



Allen Township Park and Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes February 23, 2023 6:00 P.M.

A General Meeting of the Allen Township Park and Recreation Board was held on Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 6:00 P.M. at the Allen Township Fire Company Building, located at 3530 Howertown Road, Northampton, PA.

1. Roll Call:

Present: Gary Behler; Paul Link; Louise Bugbee (arrived at 6:07 P.M.); Mary Austin; Maria Bonett; Adrienne Ibarra; Donna Teklits; Ilene Eckhart, Manager; and Maurin Ritinski, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Nicole Dotta

2. **Announcements and/or Actions to Add New Items to Current Agenda:** No announcements and/or actions to add new items to the current agenda.

3. **Review of Minutes:** Mr. Behler made a motion to approve the minutes of January 24, 2023; seconded by Ms. Teklits. On the motion, by roll call vote, all members present voted yes. (*Ms. Bugbee was not present at the time of this motion*).

4. **Public to be Heard:** Denise O'Brien, 885 Graystone Circle, indicated that she saw the survey regarding the dog park. She inquired about the improvement survey and how it will impact the dog park. She also questioned if the Park and Recreation Board will be reviewing any other parks, such as Howertown Park. (*At this time, Ms. Bugbee arrived*). Mr. Link explained that these parks will be discussed during this meeting. Ms. Eckhart also explained that she will be providing an update regarding the Requests for Proposals for the Howertown Park and Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park. Mr. Behler indicated that the purpose of the survey is to obtain feedback from individuals who use the park and gain insights on what specific improvements may be wanted and beneficial. He explained that the results will be reviewed to form a list of possible improvements that the Park and Recreation Board may suggest to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Behler indicated that the Park and Recreation Board did not have any specific improvements in mind at the time of the publishing of this survey and that the survey is a fact-finding exploratory survey. Ms. Eckhart reported that the survey was also published so that the Park and Recreation Board has some feedback from users of the park prior to the Park and Recreation Board's site visit to the park. She explained that Allen Township does not own the land at the dog park and that the Township has a property management agreement with Northampton County. She also explained that all proposed improvements to this property must be approved by Northampton County.

Ms. O'Brien voiced her concerns of negative impact regarding the proposed warehouse near the dog park. Mr. Behler explained that a land development plan has not yet been submitted but all requirements for land development plans will be reviewed including proposed buffering, setbacks,

traffic studies, etc. Ms. O'Brien stated that it would be beneficial if there was a sidewalk along Savage Road to access the dog park and along Willowbrook Road to Wayne A. Grube Memorial Park. Ms. Eckhart explained that the Board of Supervisors at the time of development along these roads felt that Savage Road was going to be a collector road and that it would best to keep pedestrian traffic inside the developments through internal walking trails. Ms. Eckhart indicated that the Board of Supervisors may look further into this and the connectivity due to the proposed Wawa. She explained that buffering and security will also be reviewed. Ms. Eckhart provided background on the rail trail and the stone trestle bridge. Mr. Link was interested in trying to connect a walking path from the future residential development at 700 Savage Road to the Nor Bath Trail. Mr. Behler indicated that a walking path will be discussed further during the land development phase for the residential portion of the 700 Savage Road property.

