

Birmingham Township Planning Commission (BTPC)

Minutes of the meeting May 11, 2021

The regular meeting of the BTPC was called to order by Ms. McCarthy at 7:32pm via Zoom.

PRESENT: Scott Garrison, MaryPat McCarthy, David Shields, Brendan Murphy

ABSENT: Eric Hawkins

Also present: Dave Schlott, Jr. (Arro Consulting), Kim Venzie

Mr. Shields made a motion to approve the March 9, 2021 minutes. Motion was seconded by Mr. Garrison and it passed unanimously.

Review Birmingham Township Act 537 Sewage Facilities Special Study

Ms. McCarthy indicated that there has been some transition in the township, effective last Monday night -- Arro Consulting will now be handling the Zoning, building codes and general engineering services for the township. Mr. Schlott from Arro is present this evening in case there are any questions about the Act 537 special study.

Ms. McCarthy indicated that at the BOS meeting last Monday night, they approved the decision to sell the sewer plant to Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority. Part of the process for the sale is that the Act 537 Special Study needs to be reviewed by the Birmingham Township Planning Commission and then the Chester County Planning Commission. Ms. Venzie offered to summarize the background of this decision for the township – the Supervisors have been reviewing some costly improvement expenses that were upcoming for the sewer plant. In light of this, it made more sense to sell it to someone who is more familiar with running a sewer plant. There is a process that must be followed in doing this - the Act 537 special study basically acknowledging that although the sewer plant is changing hands, we are still providing the services to the residents of the township and that it is still in line with the Comprehensive Plan. A very positive note that Ms. Venzie sees in this sale (as opposed to other ones she has seen in other municipalities where rates increase) is that the sewer rates are to stay the same for three years; then it is anticipated that the rates may go down after that.

Bucks County brings many efficiencies to the table in taking over the ownership of the sewer plant. Currently the residents are paying fairly high rates. Ms. McCarthy was contacted by Andrew Macham of the Inquirer indicating that the rates in some townships are doubling and tripling due to regulatory requirements having to be met. Bucks County knows that there will be some necessary upgrades when they take ownership and that is why they are keeping the rates the same for a certain time period. Per Mr. Schlott, as the discharge limits were getting more stringent, thus resulting in more processes that needed to be done. Improving those processes up to the standard to meet the nitrogen and phosphorous limits on the facility is costly.

Ms. Venzie noted that what the Board of Supervisors is looking for this evening is that the Planning Commission is a determination that the contents of the Act 537 Special Study consistent with sewer planning for Birmingham Township in the past and going forward. If there are any additional comments from the Planning Commission, they should be noted tonight and included in a letter to the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. McCarthy noted that the document seems like a resume of the existing sewer plant – in her review, she did not see anything earthshattering. Mr. Schlott stated that is a correct statement. The 537 plan is really just an updated version of the preexisting approved 2004 537 plan. This updated document provides an inventory of the existing plant and indicates that the existing sewer plant and operations will be taken over by Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority. The step of having the Birmingham Township Planning Commission review this document and provide comment and approval is a requirement required by DEP in order to complete the sale of the sewer plant. DEP will not transfer any of the existing permits that Birmingham Township currently has (NPDES, Part two permits, Water Quality permits, etc) to the new entity, without this approval.

Mr. Murphy made a motion confirming that the Planning Commission finds the contents of the special 537-study consistent with the township's planning and have no additional comments to offer to the Board of Supervisors regarding this study. Seconded by Mr. Shields and passed unanimously.

New Business/Public Comment:

Mr. Shields inquired if anyone is aware of what is being done on Wylie Terrace Road. According to Mr. Garrison the township website has an entire explanation on what the extent of the Aqua project is. He noted that it is basically installing improved water mains and allowing additional hook-ups for residents who want public water rather than a well along certain roads within the township.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 8:04pm by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mr. Garrison and approved unanimously. Next meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer A. Boorse
PC Secretary