



WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP STORMWATER TASK FORCE

MONTHLY MEETING

Minutes of the February Meeting

February 21, 2024

The meeting began at 5:09 p.m. The meeting was a hybrid with participants attending both in person and via Zoom.

Task Force Members Present

Scott Jeffers
Jason Bailey
Mike Dunn
Gabe Pankratz
Mark Umile

Township Personnel Present

Brannon Tupper, Engineering Manager
Pam Gural-Bear, Township Manager
Jennifer Keller, Operations Manager
Jim Rieben, Public Works Director
Ed Culp, Public Works Operations Manager
Wyatt Williams, Sustainability Coordinator
Ken Watton, Public Works

Township Consultant
Nick Szeredai, with SSM Group

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The January 17, 2024, meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Focus Area 1

Review of Top 10 Problem Areas

A list of the top 10 problem areas was previously sent to the members for rating priority and developing a plan of action at today's meeting.

Problem area no. 1 is an undersized road culvert at 623-635 Clover Mill Road. This is in the western part of the Township at the lowest point of Valley Creek. A member said he saw no huge red flags when he looked at this area and suggested it could be a broader watershed issue. Mr. Tupper said the area above is unstable, and a lot of rocks wash down; the area is also overgrown. There was discussion about how many crossings there are under the rail system to handle the water flow. There is PennDOT and SEPTA land that is currently unused (perhaps the old trolley line) that could be used to fix the area. There was a general consensus that you need to look upstream to determine the root cause of the problem.

A member suggested looking at the analytics – is it a lag or a lead issue – does it drive the behavior, or does it receive the outcome? Working backwards helps to understand the root cause and allows you to define points of measurement along the way. By controlling as much as possible in the beginning, you will mitigate issues downstream.

Mr. Jennings felt the issue at this particular location (623-635 Clover Mill Road) was a drainage problem, not a detention problem, and suggested a bigger pipe or dual culvert. He asked when

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the culvert is cleaned out, how long before it clogs up again. Mr. Tupper said it depends on how heavy the storm events are. Standards for pipe size were discussed. Mr. Tupper said unless there is a specific issue, like for like replacement is done. As for the water flow topping the road, Mr. Tupper explained that it's not a traffic volume issue, but rather a safety issue as there have been water rescues in this area.

Realizing the need to move more quickly through the list of top 10 problem areas, a member summarized the areas as follows:

- Problem area nos. 1-3 were the same and emphasized the need to know more about what is going on upstream.
- Problem area nos. 4 & 8 can be grouped together as they both involve culvert and/or stabilization issues.
- Problem area nos. 5 & 9 can also be grouped together. These involve private detention basins that present an educational opportunity to teach the private property owner more about stormwater in general and how to care for the basins. Mr. Tupper said no. 5 is an older neighborhood on Grove Road, and the Township used to fix this when conditions were really bad but does not want to continue this going forward as it is the responsibility of the property owner.
- Problem area no. 9 is similar situation (front yard basin on Burgoyne).
- Problem area nos. 6 & 10 can be grouped together (1551 & 1573 S. Whitford Rd) (1449 Burgoyne). The problems here cannot be solved, and it was recommended that the Township should buy them out with FEMA funding and remove the houses from the area. Ms. Gural-Bear said the Township has bought out homes before via FEMA funding. She said the owners were agreeable but added that the properties must be on the "repetitive loss list" to be eligible for FEMA funding. It was noted that there is money outside of FEMA for this purpose also.
- Problem area no. 7 has a number of driveways on private property (driveways built over a gorge) and will be impossible to solve.

Going forward, it was suggested that a two-tier rating system be created and then look at solutions.

It was recommended that any future land development near Valley Creek be sure to provide at least 100 yards around the creek to perform restoration work.

It was pointed out that since most of the Valley Creek headwaters reside within the Township, it will not be necessary to coordinate with other municipalities to solve the problem.

After discussion, there was a general consensus to start at the headwaters to determine the root cause, but it was noted that smaller fixes (low hanging fruit) are part of the picture too – both are needed. A floodplain restoration project in the Exton Park area could help the "big picture". Growing Greener and William Penn Foundation grants are a good place to start. Grants usually want projects that are "shovel ready, and these upfront costs are expensive.

With a floodplain restoration project, a watershed action plan is done first. This is a holistic approach to assess the health of the watershed, improve water quality, and reduce flooding.

Mr. Szeredai said stream restoration feasibility for Exton Park has certainly been considered but added that it would be very costly and “shovel ready” costs would need to be paid by the Township. He said he spoke with Land Studies, and they can give a presentation on next steps with flood restoration.

Describing a project he worked on in Perkiomen Township, Mr. Szeredai estimated that if the process is started now, the project could be ready for construction in 2026. He added that public buy-in is needed with stream restoration projects and residents are sensitive to reconstruction, stressing the importance of public education on the front end. A member pointed out that angry residents should not deter the Taskforce from its priority of resolving stormwater issues.

With regard to the Township’s matching requirement for grants, it was noted that volunteer hours can be used, estimating a rate of \$150-200/hr. for those on the Taskforce.

A member asked what about the stormwater facilities for land development projects currently under construction, citing the project at the Laborer’s site as an example. Mr. Tupper said at a minimum, the Township Ordinance requires detention basins be designed at the 100-year storm level. Projects such as Keva Flats is doing stream restoration as part of its land development plan. SSM conducts inspections of all stormwater facilities at all phases of new construction. Ms. Gural-Bear noted that there were no stormwater regulations prior to 2003, and it is developments that occurred prior to 2003 that are the main concern. Mr. Szeredai assured the members that the project at the Laborer’s site was thoroughly reviewed and complies with all Township Ordinances. Current projects are inspected through construction and extensive punch lists are generated before the project is closed out.

A member asked about possibly changing the impervious coverage allowances. Mr. Tupper explained that a variance from the Zoning Hearing Board must be sought for any overage, and while the limit in the Ordinance could be changed, it requires a long process and can result in making many sites non-conforming.

Mr. Rieben said the Township is required to adopt the Chester County Model Stormwater Ordinance and also abide by the Municipalities Planning Code. The Township already has very stringent stormwater regulations, and if the Ordinance becomes too restrictive, it will be contested in the Courts. It is the problems created in the 1960’s – 2000 that need fixing; not those projects developed post 2003.

There was a general consensus to focus on the floodplain restoration at the headwaters of Valley Creek in the Exton Park area but still give advice on smaller problem areas along the way.

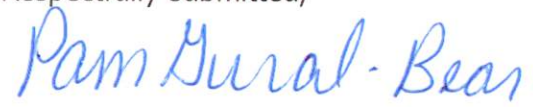
Mr. Tupper said there are two studies on this area (one from the 1970’s and the other from the early 2000’s) included in the reference materials, and he asked the members to take a look at these for the next meeting and consider what has changed, etc.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:14 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,



Pam Gural-Bear
Recording Secretary