5. Business Items

A. Requests for Proposals (RFP) for Master Site Development Plan Project – Howertown Park and Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park: Ms. Eckhart updated the Park and Recreation Board that on February 14th a subcommittee of two (2) Supervisors (Mr. Link and Mr. Frack) interviewed the firms who submitted RFPs. Ms. Eckhart explained that the Board of Supervisors will have continued discussion to determine if this is the correct path to take with the full study of these parks. Ms. Eckhart questioned if the study should be segmented to certain issues within these parks. She reported that there is a substantial cost of approximately \$80,000 for the Master Site Development Plan Project. Mr. Link explained that there is a considerable amount of steps to obtain the final product. Ms. Eckhart explained that she and the two (2) Supervisors questioned the applicants on what they felt the most critical issues were at these parks. Regarding Howertown Park, the applicants felt that there is a lack of plantings, issues regarding the orientation of the fields and sizing of the fields to meet standards, as well as parking concerns. Regarding Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park, the applicants felt that the top issues were parking and determining the focus point of the park. Mr. Link reported that the applicants also mentioned that loop trails should be considered for both parks. He feels that Howertown Park has a layout issue in regards to parking while Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park has a severely insufficient amount of parking. Mr. Link believes there is potential to add parking at the Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park property that would be past Mr. Blair's property (65 Covered Bridge Road). He indicated that this would require a walking path to be added. The Park and Recreation Board discussed parking at and near the covered bridge and felt that these closer parking spaces be reserved for handicap parking.

Ms. Eckhart explained that programming and attracting people to the park is one challenge but then there are also easily recognizable challenges, such as parking. Ms. Eckhart reported that the study of these parks through the RFPs would heavily rely on public engagement. She indicated that the applicants explained that they would prefer public input prior to identifying any problems or further discussing the future of the parks. Ms. Eckhart found this troubling due to there being limitations at each site. Mr. Link suggested forgoing the RFPs and going straight to engineering with the issues that are identified. Mr. Link explained that the consultant firms who responded to the RFP are not engineers and only come up with a design. He expressed his concern for the cost of the project, beginning with \$80,000 for the consultant to design the parks, followed by additional costs for the engineering phase, and finishing with the costs of building of the plan. The Park and Recreation Board further discussed parking options. Ms. Eckhart explained that an engineer would need to review additional parking and the location of possible parking. She indicated that the survey the Park and Recreation Board published for the Allen Township Dog Park is an excellent way to obtain information from the public and complete the public

engagement portion of the process. She stated that the residents and users of these parks are likely to know the strengths and weaknesses of these parks very well. Ms. Eckhart questioned if a consultant is needed for this portion of the plan. She suggested that the Park and Recreation Board consider gathering information through surveys as a method of public engagement and allowing the Park and Recreation Board to review this information. She believes specific study areas may then be able to be sent out as a RFP to engineers. Ms. Eckhart also believes having survey data will be beneficial for the Park and Recreation Board during their site visits. She explained that there was a significant process for gaining public comment during the Comprehensive Plan. She indicated that the data gathered during this would be valid and useful for this purpose as well.

Mr. Link explained that the Park and Recreation Board will need to consider the public input as well as what will work best at each site and what type of programming can be held at these parks. Members suggested yoga events, bands and music events, and movie nights among other suggestions. Mr. Link explained that he was a fan of the West Park in Allentown between Linden Street and Turner Street. He indicated that this park frequently has bands and art events. Member stressed the importance of improving these parks to allow for programming, events, and community engagement.

Mr. Behler indicated that he would rather use funds towards the costs of the improvements rather than a concept plan design. He suggested that the Park and Recreation Board conduct surveys and site visits of the parks and any ideas for improvements will be directed to an engineer for review. Mr. Link indicated that the Township would only benefit from concepts gained during the RFP. Ms. Eckhart stated that it would provide possibilities but that it is important to take care of the parks, improve them, and maintain them which was a point of discussion in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Park and Recreation Board further discussed possible avenues to gain more responses to the surveys such as, through the newspapers, sharing the post on social media and other pages, sharing the link on the Nextdoor App, and posting the survey link at the park. Ms. O'Brien commented that the survey should clearly indicate that there is no residency requirement in order to participate in the survey.

Mr. Behler made a motion to recommend forgoing the RFPs for the Master Site Development Plan Project, internally create surveys to obtain public engagement, and proceed to engineering once possible improvements have been identified, seconded by Ms. Teklits. On the motion, by roll call vote, all members present voted yes. Ms. Eckhart indicated that DCNR standards will still be followed. Mr. Behler noted that he would prefer to spend funds directly on improvements.

