

Environment and Recreation Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 6, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Present: Councilpersons Joe Frederick, Wendy Margolis, Tim Brennan, Larry Browne, and Jennifer Jarret, as well as Borough Manager John Davis, Borough Council President Jack O'Brien, Finance Manager Caroline Brinker, Deputy Borough Manager Phil Ehlinger, and Mayor Ron Strouse.

The **Minutes** of April 1, 2021 meeting were approved as submitted. (Jarret/Frederick)

Broad Street Park Bids. John reviewed the bid opening from last month with an approved low bidder, although the financial issue needs to be discussed. The park budget is well below its initial budgeted amount; however the entire Broad Street project is now about \$55,000 over budget. There are, however, several components that could change that amount including the sale of the Shady Retreat Road property as well as the sale of the current Borough Hall property. This part of the project could be rebid in the hope of getting a lower bid, although that is not preferable, or revamping the design, which wouldn't bring much of a savings and would push the timeline of the work back. The low bid is itemized and shows very high amounts for certain landscaping work, although the overall bid is approximately \$200,000 less than the next closest bid. According to Joanna Waldron, Borough Solicitor, the Borough does have the ability to remove these line items from the scope of work to decrease the cost of the project overall.

Wendy is not in favor of awarding this bid as it is and suggests finding ways to cut the design back a bit, as this project was initially below budget and feels those savings need to be retained. After some discussion on the possibility of removing some of the concrete paved areas, Phil explained why, in his opinion, this should not be changed and that the timing of the project would be changed drastically by rebidding this work. The process would push the project into spring if the design and bid process would start over.

Some of the tree plantings need to wait until the front of the new Borough Hall is complete due to the concrete and sidewalk work needing completion first. In response to suggestions from Jennifer and Wendy, John doesn't believe that pulling specific line items from the park design will be the best way to address this, as this will change the entire park design plan. Joe Frederick agreed; he doesn't think there will be savings by pushing some line items to a later time. Jennifer and Wendy would prefer to simplify the plaza area of the park to adjust the bid request and provide a savings. Joanna Waldron noted that by removing a \$58,000 line item, the project would be back into the budget but if the plan is changed more dramatically, it could cause an issue by getting closer to the next bidder and thereby causing a conflict.

Phil reminded the Committee the Borough was ok with the initial \$2.5 million park plan, and with Public Works taking over much of the work, it has saved over \$1 million. Due to construction pricing escalation, the initial figures have risen, which is out of the hands of the Borough. While the plan does now cost approximately \$170,000 more than expected, there has still be an overall savings. There had been a bit of a financial cushion, which is now being used.

Phil offered the possibility of removing the compass rose from the park plaza plan, as that is a separate, subcontracted line item, which could offer a savings of approximately \$20,000. Wendy proposed a motion to remove that line item, as well as the \$58,000 plantings, with Jennifer seconding. Joe Frederick and Tim Brennan both disagree that the \$20,000 savings is not worth it, when the savings with doing more in-house work has already provided a large savings to the Borough. Joanna would be concerned with removing these line items without impacting the other plaza elements. Jim Dougherty noted it is a separate line item and without the compass rose in the design, there will be another type of material to fill that space, which will then add at least several thousand dollars, and therefore, will not save the full \$20,000, but more of approximately \$4,000, which isn't worth it in the scheme of the full design.

Tim noted he would like more of a savings, but does not want the Committee to rush into decisions. Bids must be awarded by mid-June. If not decided at the next Borough Council meeting, the following meeting would be after the 60 day time limit and would then require a special meeting.

Joanna reminded the group that while removing the line item of the bushes, as the fee was very out of line with the expectation, would be appropriate, removing much more of the bid would then raise the potential issue of revising too much of the bid. Jack explained the savings provided by Public Works doing more work, and donations from Delaware Valley University, allowed for that money to be used elsewhere if needed, and this would not necessarily be increasing costs to the Borough residents.

John provided also there are ten entrance piers, and while he is uncomfortable with changing any of those, it could be changed. Both John and Joe do not agree with that option, as these ideas change the previously-approved design elements of the park. John noted the idea of reworking the design of the plaza will probably require the rebidding of the job.

Wendy modified her motion to take out the bushes line item and allow the compass rose to remain. She feels there are other areas within the Borough to save money. Jennifer seconded her motion; Tim voted in favor as well, Joe Frederick was not available for a vote. The motion passed. This will be discussed at the next Borough Council meeting.

Garden Program Requests. Brandon Grossinger appeared to discuss his nonprofit program, called Bunnies Flowers, which teaches gardening classes to families. He is requesting to use the grass space behind the Community Garden on Harvey Avenue for his classes, which include gardening classes as well as yoga and fitness. John noted this request had been pushed off for a bit, due to Covid-19. Phil noted there are no plans for that space and if there would be no disturbance to the neighboring homes, he doesn't anticipate any problem with this idea. Brandon explained these classes are small in scale, with maybe 5-10 attendees. He does have all of his appropriate clearances to work with children. John suggested a brief license agreement with insurance requirements, similar to the Farmers Market agreement.

On a motion from Joe, seconded by Tim, all voted in favor to approve John to work with Borough counsel on an agreement for this program. Brandon will email his program information to John and the group.

Plastic Ban; Moratorium Lawsuit. Mayor Strouse provided an update on trying to achieve a conversation with the Philadelphia Law Department, which is now scheduled for May 13. Penn Environment is now a party to this lawsuit.

Energy Efficiency in PA Support Letter. Mayor Strouse has signed off on this, as well as Wendy and Tim. For now, there is not an update. Wendy suggested to all to sign the letter in support, as well, as individuals.

New/Old Business: Wendy reminded the group she is still interested in the Lights Out program, involving bird safety, and would like to encourage Borough residents to minimize light pollution during migration. A Borough resolution would be the next step.

John announced, based on the Governor's new order, Burpee Pavilion will now be open for rentals, and there are summer shows planned to be held in Burpee as well.

Adjourned: 7:30 p.m.