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Harrison Township Recreation
Special Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2011
7:30 P.M.

Call to order 7:35PM.
Adjourned 9:30 PM

Recreation Chairman, Jack McElwee called a special meeting.

Open Public Meetings Act: Meeting was posted in the Gloucester County Times and on the HT website.

Roll Call Members Present: Jack McElwee, Stacy Lourie, Mark Gravinese, Tom Roth, Vicki Walters, Carl Guecia, Staci Gonskerkevis, Cathy Noakes, and Sharon Chew.

Public & Active Volunteer: Vince Gangemi Sr.,

The Recreation Commission members were given copies of the Budget Account Status reports for recreation which included encumbered requisition items and expenses for the current year. The purpose of this additional “special meeting” is to address for the 2nd time the request from the planning board to contribute \$6000.00 (half of the total cost) for the Planning Board Planner to develop a development plan for open space in Harrison Township. Jack McElwee referred back to the last three meetings. He admitted to doing a poor job explaining what the request for the \$6000.00 is. “It is not just for a trail system throughout the township. We are looking at developing a master plan for the open space that’s within the township. \$6000 dollars would be kicked in by the Harrison Township Planning Board as part of the master plan and the other \$6000 is being requested from the Recreation Commission. The combined \$12,000 is the estimate provided by the Planner against which he will invoice as the Planner performs his work. The Planner will conduct interviews with the sports groups, reviewing their 5 year, 10 year and 15 year plans as the township builds out to 20,000 people; he will interview members of the Senior Citizens Sub-Committee; he will interview members of the Recreation Commission, and he will interview Harrison Township personnel as required. The township owns over 300 acres of open space available for development. What we need to do is plan for the development, determine if there is anything that we can use to sell off and use that money to develop the open space as well. Using the information obtained from those identified above, the Planner will put together a plan of action, which suits the residents of the community, to be reviewed and approved by the Recreation Commission. Knowing the requirements for a Senior Citizen’s Center and a Community Center and other amenities that could be incorporated into the park system, the Planner would plan accordingly. Basically what we are going to do is give them a wish list to plan out over the 300 some acres we have available.” Mark questioned what was included in the 300 some acres, more specifically does the 300 acres include those facilities already built, i.e. Pleasant Valley, William Wilt and Ella Harris? Jack responded – “The 300 acres includes William Wilt, Pleasant Valley and Ella Harris Parks, and all other open space developed or undeveloped.” Tom questioned – “You said the Planner is going to interview the sports teams? Wouldn’t that filter through us? Or will the Planner go directly to the sports teams?” Jack responded – “The Planner is going to meet with the Sports Groups with Recreation represented. Years ago

