

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS and Parks and Recreation Committee
Joint Monthly Work Session Minutes
Tuesday, July 12, 2022
2:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

The Board of Supervisors held a worksession to discuss Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan Update on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, as a hybrid meeting. In attendance were:

Board:	Laura Dininni, Chair Lisa Strickland, Vice-Chair Patty Stephens Tierra Williams	Staff:	Centrice Martin, Township Manager Jaymes Progar, Assistant Manager Eric Endresen, Director of Finance
Parks:	Bill Keough Norris Muth		

Others in attendance included: Josh Clark, HRG; Tracy Strickland, HRG.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Dininni called the Tuesday, July 12, 2022, joint worksession to order. There is a quorum of the Board and not with the Parks Committee. There will be no action at this worksession.

Ms. Martin welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that the joint worksession had been advertised in accordance with the PA Sunshine Act as a hybrid meeting with an option to attend online utilizing Zoom and the main meeting room for the public to participate. Persons attending the worksession as members of the public or agents to speak and who wanted to participate were asked to state their name, municipality, and topic. Public members were asked to be muted during the worksession and must be acknowledged by the Chair and then unmute for comment. Ms. Martin took Roll Call and there was a quorum.

II. CITIZEN'S INPUT – none.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. DISCUSSION ON RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE DRAFT AND GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND MISSION STATEMENT

Link to: [2009 Ferguson Township Recreation and Park and Open Space Plan Update](#)

The speakers were introduced as Tracy Strickland and Josh Clark from HRG, the consultant. Topics to review:

- Previous 2009 plan and recommendations;
- Mission statement;
- Previous plan's goals and examples of other ones to expand upon.

Tracy Strickland (Consultant) noted the mission statement and goals are standard now with the DCNR report template. If time permits there are some image boards to review that were provided after the park amenities and future master plan exercise as well as the site plan discussion for Fairbrook and Greenbriar Saybrook parks to get some guidance and ideas. Follow up on comments prior to the Parks and Recreation meeting in August.

The consultant reviewed the 2009 plan's recommendations that were an update to the 1998 plan.

- Adopt the 2009 Plan update to be used as a guide for future parks, recreation, and open space development;
- Continue the Township's compliance with the PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

The consultant asked if the recommendations are still relevant. Discussion followed on sticking to the plan and the next iteration of the plan. Mr. Keough discussed rewording the message in #1 would be most appropriate and we will need to confirm that those are things that are going to be on our plate as we move forward. Ms. Dininni added to take into consideration not only the MPC but also DCNR. Mr. Keough concurred in that MPC is a legal document codified statewide but that adding a DCNR reference is good, maybe state as "in support of DCNR initiatives", and not necessarily codified.

#2 – General. The Recreation Parks & Open Space Plan should be updated in 5 Years to ensure that proposed changes are consistent with anticipated development.

The consultant noted to emphasize the timeframe. Discussion followed on lifecycles of facilities and timeline of five to ten years. Mr. Keough likes no more than ten years that allows working it into the staff workload environment and enough time in-between reviews so that we have enough data capacity to measure what impact the plan has made. Ms. Dininni stressed in addition to adopting the plan, it needs to be a living, breathing document to keep it active and implemented in the Parks and Recreation Committee. Mr. Keough suggested every two years for review. Discussion followed along with utilizing a dashboard as a tracking tool for implementing goals. The consultant stated some wording in the core cycle could be updated.

#3 – General. Board to Establish an Advisory Committee to Oversee Implementation of Updating the Plan and to Advise the Parks & Recreation Committee.

Discussion followed between Ms. Dininni and Ms. Martin on the Bylaws, assessments, and recommendations that the Parks committee makes to the Board on Master RPOS plans. In addition, to provide input as necessary for the facilitation of the master planning documents. Ms. Dininni noted RPOS plans could include a lot of things in addition to a master plan, i.e., expansion of programming requests, CRPR, and interaction of a Parks committee with the RPOS as a conduit for public input. Ms. Martin clarified that there is reference that Parks & Recreation Committee should provide some assistance in updating the RPOS Plan and went into detail on variables in the discussion. The consultant concurred with the comments discussed and tried to adapt the exercises accordingly and possibly adapt shorter exercises to engage more participation. More discussion followed on doing a dashboard as a communication tool between the Board, implementing the Plan, and the Parks & Recreation Committee advising to integrate under items 2 and 3 under General. The consultant's suggestion to #3 is "The Board should find ways to integrate the advisory committee to actively participate in ongoing review..." Ms. Dininni reiterated using the dashboard tool.

Mr. Keough noted that sometimes there seems to be confusion on what the committee's role is and how they have adapted to that role and provided an example. Mr. Keough noted there is a full-time administrative staff in Planning vs. no staff in Parks committee for the due process moving forward. Ms. Dininni thanked Mr. Keough for his comments and noted the time to keep on task and move to the next topic.

