

DRAFT



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PARRC MEETING MINUTES

March 22, 2023-A hybrid meeting

In attendance:

Michael Lenhart, Borough of Pottstown
Cathy Paretti, Upper Pottsgrove Township
Jay Erb, North Coventry Township
Karen Nocella, East Coventry Township
McKenna Powanda, Douglass Township

Bill Keohane, Lower Pottsgrove Township
Charlie Valentine, West Pottsgrove Township
Rich Sichler, Washington Township
Craig Colistra, Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation
Tricia McCloskey, PARRC Regional Recreation Planner

Meeting Notes:

1. Call to Order- 4:30pm and Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Welcome, no introductions were made.
3. Meeting minutes from February 22, 2023, were motioned for approval with one edit by R. Sichler and seconded by J. Erb; all approved. There were no abstentions.
4. Public Comment-none.
5. Executive and Subcommittee Reports.
 - a. Treasurer's Report. C. Paretti previously provided the Financial Report and it was accepted by the Committee. [M. Lenhart shared the screen with the Financial Report]. C. Paretti stated that there is \$17,655.98 in checking and \$58,867.68 in savings. C. Paretti stated that she will be mailing out the second installment for the planner contribution later this month.
 - b. Events Subcommittee. K. Nocella reported that she and J. Erb are pulling together the PARRC Birding Series events. C. Paretti stated that a birding event will also be held at the Althouse Arboretum and will be on 4/29 at 8:30am and will be a free event.
 - c. Financial Sustainability Subcommittee. M. Lenhart reported that emails have been going back and forth regarding the MOU and funding resolution for the next state of PARRC. **M Lenhart said there will be a draft ready for the April PARRC meeting.**
 - d. DEI Subcommittee. C. Colistra stated that he and T. McCloskey met with a Deborah Vereen, owner of the Vereen Group, a consultant who provided DEI training in the past to the PA Parks and Forests Foundation. During the meeting, D. Vereen explained the types and typical format of DEI training. The PARRC Committee was generally in favor of holding the training. B. Keohane stated that perhaps municipal officials and managers should be invited to the training as well. M. Lenhart stated perhaps a single training should be considered rather than dividing the training up over a few PARRC meetings. B. Keohane requested that we ask about virtual versus in-person training options. M. Lenhart indicated that a to-do item for **each PARRC representative was to ask / gauge the level of interest for DEI training from their individual municipalities.**
6. County Planner Updates. S. Buck discussed the on-going Chester County Trails Master Plan project. He stated that the first public meeting was held last week and that despite the weather, 40 people attended the in-person meeting, and another 60 people joined the meeting virtually. The presentation is on-line. Another

item to report was that the County is working on a DCNR C2P2 grant for the Chester Valley Trail project. T. Konetchy reported that Montgomery County had a ribbon cutting event for the opening of the Chester Valley Trail section from Norristown to Exton. T. Konetchy also discussed the Planning Smarter education series, and that the County is working on its new Comprehensive Plan, MontCo 2050. A public survey is available to complete. Additionally, T. Konetchy stated he will be sending out reminders for the PMRPC grant progress reports soon.