when we did this for Pleasant Valley, we had all the sports groups provide their requirements for the next 10 years. Using those requirements, we developed the plan for Pleasant Valley and a future plan for William Wilt, which had yet to be purchased.” Tom – “So we have the wish list from all the sports. Who is going to decide the hierarchy that Pleasant Valley has been on the planning site for a number of year and say another group such as field hockey comes, haven’t been around for years. How will that be determined? By us, the commission or by the planner?” Jack responded “Yes, it’s going to be developed in tandem with the commission and the planner. All that the planner is going to do is take the input from the recreation commission, sports teams, senior citizens and the community needs to develop this open space, to propose a plan for this. Keep in mind, that this plan is going to be amended and changed probably every 3 -5 yrs. The Township amends the Master Plan every three to five years. Every time the Planning Board amends the Master Plan, the open space will be looked at. Tom replied – “What I’m trying to get at is, if we have things on the board and they have been waiting patiently, different organizations, are we as a Commission going to vote and say, Pleasant Valley has been waiting, waiting, waiting. We as a Commission, can we move them to up as a vote on the table and say there are ten projects out there?” Jack responded, “This has nothing to do with projects right now.” All the Planner is going to do is identify the needs and the space to accommodate those needs.” Tom – “And then we as a Commission will prioritize which ones?” Jack interceded – “We will prioritize once we start getting money in.” Tom – “Can’t we prioritize prior to and say, in the pipeline these are the projects we’d want addressed first as a Commission?” Say, the walking trails are going to be number one, or is the planning board going to come in and say, we want?” Jack interceded again – “The Planning Board is not going to do anything with this open space. This open space is going to be relegated by Recreation. Recreation, as you pointed out, as you stated, Recreation will determine or will suggest to the Planner where you want to put football, where you want to put baseball, where the senior citizen center should be, where the community center will be. They will take our input and they will try and lay it out into the open space that we currently have.” Mark responded – “Can I add a comment, Jack? I think what we want to do, what we’ve been talking about is, aside from whatever happens here, whatever the development and the things there. We probably want to sit down and prioritize what we think needs to be done. Some things can be quick hits such as maintenance, whatever.” Jack – “You need money to do that. This is to just plan the space. Once we start getting money in, once the township starts getting money in and can start developing spaces, then we as a Commission can say, we need a bathroom facility at Pleasant Valley. That’s top priority.” Mark – “I think Tom’s point is, we want to have some type of list that we have developed. Again it doesn’t have to be all inclusive of everything.” Jack – “That would be separate from what the Planner is saying.” Mark – “We need to have that before we take it to the next level. That was my point. In other words, this is going to go on, we still need to do that work either we move forward or not.” Jack – “The way I look at this is that you have to plan for the space first. That’s the Planner’s job. At the same time, we as the Commission can develop a priority of what you want to do as far as developing the open space. You do that simultaneously.” Mark – “I think that’s what Tom was asking. Not exactly go build it, do it but have some kind of list. Things we want to target when the times right. We want bathrooms, we want a community center.” Jack – “We now own acreage in front of EHP, 12 acres along Rt. 77. The township can sell off the frontage to develop whatever open space we want to develop.” Stacy Lourie – “None of that would be part of what that \$6000 is all about.” This \$6000 is purely to give to the Planner to come up with an idea, when and if we were ever to develop the land. This is what we would suggest at this time here, July 2011. What we think we should do with the land.” Cathy – “I’d like three things. Referring to the \$52,000 recreation account balance, where did this money come from?” Jack – “We raised it.” Mark – “It’s our fundraising, secured dollars.” Cathy – “What I heard from the last meeting, I know not everyone was here. We want to do this, we want to spend this money but whatever is put in there may never come to for wishing. That’s what I heard. I’m I hearing correctly?” Jack – “Because the township wouldn’t have the money.” Cathy – “No, no, no, that might totally change. What I heard is that it won’t come because it may be totally changed.” Jack repeated himself by saying, that plan may change. Then five years from now the Planner would then make that change at the Recreation Commission’s direction.” Cathy – “Would we be looking at spending \$6000 every 5 yrs. for the changes.” Jack – “No. What the Planner is doing is collecting all the information right now. All it’s going to come down to is 5 years from now or 10 years from now, whenever the Commission wants to change a parcel. That’s when the Planner would do that. Now the Planner is changing the master plan every 3 – 5 years anyway per the Planning Board so it’s not a big deal. But the \$6000, or actually the \$12,000 is to take all this information that we are providing. That’s

