

1. **Meeting Called to Order** – The meeting was called to order by Kevin McGovern at 6:32 p.m. at Town Hall.
2. **Roll Call – Present:** Members: Kevin McGovern, Chairman, Phil Spohn, Vice Chairman, Robert Blasko, Maia Simon and Jerry Holum; **Council Liaison:** Laura Ray; **Staff Liaison:** Carol Schneider; **Absent Members:** Niloofar Aflatooni & Shaun Yanchuk; **Absent Council Liaison:** Priscilla deLeon. **Jr. Council Members:** Cole Hubert & Samuel Van Norman. **Guests:** Diane Hollowell, Cindy McKellin & Atom Kallen.
3. **Approval of March 4, 2024 Minutes** – Kevin asked if anyone had corrections to the minutes, Maia had one on page three line 5 accept should be changed to except. Kevin asked if there were any other corrections? Jerry motioned to approve with Maia’s correction.

**MOTION:** Jerry

**SECOND:** Phil, motion passed 5-0 (Niloo and Shaun were absent).

4. **Presentations:** None
5. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items:** None
6. **Special Event Applications:** Kevin asked everyone to read over the Special Event application for the Saucon Valley Conservancy for May 18, 2024. He stated that they are expecting 150 ppl and will have tents and food TBD. He said that it doesn’t appear that they are asking for any additional resources and should be good. Phil asked what the relationship was between the Heller Homestead and the Conservancy? He said he was surprised that they had to apply for this. Carol said this was in place for all events for many reasons. She said that all departments (Public Works, LSTPD, Zoning etc.) are notified for safety awareness & liability. She also mentioned that Parks & Recreation should be looking at the number of attendees vs. restrooms, paperwork completion, parking and map configuration.

**MOTION:** Jerry

**SECOND:** Maia, motion passed 5-0 (Niloo and Shaun were absent).

7. **Park Updates:**

1. **Town Hall Park (Niloo absent)**
2. **Southeastern Park (Kevin)** - Kevin reported that he visited the park and he was impressed. He said that Southeastern has a nice ballfield and nice pavilion, he said it also has some plaques from people that have made donations along with a book box and things were really well done. He mentioned that he saw a few things in need of power washing that he’ll bring up later. He stated that he and Robert discussed the damage that the Ash trees were causing throughout the Township and the State. Overall, he said that that park was in good shape.
3. **Kingston Park (Kevin)** - Kevin said that Kingston Park was the second park he visited and was in very good shape. He mentioned that he didn’t see anything that really needed any immediate attention other than some trees that were down between the schoolhouse and park. He said that it could be a project for perhaps an Eagle Scout or a scout troop looking for some work, or maybe our Park & Recreation department, it’s something that should be cleaned out at some point. He said that the trees don’t impede the trail, it goes between the park to the schoolhouse, it looks unsightly and he was worried about possible fire damage.

Maia said that depending on where it is and the weather, the trees are good habitat for butterfly larva and so on, it’s a good idea to have a controlled brush pile and if one would be allowed, it could be neatened up instead of taking it away. Kevin said good point, he didn’t know that. Robert added that he was told that a tree could habitat insects for up to 15 years until it decays and is an important part of the ecological site.

4. **Steel City Park (Shaun absent)**

5. **Polk Valley Park (Robert)** - Robert said that he has a suggestion on some feedback...he said that he can get some 50 caliber boxes and 4 x 4 posts and make suggestion boxes for the parks so residents can submit comments on the parks. Kevin said he liked this idea but thought maybe a QR code would be easier. Kevin asked Carol what the protocol would be to get a QR code posted at all the parks? Carol stated that the Parks & Recreation liaison could take that to Council. Laura said she could do that.

Cindy McKellin asked why the dog park was closed? Carol stated due to the weather however, it was open earlier that morning.

Maia stated the need for cameras and lights at Polk Valley Park. She said it's not safe walking at dusk. Robert said there have been some break-ins reported at the park as well. Maia said that there is an appetite there to spend a little bit of money, she wasn't sure if there was money to do so. Laura said there might not be enough money to add that at all the parks however, the parks do close at dusk therefore; she didn't know if Council would want to invest into lights. Maia said that they will probably need electricity to put up cameras... Kevin mentioned that he knows there are solar paneled light posts, the disadvantage is that they are not on timers. Phil asked what the hours were for the parks? Carol said they are all dawn to dusk with the exception of Town Hall, the lights have to shut off by or before 10:00 p.m. Robert said that he believes that the Basketball court is 10:00 p.m. as well and it's on a timer.