Item 1 - Recommendation from 2009 RPOS Plan

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

The consultant and Ms. Dininni discussed minimum standards from the 2009 plan. A lengthy discussion followed on the design of parks for the geography of those Parks. Ms. Dininni gave examples, i.e., we do

not want a goal of monoculture recreation; we want to have diverse opportunities for recreation and not mandated recommendations in all parks. Whether the goal of the overall park system is for Ferguson Township or the region. Our concept of parkland is not just a neighborhood park and should have a diverse mix of opportunities for both parks and open space in a way that is aligned with the geography and in an efficient manner that is cost-effective. Ms. Stephens noted board surfaces as Ms. Williams had previously noted and exclusivity. Ms. Dininni noted to have a targeted general statement about the goal of a diverse and inclusive mix of recreational opportunities and included values such as being environmentally sensitive and financially responsible. The consultant detailed the values and referenced exercises 4 and 5 storyboards for active recreation. Keep it general to the goal and objective.

The Township should provide CIP funding each year to develop portions of the parks.

Ms. Dininni stated funding is rotated as needed and not per year. There have been discussions on having an inventory of assets in the parks including kiosks format to track maintenance needs for a data drive CIP. However, not every park needs a CIP allocation. The consultant noted they did on-site assessments to go with each of the maps and suggested taking a version of that to review and develop further and prioritize cost. Ms. Dininni suggested along the lines of a goal, i.e., to be data-driven and resident preferences to drive CIP investment.

Item 2 - General Phases – The Township has established and shall continue to utilize a standard master planning process (MPP).

Ms. Dininni noted we should use a MPP when the need rises to the MPP level as well as develop a standardized way to do minor updates to the master plan that does not involve a full assessment. The consultant noted that some specific details we will get to and it goes back to the previous discussion of looking at the spaces individually recognizing what they can be vs. what it has to be. It helps keep costs in check. Ms. Dininni noted a timetable for checking on master plans is helpful.

The consultant skipped to item I, regarding how many years a master plan is good for. Discussion followed on revising the verbiage in this section to “master plan should be considered for full updating in a 10 to 15-year window and minor updates can happen during that time.” Expand for guidance from the Parks committee for framework and flexibility. Discussion on the initial master plan vs. an updated master plan. Goal: Be responsive to community needs; 10-15 year generally; caveat for an initial master plan; and check in on 3 to 5 years. The consultant suggested mapping out in GIS. Adaptive play for pickle ball for example. More flexible space for resident activities. Discussion followed on adaptive activities and the drivers for the changes. Ms. Martin noted an email she received from a Parks committee member on more acknowledgment of Social Equity; touched on looking more at the criteria vs. just the years that have been discussed along with demographic changes. Ms. Martin acknowledged that sometimes doing a master plan update is important for a grant funding application to be competitive, i.e., Cecil Irvin Master Plan Update as well as other examples that can be integrated into the plan. Mr. Keough agreed on the language for up to 15 years is a good measure. He noted the statement also needs to address maximum opportunities for flexibility to change; avoid using the verbiage minor changes to avoid what are minor changes and allow for change to occur during the 15-year period without a rewrite of the entire master plan, aka, interim changes. The consultant reviewed #2’s descriptive list on the standard master plan development as listed. Discussion followed on public input and hosting meetings that are weighted factors and valued when applying for grants and for community engagement activities and to include in the goal’s verbiage. Simplify items and design iteration process with a consultant for the board to go thru proper procedures and adoption. Mr. Keough suggested there is a variety of good information and planning other than scripted consultant language and to have the opportunity to use both scripted consultant language and other options. Ms. Martin noted professionals in the field of study can be called upon to add their expertise, i.e., the Township’s Arborist, engineers, planner, etc... when applying for grants.

Item 3 – Township should complete development of partially developed parks.

Discussion took place on whether a park is completely developed according to the master plan, park assessment charts, and whether to complete the partially developed parks vs. updating the master plan. The consultant noted we'll check with DCNR requirements and report back to Ferguson Township.

Item 4 – Township should continue to utilize the Official Map to designate future parkland locations.

Discussion followed on other avenues to designate parklands. Mr. Keough stated in regards to Planning Commission, a developer will designate an area in relation to development or fee in lieu of parklands. Ms. Dininni agrees; however, keep the language for the Official Map due to being a great planning tool in combination with the bike paths addition to the map. Ms. Dininni noted item numbers 4, 6, and 7 are the Official Map that can be combined into one sentence stating "the Township should continue to utilize the Official Map to designate future parkland, bike paths and open space areas to include previous recommended open space areas." Do not recommend previous recommended bike baths because they now relate to the newly recommended bike paths. Confirm if any open space areas, that were not added to the Official Map, have been bulldozed by development or an endangered species designation; examples were given as noted on the document. The consultant will check on this along with page 38 for updated bike paths and will combine and simplify the language. Mr. Keough suggested using the Official Map as one of the mechanisms to designate future parkland locations.