Mr. Link indicated that he would like information to be posted at each park to let the public know when public meetings are. He would like to see greater attendance from the public at Park and Recreation Board meetings.

B. Park and Recreation Board Spring 2023 Park Site Visits:

- i. **March 23, 2023 – 5:30 P.M. – Howertown Park and Savage Road Dog Park**
- ii. **April 27, 2023 – 5:30 P.M. – Allen Township Riverview Preserve and Kreidersville Park**
- iii. **May 25, 2023 – 5:30 P.M. – Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park**

The Park and Recreation Board discussed the upcoming site visits. Ms. Eckhart explained that she must advertise these public meetings and note that they are field visits. Members discussed the meeting location for the March 23rd site visit. Members decided to start the site visit at the Field House at Howertown Park. After concluding the site visit of Howertown Park, the Park and Recreation Board will continue the meeting by conducting a site visit at the Allen Township Dog Park. Mr. Link noted that the site visit is weather dependent. He inquired if the meeting could then be held at the Allen Township Fire Company Building. Ms. Eckhart explained that this would complicate the advertisement and that it may be best to cancel and reschedule the meeting if there is inclement weather. Mr. Link suggested the meeting could also be held inside the field house if needed due to weather. Ms. Teklits inquired if any other business will be on the agenda. Ms. Eckhart explained that the focus of the meeting will be the site visits and that if anything else pertinent arises it will be listed on the agenda. Mr. Behler questioned if the survey for Howertown Park could be published prior to the site visit of the park. Ms. Ritinski will create the survey and have it posted. Ms. Eckhart requested that if any members have any specific questions they would like included on the Howertown Park survey to have these emailed to herself and Ms. Ritinski.

The Park and Recreation Board decided to begin the April site visit at the Allen Township Riverview Preserve before traveling to Kreidersville Park for the site visit.

Members discussed some additions to the parks that they would like to see and the events they believe the community would be interested in. Ms. Bugbee suggested a picnic area. Mr. Link suggested ice cream events and the possibility of food trucks. He also suggested holding a First Responder Day and having fire trucks brought to the park and having hayrides in the fall. Ms. Teklits suggested holding a corn hole tournament. Ms. Bonnet suggested pet-centered events such as Northampton Borough's Paw Prints on the Canal. Ms. Eckhart suggested school band and musical events at the park. Members also discussed food trucks. Mr. Behler voiced his concerns regarding traffic.

The Park and Recreation Board discussed permanent restrooms at park sites. Ms. Eckhart indicated that the port-o-john at Howertown Park has been set on fire twice. The Township now owns this port-o-john. Several members had concerns with vandalism of permanent restrooms. The preliminary survey results for the dog park indicate that a number of survey-takers would like a restroom at the dog park. Ms. Eckhart indicated that there are no facilities at this site, including any port-o-johns.

Ms. Eckhart indicated that she would like to speak with Ms. Bugbee regarding the types of trees that would do well at the Howertown Park. She reported that several trees had to be cut to allow for the expansion of the network and security upgrades.

The Park and Recreation Board is interested in beginning some smaller programming events including music and art for the 2023 year. Ms. Eckhart will research possible programming further.

6. Public to be Heard: No public comment.

8. Announcements: No announcements.

The upcoming meetings held at the Allen Township Fire Company Building (unless otherwise noted) as listed on the agenda are as follows:

- Planning Commission – Monday, February 27, 2023 at 6:00 PM
- Board of Supervisors – Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 6:00 PM

- Board of Supervisors – Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 6:00 PM
- Planning Commission – Monday, March 20, 2023 at 6:00 PM
- Park and Recreation Board – Thursday, March 23, 2023 at **5:30 PM** (*Site Visits of Howertown Park & Allen Township Dog Park – Meeting at Howertown Park Field House*)

9. **Adjournment:** There being no further comments or business the meeting adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilene M. Eckhart



Allen Township Park and Recreation Board

**Meeting Agenda
Thursday, February 23, 2023
6:00 P.M.**

**Location: Allen Township Fire Company Building
3530 Howertown Road, Northampton, PA**

The Allen Township Park and Recreation Board meetings will be held at the Allen Township Fire Company Building, located at 3530 Howertown Road, Northampton, PA.