Diane Hollowell stated that she believed that all the people who had their cars broken into were parked and went to the dog park. She said that its possible that when the Pickleball court is being used, that there will be less break-ins due to more people parking nearby. Maia said that would be great but she's not sure they can count on that. Laura said that perhaps lockers would be good? Kevin said that for now, we'll let the Police do their job and see what happens. Maia asked if we could get a report? Laura said that we could ask the Police for information on that.

Kevin asked for a status on Sebastian and his Eagle Scout Project. Robert stated that at the last Council meeting that Ms. Garber from the Bethlehem Landfill volunteered to fund the project from the landfill for a total of \$1,500.00. Robert also stated that his son offered the use of his post hole digger that Sebastian can borrow. Kevin said that if they are in need of manual labor, he would be willing to help.

Jerry asked the status of the Pickleball Court? Carol stated that the were many projects in need of finishing at the moment for Public Works and that there was no update at this time.

6. **Easton Road Ballfield (Jerry)** - Jerry mentioned that he had some photos from earlier that day. Jerry said that the field won't be open in June when Council had thought however, the field is 50-60% complete. He said that they are dependent on subcontractors, he said that the last portion of field construction is going up now, the poles for the netting and the retaining walls are going up at the cost of \$430,000.00. After this, the sod will be put in and may be ready in July. Kevin said that our goal today is not to debate the field and it's wonderful to hear of all of the progress. He said the rain has played a part in the contractor's schedule however, they are making progress. He said thank you to Jerry, and thanked him for his comprehensive report.

Diane Hollowell asked from the audience when the field would be operational? Kevin said they would be finishing near the end of June and there might be a sod issue. Jerry said they need to lay a lot (18,000 sq. ft.) of sod down and water it with tanker trucks. The field won't be operational until the sod takes root and is established. Kevin asked Carol who decides when the field is ready to be played on? Carol said Roger is kept up to speed on everything. Kevin asked, so Roger is in charge of making that decision? Carol said that the Manager, Roger and Hanover would have a conversation and things would have to be met at that time as far as inspections. Once inspections are complete the Township will issue a Certificate of Completion. Jerry stated its being controlled, he said that Hanover Engineering is out there every day. Oversight is there and it's a excellent thing.

7. **Heller Homestead Park (Maia)** - Maia said she didn't have a report this month and she will next month. She said that she was able to test drive her apps. For the Invasive Plant Project, and they did work.