Item 5 – Township should continue to utilize a regional master planning process for the development of community parkland. This topic on hold for a future meeting.

Item 8 – Township should continue to pursue the purchase of agricultural conservation easements to manage growth and preserve the industry of farming. This will allow cost-effective services to residents located within the growth boundary.

Discussion on broadening parkland and open space plan. Discussion on concern over the inclusion of Ag easements in a Recreational Park and Open Space Plan and whether a recreation easement can be done with those land owners instead of it being designated what it is not so as not to trespass on the land designated as open space in the RPOS. Mr. Keough recommended eliminating #8 because both Rec Open Space and Ag Easements are not compatible together. Ms. Lisa Strickland concurred and highlighted the Township's commitment to the allowable continued use in the Ag area belongs in the Strategic Plan and to note where we are taking it from and reemphasizing it somewhere else. Mr. Keough discussed the protection of farmland intent as an open space concept for farmers. To clarify, item #8 will be removed from the RPOS Plan.

Item 9 - Ms. Dininni reiterated what folks thought open space is and to remove #9 from RPOS Plan.

RA is not a provision of open space. Recommended for a growth management provision strategy. Discussion followed on the appropriateness of where to place parks. Ms. Martin noted requests in Parks and Recreation Committee for requests for orchards and discussion on the management of it and could be something for the RPOS Plan to explore and see what other communities are doing, i.e., The Orchard Project, and move forward without liability to the Township. Mr. Muth noted there is a June Berry Orchard "starter program" in the Ferguson Township parking lot! Ms. Dininni discussed previous concerns brought up regarding space being close to Ag areas and adding trees and gardens. Ms. Dininni noted new goals to bridge the infrastructure of master planning into regional goals to include those environmental areas discussed today.

The consultant noted there is a separate chapter on new recommendations. We have discussed previous goals but have not really discussed new goals yet that will be at a future meeting to define and determine resources to manage local initiatives for programming as noted in this worksession vs. regional programming.

Item 10 - Township should pursue additional forms of open space preservation such as greenways and linear parks.

Ms. Dininni noted it's valid to keep #10. Board discussion followed on consensus to keep linear parks. Mr. Keough discussed listing different examples of greenways concept in more urban areas. Ms. Dininni noted three examples of connectivity, i.e., Wildlife Corridor, and continued discussion on bike path connections. Ms. Dininni suggested connecting to existing, providing connections between gaps, and utilizing linear parks. The consultant suggested overlapping #10 with #11 with the new goal, Trish Meeks new files with the Township's GIS map layers along with the known designated open spaces. Overall, to complete the map.

Item 11 – Township should coordinate timing, funding, location and maintenance of bike paths with adjacent municipalities where the connections are feasible.

Mr. Keough discussed the history of conservationists, and state and national organizations regarding claims to railroad beds and to be aware of the verbiage used when talking about linear and greenway terms with people in the western part of the Township. The consultant noted diversifying the list of options and being more inclusive and less prescriptive.

Item 12 – Township should continue to pursue to the opportunity to purchase open space adjacent to the existing park facilities to expand recreational opportunities.

Ms. Dininni and Mr. Keough had a discussion on when #12 had been introduced into the RPOS in regards to the timeframe of both the 75-acre parcel purchase and the 25-acre parcel purchase of Whitehall Regional Park. Connectivity on expanding that makes sense in an environmentally sensitive area should be balanced with financial responsibility. Mr. Muth suggested rewording to ensure the sustainability of existing recreational activities and preserving existing, maintaining ROW, etc. HRG suggested sending responses to Mr. Progar so that the comments can be sent to the consultant to itemize all together.

ORDINANCE REVISIONS

There are two items under Ordinance Revisions from the 2009 plan. Recommendations: SALDO and Zoning Ordinances should be updated regularly for consistency with the goals and objectives in the RPOS Plan.

Mr. Keough concurred it should be updated. Discussion followed on SALDO review and zoning areas. The wording was refined to ensure sustainability and preservation in regards to ecosystem services/equitable access to parks and open spaces.

REGIONAL/COMMUNITY – Items 1-3 tabled discussion for a later date.

FINANCING – Tabled discussion.

The consultant noted for the rest of the exercises not reviewed to do at home and respond before the next Township Parks and Recreation meeting in August so that a report can be made to the committee.

Ms. Dininni thanked the consultants for their time on this project. Ms. Dininni took a motion to adjourn.

IV. CALENDAR ITEMS – July

V. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, Ms. Strickland motioned to **adjourn** the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Centrice Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Centrice" being more prominent than the last name "Martin".

Centrice Martin, Township Manager
For the Board of Supervisors

Date approved by the Board: 08-16-2022