why we are going to the sports groups, saying, give us your estimates of people in your organization, 10 years from now, 15 years and 20 years from now. So the Planner can build that out. And if it needs to be changed, we have the opportunity to change it.” Cathy – “I guess some of the difficulty I have with it Jack, and I’m hoping that you don’t look at it in a negative way, but the planning part of the township is for the Planning Board. Now what I heard Joe Paccera say, is that we don’t have to do this but every 11 years but we do it every 3 years. Well if they do it every 3 years and there is a budget for it, then why don’t you do it every 4 years and take the money from one of those years to use for this planning that they want to do. And the other issue is, is that I have difficulty that we will in the end maybe even now what is going on. I mean, when the Mayor said that Pleasant Valley changes or whatever we supposed to be done there, that he did away with that the first year. I was in shock. Because I never heard it and I don’t know if anyone else heard it because they may not have been on three years ago. Or did we get notice that, by the way Recreation, we are not doing anymore at Pleasant Valley. That’s off the books. That’s gone. Did anyone else hear?” Tom – “That was the first I heard because the Commission here is always trying to support Pleasant Valley because it’s been on the books for awhile. And then the Mayor comes in and says, that’s a done deal, we’re not investing anymore money over there. Now I understand he did give money for the lights over there but when we brought up bathrooms and stuff, it was scratched. When he campaigned to be Mayor, he put his focus on this field right here so from me, I think we are heading down a path thinking we are going one way and powers above us are making decisions going another direction.” Cathy – “I’m just saying that I was surprised because I never heard that before.” Sharon – “So was money paid out for the plans for Pleasant Valley?” Jack – “There was no money spent. I was the one who developed the plans for that. They took my plans and gave to the county and the county developed a plan for Pleasant Valley which included a football field, full major league style baseball field and all purpose fields that could be used for field hockey and lacrosse.” Stacy Lourie – “And a senior center on the corner right?” Jack – “And a senior center was going up on the corner across from CVS. Now what’s going there is the diocese is building a senior assisted housing there now. But to back up, what the Mayor was saying is that plan for the baseball, for the lacrosse and field hockey, that plan for all those together was done away with.” Cathy – “I didn’t know about all that stuff. That the county gave a whole plan of all this.” Jack – “The bottom line was what he was saying, is that the plan to have a baseball field there, and the lacrosse fields, that plan is gone.” Cathy – “But that’s not what I heard from him. I heard that we are not doing anything else at Pleasant Valley.” Jack – “This is the thing here. Pleasant Valley is going to become a football complex.” Cathy – “That is what is also thought it was going to be.” Jack – “No, at one time it was going to be an all purpose complex. And that’s what was nixed. That’s what he eliminated, all the other sports playing there. Especially now that we have the properties south of EHP which once the LL hits 1,000 people you have to split the club in half. That’s the intention there is bring in more baseball fields south of EHP. Keeping that as the baseball complex.” Cathy – “OK, my last question, the \$6000 that the planning board will use, where does that money come from?” Jack – “That comes from developers. A certain percentage from the developer’s fees.” Vicki – “So then there is funds that are raised or generated for open space.” Jack – “What I’m saying is that it is commercial development or residential development. When they come in there is a fee that they have to pay for. A certain amount is put in escrow and a part of the fee goes towards the master plan. Anything for recreation has been done away with through by the court.” Stacy Lourie – “I guess we just need to let this \$6000 thing go and then we as a committee, there are some concerns of some conversations tonight that I’m a little concerned about. It doesn’t have anything to do with this \$6000.” Sharon – “Can we resume this after the movie gets started, or is everyone else leaving?” Tom – “No.” Jack – “Would anyone like to table until our next meeting if anyone is uncomfortable voting on this at this time.” Staci G – “Why does rec have to contribute? Why can’t planning just raise the whole \$12,000 themselves? Has rec ever been asked to contribute any kind of a planning thing like this before?” Vicki – “My question was if we feel that this is important, instead of taking from money we have raised for things we have running. I know we have paving to do with Trick or Trot money that has been allotted for. Why couldn’t we do a fundraiser of some sort including the sports teams? I’m thinking MH Tri-Club would love to have running paths through the township. So why couldn’t we sponsor a run with them with proceeds to going to help fund a master plan for walking trails and bike trails through town. Because I know that there are groups that benefit.” Tom – “I think the urgency here is that the Planning Board came to us that they need to move on this.” Jack – “The urgency is that we have given, the Planning Board has given direction to the Planner to revise the master plan because of several areas in the township designated for redevelopment areas. And then

with the Richwood Center coming on board, we had to rezone some of the area out there to protect the township interest. So they are in the process of amending the master plan right now and as part of that we wanted to do this recreation as well, so that's why the urgency. Any other questions?" Jack – "I'd like to make a motion to approve the expending \$6000 out of the \$52,993.00 for the recreation master plan to develop a master plan of the open space that currently exist within the township. Do I have a 2nd?" Carl – "I'll 2nd it." Jack – "Is there any questions or comments or discussions need to be done further? None" Roll Call Vote: Stacy Lourie; NO, Mark Gravinese; NO, Staci Gonserkevis; NO, Carl Guecia; YES, Tom Roth; NO, Cathy Noakes; NO, Vicki Walters; NO, Jack McElwee; YES. The motion to contribute \$6,000 to develop a Master Plan for Recreation was defeated.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Jack McElwee and 2nd Tom Roth. All were in favor.