8. **Sandra Yerger Community Recreation Area & Nature Preserve (Phil)** - Phil asked Carol if the SY Nature Preserve would ever get closed? Carol responded; no hours are dawn to dusk. Phil said no, closed as in the whole park, like Polk Valley Park does? Carol said no. Phil said that he was concerned about three areas in the park that are bad. He compared the bad areas to the Rail Trail and said that they put down big chunk rock down and then put filings on top and that would make those spots better. He said he thinks that the area may only be 30-ft. long but there are three spots that are water logged and are impassable. Maia asked if Phil was talking about trails? Phil said yes, it is a trail, he said that the spots were not walkable and you would have to walk around the spots unless you had high boots. He said that this could be a good Eagle Scout project but he wasn't sure of the environmental stuff associated with fixing it and that maybe it could be rerouted? Maia said that rerouting would be advantageous to her next comment which is vernal pools. She stated that Vernal Pools are water that stand in the spring that are a vital habitat for breeding amphibians. So, filling the vernal pools would not be environmental sound. You could reroute the vernal pool by opening it up a little bit downhill so it's not crossing the trail. Phil said that he didn't think they were vernal pools. Kevin suggested that they were just low spots. Phil said that the ponds had tons of tadpoles, this was just a soggy area. Kevin said do we want to ask if this could be addressed this time of year to make it more useable? Phil added that this time of year it's just a mess Laura asked if a boardwalk type trail would work rather than rocks? Phil said that would be easy to do but then again, he didn't know the implications of putting pressure treated wood down or cedar down, he didn't know if that was legal or allowed. He said that it wouldn't need to be an elevated type of platform. Laura asked Phil if he thought it was the spring running high? Phil said he doesn't remember what they did to avoid this when he golfed there to get around this, he said that's the other thing, you could probably renavigate and get around it, they did it with the mowing however, it's still miserable to walk, he said he expects it so he has no problem with it. Kevin said that we want all the parks to be useable and this year we have had a lot of rain. Phil said that he's glad to reach out to staff and asked Carol who he should contact? Carol said he could contact Roger. Phil said that he'll contact Roger and mentioned that he will not be at the May meeting. Kevin told Phil to contact Roger and he'll report out the information in May for him. Maia asked what Roger's last name was? Carol said Rasich. Laura said so maybe some photos or videos of what it looks would be good? Kevin said, Phil that's not a bad idea. Kevin said is there anything else out there? Laura asked if that was like that every year? Phil replied yes. Laura asked in the same places? Phil noted that it's not just in the spring time, it happens in the summer as well when we get lots of rain.
9. **Saucon Rail Trail (Maia/Jerry)** - Maia asked what the jurisdiction was at this location for Parks & Recreation? Was it just the Park in the parking lot or the trail? She said that she was under the impression that the trail was under the jurisdiction of the Saucon Valley Rail Trail Commission. Jerry said that they had this discussion explained to them at their first meeting. He said that the Saucon Rail Trail falls under the umbrella of the Parks & Recreation Board. Maia said she believes that it's the three municipalities. Jerry said that he knew that but the township portion of it was. Bob said that he spoke with Priscilla about this last week and he saw information that SEPTA was considering going back to using the trails for passenger cars or passenger train service from Allentown to Philly, Allentown to Norristown, Allentown to New York via Hackettstown. The figures are from the tens of millions to hundreds of millions as far as money. He said that Priscilla said, we signed a lease for the rail trail for 30 to 40 years but eminent domain, if they want it, they will take it back, it is what it amounts to, you're not going to stop them. He said that he didn't know how sure they were about this but, it's something we may want consider. Jerry said that that was one of three options. He said opening one of the sections was another option. Maia said that the way that she read it was, all three options hit parts of the trail. She said she could be misremembering things but that's what she thought. Phil said, Lower Saucon Township doesn't really have a park associated with the trail like the other parks do, like the Water Street Park is in Hellertown. He said the parking lot out in Bingen, the Reading Trailhead, that's the only parking we have in Lower Saucon Township for the Rail Trail. Maia said yes, that's what her question was, there were volunteers maintaining the Native Plant Garden there and she didn't realize that the Parks & Recreation Board had jurisdiction over the trail. Jerry asked Carol if this was true? Carol said that as a group they would be able to suggest things like benches or items like bike pumps for the Rail Trail. Robert mentioned that while reading past minutes from a year or two, either Parks & Rec. or perhaps Council, and it was brought up by he thinks Mr. Carocci, that our section of the trail was the only section that did not have a restroom, and they were considering investing putting up a block

building to put a nice restroom up. He said so, that would be quite an expense that you may want to consider knowing that the Rail Trail might be converted back to passenger service again, that's why he brought it up. Kevin asked if there were any other comments on that? Jerry said yes, he attended the March 25<sup>th</sup> Oversight Committee meeting, he said there were several things, the Railroad signs at the stations will be completed by the end of April. He said that they have a Bingen sign at the park and he believes that they are putting together a kiosk with history at Bingen, Hellertown, Center Valley and Coopersburg is to follow. Mile markers are a problem at the rail trail because they are falling down, they are looking at replacing them with wood or metal. He said the most important one is Bethlehem is in the process of purchasing the last piece of property from Norfolk Southern in Hellertown. Kevin asked, was the part that wasn't finished? Jerry said that that was the link they needed to connect. Kevin asked if that was near the old bridge? Phil said yes, that was by the closed High Street bridge. Jerry said it was a sale not a lease, he said he couldn't believe it because all the properties along the trail are all leased. Kevin said so, they are going to buy that, that's Bethlehem and finish and connect it? Jerry said yes, they will link it up to the Greenways. Kevin said that will be impressive. Robert confirmed and said that the article he read said that there were private property owners along the trail. Jerry said ok, the second part of it is the sight of the rail trail after the storm. He mentioned that he took pictures (and passed them out) and you would be surprised at how deplorable it was. It appeared to him that Public Works has done some work but he was concerned that there are still some safety hazards. He said that the bad section is between Meadows, Bingen and Mill Roads, that's where his pictures are mostly taken. Robert mentioned that the trail would be a good place for a QR code. Kevin said that he liked that idea. Kevin asked Jerry if he had anything else to report on and Jerry said yes, the air pump out at Bingen did not work. He asked Carol to put that on Roger's to do list.