A summary of the public comment policy and procedures is located at the end of the agenda as a reference for individuals wishing to address the Board during the “Public to be Heard” segments.

Note: Per Act 65 of 2021 requirements, this agenda was posted to the Township website, at the Township Municipal Building, and at the physical location of the proposed meeting, by Township staff on: February 22, 2023.

1. Call to Order

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

3. Roll Call

_____ Paul Link, Chairman _____ Gary Behler, Member _____ Ilene M. Eckhart, Manager

_____ Donna Teklits, Secretary _____ Adrienne Ibarra, Member _____ Louise Bugbee, Member

_____ Nicole Dotta, Member _____ Mary Austin, Member _____ Maria Bonett, Member

4. Announcements and/or Actions to Add Items to Agenda

5. Review of Minutes

6. Public to be Heard (Residents shall limit their comments to no more than three minutes)

7. Business Items

A. Requests for Proposals (RFP) for Master Site Development Plan Project – Howertown and Kreidersville Covered Bridge Parks – Update

B. Park and Recreation Board Spring 2023 Park Site Visits

i. March 23, 2023 – 5:30 PM – Howertown Park and Savage Road Dog Park

ii. April 27, 2023 – 5:30 PM – Allen Township Riverview Preserve and Kreidersville Park

iii. May 25, 2023 – 5:30 PM – Kreidersville Covered Bridge Park

8. Public to be Heard (Residents shall limit their comments to no more than three minutes)

9. Next Meetings – All meetings will be held at the Allen Township Fire Company Building, located at 3530 Howertown Road, Northampton, PA – **WITH THE EXCEPTION AS THOSE NOTED AS SITE VISITS BELOW**

- ◆ Planning Commission, Monday, February 27, 2023 at 6:00 PM
- ◆ Board of Supervisors, Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 6:00 PM

- ◆ Board of Supervisors, Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 6:00 PM
- ◆ Planning Commission, Monday, March 20, 2023 at 6:00 PM
- ◆ Park and Recreation Board, Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 5:30 PM (Site Visits Howertown Park and Savage Road Dog Park)

10. Adjournment

-Public Comment Policy and Procedures-

- 1. A period for public comment will be held at the beginning of the meeting and at the conclusion of all agenda business items. Any public comments or questions shall be reserved until time on the agenda. Public comments and questions will not be permitted during the course of the Board's/Commission's business items.*
- 2. Individuals who speak must give their name, address and municipality prior to speaking.*
- 3. Time limit on length of public comment or presentation will be three (3) minutes per person, per meeting.*
- 4. A speaker will only be granted one three (3) minute extension, if given, for a maximum speaking time of six (6) minutes, at the discretion of the Chairman.*
- 5. Comments/questions shall be directed to the Board/Commission members only.*
- 6. Procedures will be in place to maintain proper decorum for the hearing. Public participation will be allowed but the Board will ensure respect for all citizens and maintain order. Personal attacks and outbursts will be ruled out of order. The Chairman of the Board or Commission may, within this discretion, rule out of order scandalous, impertinent, and redundant comment or any comment the discernible purpose of which is to disrupt or prevent the conduct of the business of the meeting.*
- 7. Individuals with lengthy written statements may submit them for the record and provide a verbal summary of three (3) minutes or less. Interested persons may email public comments via email, sent to manager@allentownship.org until 3:00pm local time the day of each meeting or by contacting the Township office. Public comment received via email will be read at the outset of the meeting. If you require an auxiliary aid, service or other accommodation, please contact the Allen Township offices in advance. In addition, an audio recording of the meeting will be posted to the Township website: www.allentownship.org within 48 hours of the meeting.*