluate properties and present the awards in September. Advertisements to solicit nominations for properties will be advertised on UMGA-TV. Of particular interest to the commission are backyard properties.

Ms. Barbara Van Clief, temporary Chairman, discussed the Tree Tender Program. She said this is something she is aware of because of her experience working for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society where she ran the Tree Tender Program in the counties outside of Philadelphia. Such a program in Upper Merion would help with the township's tree goals. Such a citizen care group would also be beneficial in making Upper Merion more eligible for grants that are available through the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. There are already enough people trained as tree tenders in Upper Merion to start a group. She said that these are citizens who are trained to volunteer to do tree care and tree planting. Additional members could join the group, obtain training and make the organization stronger. Ms. Van Clief has spoken with several people about possible planting areas in Upper Merion where trees are needed. She noted that the Montgomery County Tree Tenders Program concluded in April, but there is a program scheduled in Chester County in the fall and another one in Montgomery County in the spring. It is taught by professionals in the field, arborists and special foresters, but it is directed at level that the average citizen can easily understand and does not give more information than is necessary to be an effective tree tender.

Mr. Bartlett asked for clarification about the involvement of the tree tenders with new and/or established trees. Ms. Van Clief responded that the tree tender can handle anything that they can do with their feet on the ground. They do not climb and ladders are not encouraged. The real benefit of a tree tender is in the early care of trees which will prevent the need for later care.

Mr. Kowal said that they are looking to work with Dan Russell and advertise some of the summer programs this year.

Ms. Van Clief commented that if there is a park friends group they should be encouraged to become part of the tree tenders.

Mr. Bartlett pointed out that with the 1,000 Tree Program already underway there are obviously some trees that are going to need attention.

Ms. Van Clief said that with a strong tree tender group in place the township is more likely to qualify for tree funding that exists through the Department of Conservation and Naturalization.

Mrs. Spott asked if there is any way we could get a tree tender course here in Upper Merion in 2011. Ms. Van Clief responded that it is possible and certainly Upper Merion could be put on the list, but the decision of where classes are held is a decision made by a number of different committees. Taken into consideration are the locations of recent programs so that more people are served.

Mrs. Spott commented that the 1,000 Tree Program is a great program, but it should have more press. She said that the first year after planting is critical. Mrs. Spott pointed out that the Farmers Market will have an information table with public interest pamphlets and the tree tender program could be promoted in this venue as well as on UMGA-TV. She also suggested the possibility of partnering that can be done with the Media Board.

Ms. Van Clief said that she could provide brochures for display at the Farmers Market and information is also available in the library.

Mr. Jenaway commented that another opportunity to recruit members would be with biology teachers where there are potential horticulturalists. He also asked for clarification about the age of teens who would be eligible. Ms. Van Clief responded that the age should be 15 or above. She also noted that many schools offer extra credit.

Mr. Bartlett asked if the tree tenders get involved in protecting the tree from deer such as at Valley Forge National Historical Park. Ms. Van Clief responded in the affirmative and said that there are ways that seem to be effective and they are always learning new ways and there no reason why a tree tender could not apply a deer prevention device.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the Joint Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

RONALD G. WAGENMANN
SECRETARY-TREASURER
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:

Minutes Entered:

The entire proceedings of the business transacted by the Board at this Business Meeting were fully recorded on audio tape, and all documents submitted in connection thereto are on file and available for public inspection. This is not a verbatim account of the minutes, as the tape is the official record and is available for that purpose.