## 8. New Business:

1. **Natural Resource Inventory** - Maia passed out papers on apps. And stated that there were details that needed to be ironed out however, it's a pretty straight forward project. She said that everyone that will work on this project will need a smart phone that will imbed the location and photograph of the plant. Maia went over the details on what they would need to do and said that they would need a partner, water and maybe sunscreen. Kevin said help me understand, we get these two apps (Pin Drop & Picture This) and we take these pictures and we identify the plants and the app will identify what we are looking at in a plant prospective of course... Maia said, you're going to take a picture with your camera, Kevin said right...Maia said then you open your Picture this app and instead of taking a picture with that app. you will click on "use the camera roll" and point to the picture you just took and it will then identify the plant. Kevin asked them what happens? Maia said, the person that is working the Pin Drop app. will add the pin using the photograph, but you have to identify the plant and have a name before you put down the pin and save. Kevin said ok, so then we map out the park and what is the next step, this by itself sounds like a really good first step. What would you suggest we do after this point? Maia said, she sees doing this park by park. Kevin said stay with one park to begin with. Maia said we would take the list of invasive plants and go to Council and recommend that they be removed. Kevin said, gottcha. Maia, said and then we would recommend replacing the plant with a native plant. Kevin asked Maia if she thought the Heller Homestead was manageable because he knows that Kingston Park isn't that big either, Wassergass was a little bigger and Sandra Yerger Preserve they couldn't get to because it was much bigger (50-60 acres). So, you think the Heller Homestead is the place to start? Maia said yes, she'll be 77 in a couple of weeks, she doesn't expect this to be completed before she dies, nonetheless, every acre that they clear is a big value, especially with bradford pears, multifloral rose, oriental bittersweet, they are everywhere. Kevin said he likes the approach and he might suggest a date as a group as a nice starting point to practice with the apps. He said that he would like to hear from the group on what their thoughts were. He said that he would look at this as a pilot with one park or do we want to go in a different direction? Laura said that she suggests that in May they (PR) meet at Southeastern and they can do a learning session there. Phil asked what Maia proposed to do at Heritage Day? Maia said that she will be at Heritage Day representing Bird Town and herself not as a Representative from Parks & Recreation. Jerry said, he didn't want to play devils advocate, the goal is to remove the invasive, we identify them who does the work? Who do expect to do that? Our Public Works Department? Maia said yes, we'll ask Public Works to do it? Jerry said don't you think they have enough work to do? Maia said there are other ways to do it....we can do fundraising, we

can solicit volunteers. Kevin mentioned an Eagle Scout Project. Phil said or you can make it an annual community wide earth day project supplying tools. It could all grow into that. Maia said somethings just need to be cut down, Bradford pears just need to be cut down. Some things need to be dug out by the roots like multiflora rose, some things you need to poison like tree of heaven, you have to put cuts in the bark and squirt poison three times in a year and maybe it will die. Kevin said, Jerry, we'll let you do that good discussion, are you good with that Maia? Maia said thank you. Kevin said that's impressive, you followed through on that.