7. Planner Report. M. Lenhart shared that Planner's Report on the screen, and T. McCloskey went through the Planner's Report with the Committee. Items included the submission of several grant applications to PAHWF for park and recreation projects and work on the Recreation Assistant position, including interviews.
8. Old Business
 - a. PARRC Nonprofit Designation Update. No update, still waiting for the IRS form.
 - b. PARRC Recreation Assistant Update. K. Nocella stated that both interviews were held with A. Fenske and E. Heffner, both candidates were basically equally qualified. A. Fenske had the benefit of living a bit closer to the Pottstown area than E. Heffner (Philadelphia). T. McCloskey stated that when she reached out to her third potential interviewee, he indicated that he was no longer interested in the position. T. McCloskey stated she reached out to two other qualified candidates, one of whom was also no longer interested, and one who did not return her email. An offer will be made to A. Fenske. A discussion then took place regarding the starting rate of \$18.00 per hour, with a six-month probationary period after which an increase of up to \$19.00 could be given. It was also discussed that \$19.00/hour could be offered at the initial hiring if needed for negotiation purposes. A motion was put forth by B. Keohane authorizing T. McCloskey to extend an employment offer to A. Fenske with a starting wage of \$18.00 per hour, increasing to \$19.00 per hour after an acceptable 6-month review. Additionally, this motion authorizes T. McCloskey to increase the starting and 6-month wage by an additional \$1.00 per hour, if needed, during negotiations. The motion was seconded by C. Paretti. A roll call vote was taken as follows: K. Nocella, aye; M. Powanda, aye; C. Valentine, aye; M. Lenhart, aye; B. Keohane, aye; R. Sichler, aye; C. Paretti, aye; and J. Erb, aye. M. Lenhart indicated there should be at least \$1,200 for mileage and equipment to spend on start-up costs. **He will also run a background check.**
9. New Business.
 - a. TrafX Trail Counter Data Plan. A discussion took place regarding the \$500 fee for three more years of data service through TrafX for the trail counters. The group decided to let the current plan expire, and research getting another grant to purchase new sensors and data plan. T. McCloskey indicated historical data can be used on any grant applications that require it, and that she will be collecting data at least one more time before the data plan expires.
 - b. Elverson Borough PARRC Membership Request. M. Lenhart stated that speaking for the Borough's officials, it would probably be uncomfortable with having a ninth municipality in PARRC. J. Erb felt there may be some push back from North Coventry's officials to having 9th member. C. Paretti stated that the cost of membership is a concern and was softened with 8 municipalities as the max. B. Keohane stated that administratively PARRC is not in a position to handle it. K. Nocella stated that the timing of the request is not good. B. Keohane stated that new members are to be added at the beginning of the fiscal year. **M. Lenhart indicated that he would respond to Elverson stating PARRC is not in a position to accept a new member right now.** C. Colistra scope is a 10 mile radius around Pottstown, so they couldn't support Elverson from a financial standpoint.

- c. Nature Based Place Making. M. Lenhart indicated that a presentation by the PA Downtown Center was discussed at the last meeting. T. McCloskey stated that she will contact J. Fitzpatrick and schedule a presentation.

10. Grant Announcements. M. Lenhart read the upcoming grant deadlines including DCNR, PAHWF, Schuylkill Highlands Minigrants, and DCED.

11. Partner Updates:

- North Coventry: J. Erb stated that PECO approved North Coventry's easements for the Coventry Trail.
- Douglass: M. Powanda stated he is working on pesticide applicator training and finally heard about the Local Shares Account funding. He stated that the township received a \$57,000 grant to purchase a tractor and attachments which will be used to maintain the parks and trails. He is also working on advertising the bids for the pickleball court resurfacing project. Three bids are required and he can use COSTARS.
- West Pottsgrove: No report.
- Washington Township: R. Sichler stated that he talked to the Berks County Planning Commission regarding attending the PARRC meetings. He stated that he explained Montgomery and Chester County's participation to the BCPC representative of BCPC and they stated that BCPC will be interested in participation if they receive certain funding. R. Sichler also reported that the Township that the public survey stage for the new Township Open Space Plan is still underway, and so far, the survey has a good response rate.
- East Coventry: K. Nocella stated that the Rock the Wall race is set for 4/15. They have a lot of sponsors but are hoping for more participants. June 3rd is National Trails Day and the township is planning a scavenger hike at East Coventry Nature Preserve. She also reported that the Township was awarded \$441,000 in statewide Local Shares Account funding for Tow Path Park Construction.
- Upper Pottsgrove: No report.
- Lower Pottsgrove: B. Keohane reported that the new playground construction at Sanatoga Park is now underway. He also shared that the Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for April 1 at Gerald Richards Park.
- PAHWF: C. Colistra stated that regarding the Pottstown Parks Foundation, he is still waiting to hear back from the IRS. He reported that significant taxes and penalties had to be paid due to not filing the yearly 990 forms. C. Colistra also reported that he is part of a task force with the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society and that small-scale grant funding may soon be available for members. Furthermore, C. Colistra stated that he is also on the Task Force to create a state Office of Outdoor Recreation. Governor Shapiro is in support of creation of the office and will send an invitation about it in person meetings to PARRC.

12. Pottstown: M. Lenhart reported that he just got back from the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society Annual Conference. Pottstown Borough received an award for its new 2022 Play Streets program.

13. Action Items. None.

13. Next PARRC meeting-M. Lenhart stated that the next PARRC meeting will be held on 4/26, and to send all agenda items to T. McCloskey.

14. Adjournment- A Motion to Adjourn was made by B. Keohane and seconded by C. Paretto; meeting adjourned at 6:04pm.