Jerry said Kevin, I digress, back to the Rail Trail, we've identified a problem, what are we going to do about it? Kevin said that he assumed that would go to Roger and it looks like they've done some work there. Jerry said that he personally thinks Public Works has enough to do, he said he thinks they (PR) have to start organizing and do things. What he suggested at the Oversight meeting is a work party to get things cleaned up, they didn't like the idea very much and said how would you organize it? He said pretty simple, you have a captain in each location and each community to be in charge of it? He said correct him if he's wrong Carol, but don't you think if you put something on the website that we would get volunteers to help clean the rail trail? Carol said she didn't know. Kevin said they could definitely do that, he has seen volunteer activities in the community, it could be a trash pickup day, some were attended well and some were not. He said if we're going to do the clean up especially with branches, he would assume they would need some support because you're talking about trees that are over at the trail... Jerry said no, he meant moving things to the side. Kevin said that there are various levels of it, moving things to the side would be fairly easy, then you could talk about if there is stuff on the side that should be removed, how would we do that? Would that be in coordination with Roger and the team there? And of course, Roger's work there would be more complicated hauling out the heavy lumber and those types of things. It would be something to think about Jerry if we could do it in conjunction with the Rail Trail Oversight Committee that you mentioned. What was their reaction to this? Jerry said they asked him how the Lower Saucon Township portion of the trail was? They also asked how he would organize this at that point. It's one of those cases of who wants to be in charge and do it. Kevin said where do you want to go from here Jerry? Jerry said that we should advertise that we're looking for people. Maia said the QR code. Laura said it shouldn't be hard to get volunteers, there are people walking the trail anyway, they could pick-up sticks while they're walking. Jerry asked Laura if the Historical Society ever had an issue getting volunteers for the Adopt-A-Road? Laura said that they have an issue getting help sometimes, it's not the public it's the members who clean up, it's hard. Jerry said we can start by putting up a sign. Kevin said that would make sense by putting up a sign, and maybe the website as well, it sounds like it should be a coordinated effort however, with the group that you attended. Jerry said they didn't seem very enthusiastic about it the idea and he thinks it has to be done at their level. He said he didn't mind going out and doing the cleanup and being in charge of it. He said people here would feel the same way. Robert said maybe the local radio stations would be a good idea to get the word out. Maia said it could be a news article for the Saucon Source. Phil said I'm sure Josh would run something for the Saucon Source. Jerry said do you know Josh? Would you contact him? Phil said, yes. Jerry said ask him how he feels about it and maybe we can meet again. Kevin said he like the idea and it definitely has merit, the question that you're bringing up and it's right on target, is how do you advertise for that and how do you get support for that? He said that he thinks the Saucon Source is one opportunity, the world is on Facebook, our township site, he would assume the Rail Trail has a site, and he thinks all of those would be appropriate and he thinks you would have a good turnout. You would also have to think about what you are asking people to do. If it's simply asking people to move things off to the side or articulate if it's something more than that and put it in a spot that Roger's team can pick-up. Jerry said, so where are we going to leave this, Phil is going to contact the Saucon Source, and he will pursue another direction. Kevin said you're going to go back to that group and see if they are interested...Jerry said no, they're not interested, you can sense when someone is interested and they are not. Kevin asked Carol if they could put the information on the Township site and Carol said yes. Kevin said you need to set all of the information date, time location etc. Robert said you should have a rain date. Diane Hollowell said she had contact information for Lehigh University students for next year.

- 2. Heritage Day - May 18<sup>th</sup>** - Phil wanted clarification on the organizations that were involved along with location. Kevin said it will be at the Hellertown Historical Society (the Grist Mill) and the Saucon Valley Conservancy (Heller Homestead).

3. **Movies in the Parks (dates TBD) Survey** - Kevin said that the movies are - Aladdin in June at Polk Valley Park, Zootopia in July at Steel City Park and The Little Mermaid in August - at Town Hall Park. Kevin asked about the dates and Carol said dates are TBD as we need to confirm with the MTG (LED screen company). He said that he will keep this on future agenda's and would be happy to help at one of the movies, two if needed. He said that it would be great opportunity for Parks & Recreation to volunteer.
4. **Volunteer Ideas for National Night Out (NNO) on August 6, 2024** - Kevin said we need to think about this.

9. **New Business:**

- **Discussion on (possible) Future Bocce Ball Court at Southeastern or Polk Valley Park** - Phil asked if there was a presentation? Kevin said he didn't believe so. Carol mentioned that a resident inquired (sent an email to Priscilla) about having a Bocce ball court added to either Polk Valley Park or Southeastern Park. After speaking with Roger, it was determined that it would be best to hold off on discussion until current projects were completed. Kevin and the Parks and Recreation Boards agreed to table the idea for a future discussion.
- **Softball Game** - After some discussion, Jerry said that he felt like this would be a fun game between the employees, and try to bring two groups together that a previous bridge was burned. Kevin clarified that this game would be played by Hellertown Borough Council, committee members and employees alike with Lower Saucon Township Council, committee and employees. Kevin questioned Laura if this would need to go to Council... Laura said she felt that this would be better at Community Day at Dimmick Park on August 17<sup>th</sup>. She didn't believe that they needed Council's approval on putting together a baseball game as it won't cost anything. Maia suggested having a food truck or a popcorn machine to get the community out to watch. Laura stated that's why the Community Day was a perfect time for the game because all that stuff is there (food trucks/popcorn machine etc.). Kevin asked if everyone was good with this idea? Everyone said yes. Kevin told Jerry to run with the idea, talk to Heintzelman and reserve the field and think about who else can be at the game as far as boards/committees and employees and how to talk to them to see if they are interested. Laura mentioned that she could bring the idea up under her reports, she said that she didn't know how good she could play baseball.... Phil said he wasn't sure if a softball game was the avenue to go, he was looking for something less athletic. Kevin said that he appreciates Jerry bringing this forward and all the work he's done with Heintzelman and team. He said, let's have Laura bring this to Council, just as an invitation and they'll (PR) continue to talk through this at the next meeting. He suggested to continue to talk to Heintzelman about reserving the field. Jerry said he'll tell them that they are interested? Kevin said yes, tell them we are interested on having the game on Community Day on 8/17 and reserve the field, that way we are 9/10ths there, we'll just pray to the rain Gods that it doesn't rain, we'll field a team and have a lot of fun. Maia asked if Kevin could communicate with the Presidents of other boards to let them know that we are doing this and see who would like to play softball? Kevin said sure he could get them from Carol or from the website.

10. **Junior Council Reports:** No Report

11. **Adjournment** – Kevin asked if there was anything else?

Diane Hollowell mentioned from the audience that Bocce Ball is really popular in California at all their wineries and probably less expensive to make than a Pickleball Court is and she stated that she didn't know when ours will get done. Kevin mentioned that it was said that the more we have to offer for our residents, the better. Some people will really benefit from the baseball field, Pickleball, the Rail Trail, all the nice parks they talked about, and Bocce ball will play to a certain audience and is something they should consider at the right time. Maia suggested an archery range and Kevin stated all ideas are good, some better than others.

Laura said that she had a suggestion, she said since you're rolling right into it anyway...we haven't had a survey to residents for over a decade or two on what the public thinks the Township should offer in our parks. She

added, do they think we have too much soccer and not enough archery? She said maybe we can develop a survey and put on the next agenda. We could think of some ideas of what to ask and how to do a survey, if we do one by mail or the next newsletter? She said she saw that received a survey with a QR code from the School District in the mail. She said that she didn't know what it was about but thought that might be a good idea to do a survey on this. She thought that they should really get this information from the public and see what they think. Kevin said he received one as well and he liked the idea to talk about it next time. Kevin asked if there was anything else?

Jerry asked Laura who the Liaison was for the EAC? Laura said it was her and they have a meeting scheduled for Tuesday night (4/9). Jerry said that there was an agenda item that he wanted to talk about. The Adopt-A-Road Program, he asked why they couldn't have an Adopt-A-Trail Program? Diane Hollowell stated from the audience that the Adopt-A-Road Program they pick up trash, she said that she never saw a lot of trash on the trail. Jerry responded that they move trash off to the side of the road. Diane said that they would have to know what they were adopting on part of the trail and that it didn't involve picking up trash. Jerry said we would have to get volunteers first and then we would tell them what their responsibility was, let's see if there is interest. Jerry asked if Laura could ask at the EAC meeting and she said she would talk about it. Jerry then asked about the Adopt-A-Road process. Laura said that they pick up twice a year, however all the roads are adopted. Phil said they have signs up as well determining who does what road which he said you cannot do on the trail. Kevin asked again, anything else? No other business was brought up and meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

11. **Next Meeting:** Monday, May 6, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m. @ Southeastern Pavilion.