

Lower Paxton Township Community Engagement Committee

Meeting Minutes
September 22, 2021

Members in Attendance

Jim Seidler
Denise Hussar
Stan Smith
Pat Crawford
Bob MacIntyre

Members Absent

Also in Attendance

Rachelle Scott, Staff Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Seidler called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm on the above date in Room 174 of the Lower Paxton Township Municipal Center, 425 Prince Street, Harrisburg.

MINUTES

Ms. Crawford made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2021 meeting, as corrected. Ms. Hussar seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved. (Mr. Smith abstained.)

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Ms. Scott stated the CEC account has about \$23,484 in it. According to the documents, there should be a reserve a minimum of \$5,000 or 25% of the total funds, whichever is greater. Ms. Scott asked if there should be a large project that we work towards or should grants be awarded as groups request it. She also would like the CEC to consider funding volunteer activities in some way.

At the previous meeting it was suggested to allow money to be spent at the Manager's discretion, but this needs to be discussed. Mr. MacIntyre suggested allowing \$1000 to be spent and Ms. Scott would report monthly, (within 40 days of) and replenish it when it gets low. Ms. Crawford noted that allowing her to spend as needed makes it less unwieldy than if each request would come to CEC meetings. Mr. MacIntyre noted it could be handled by a designee if Ms. Scott decided so.

Mr. Seidler noted that fundraising is part of what a boy scout must do for his Eagle Award.

Mr. Smith stated that the idea seems to be to help fund, not solely fund, a project. Ms. Hussar added it could be seed money or matching funds.

Ms. Hussar asked if there is a business plan of how this would fit into it what we would like to accomplish. Ms. Scott stated there is a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) list, but not something of a smaller scale. Ms. Crawford stated there is not a business plan for the CEC. Mr. Smith stated that is because CEC was created to work as a funding stream for the volunteer boards and was not created to be driven by the township's strategies. The basis for the current struggle is that none of the boards have come up with much. There isn't a game plan for the boards or committees of what they want to do outside of the township initiatives. He would like the committees to think annually about a project that could be funded through CEC. There is no list of projects sitting and waiting for funding. Ms. Crawford stated that one of the projects in the CIP is an Arts Council initiative and the AC is very interested in completing it but the cost was so high. Ms. Scott stated that Brightbill Park play equipment is high on the CIP list because there is grant funding available. If the Township is successful in getting the grant money, they would possibly ask the CEC to match \$9,000 to show matching funds and support by the CEC.

Mr. MacIntyre stated that bringing music to the parks is great, but there has to be a way to do it that doesn't cost \$18,000. Maybe a recent graduate who could design something that was still great, but didn't cost that amount of money. He cautioned that the CEC may be turning into a source to fund other things that the committees are doing, where he understood the CEC to be tasked with engaging the community and working with community on the things they want to do. If that is indeed the focus, no one knows how many scouts will come to the Township for projects, so to allocate money for that is whimsical. However, giving the director the discretion to apply funds as needed. And then the CEC can amass as much money as it can, and then see how that money can support the other things, rather than finding ways to fund committee projects.

Mr. Smith viewed the issue CEC purpose differently. There was a point in time where the Friendship Center was going to start campaigning for a large amount of money, and the Arts Council was looking to fundraise for a very large project as well. To avoid each group asking the same people for money, the CEC could coordinate the efforts and avoid conflicts. The original idea was for the CEC to be a fundraising tool for the three (then four) boards for things that could not be funded by the Township budget. A better sense of unity for funding for things related to Parks and Recreation, rather than each entity doing its own thing, and possibly duplicating tasks and requests. Mr. MacIntyre agreed, and added that there was also discussion about becoming a 501(c)(3) which was determined to be not necessary. Through all of this, the CEC has evolved. Ms. Crawford agreed as well, noting that she remembers the focus being on community outreach which has diminished. She also noted that there wasn't a real clear message back then or now as to what we want people to do. For right now, the community involvement cannot be a priority since people are still hesitant to gather in large groups. Ms. Hussar stated that the way Mr. Smith described the creation of the CEC is how she remembers it from a FCOB member perspective. Ms. Crawford found a handout from the past, and it listed four things that we were asking of people, but nothing ever came if it. Mr. Seidler asked if the purpose needs to be restructured. The funding policy may also need to be rewritten to reflect the request to allocate money. Ms. Crawford asked what information needs to be reported back to Ms. Scott and then to the CEC

regarding the use of the money. Mr. MacIntyre stated that giving discretionary money to the director falls under #2 on the funding policy. Mr. MacIntyre stated that the CEC has to reach the community and let them know they exist, so that they can find ways to connect and help. This would be done via the internet not so much as walking events passing out flyers. The question of what we are and what we are doing is fundamental at this point. Ms. Hussar added that how the CEC brands itself needs to be identified as well.

Mr. Smith noted that in the early stages of the CEC, there was discussion about the structure and using subcommittees for things such as marketing, event planning, public relations. The CEC is still wrestling with two items; responding to things that come from the parent committees, and citizen requests for something. The second item isn't covered by the funding policy, so that needs to be worked out. He suggested adding a fourth bullet to allow citizens to come forward to request a project that would enhance the parks and activities.

Ms. Hussar asked about the subcommittees, and Mr. Smith stated that the idea did not progress, and mostly because we were asking people to join a committee that didn't have anything to do yet.

Mr. MacIntyre stated that there are small organizations that are doing things in the community and they would be a good example of a grant recipient or cooperative project for something they are doing. For example, there is the ultimate frisbee group, who needed a disc target basket to practice at, then they hold a couple tournaments and raise some funds to use to build more targets to engage more of the community with this activity. There is a lot of things the CEC can do, but not until it is organized. Mr. Smith stated there are channels that can be utilized for communicating with the public. Nextdoor, Facebook, and email are ways to ask residents for suggestions for projects that would enhance the parks or the township.

In the funding policy, #3 can be edited to say: Funds shall be awarded based upon verifiable information. Preference should be given to applications or requests from the Parks & Rec Board, Greenway Committee, and Arts Council. Ms. Crawford suggested adding a sub-bullet allowing funds for the discretionary use, under the line that says all...shall be reviewed and approved. Mr. Seidler agreed.

Ms. Scott stated that there are very few if any groups requesting help with funding for projects. The criteria for Eagle Scout and Gold Award include soliciting funds for their project. A different sort of volunteer project has come about recently where a resident goes to a park monthly and cleans up garbage and things. It would be ideal to be able to pay for supplies such as when she needed to buy yard waste bags because what was being cleaned up that month happened to be a lot of branches and leaves. Another resident requested futsal in the hockey rink and asked for goals. That person was directed to request funds from the CEC via Parks & Rec Board. She would instruct that resident to prepare a request and come to a CEC meeting to discuss it with the Committee members.

Mr. Seidler asked that the edits be made to the funding policy, and that Ms. Scott request her funds (\$1,000) every so often. Mr. Smith stated that a Township staff person should be

requesting money, it should be a resident or community group. Mr. MacIntyre suggested renaming the policy the “community funding policy” and then the money that the director can use falls under an internal funding policy. In the budget plan there can be a petty cash fund of \$1,000 that and each expenditure is tied to an applicant.

Mr. MacIntyre suggested that the issue be tabled until such time as Ms. Scott can provide a revised policy for the CEC’s consideration.

Ms. Scott will draft a policy mimicking the Friendship Center Financial Assistance Policy. There was a section where if an applicant met certain criteria, the Director could award the applicant a grant up to a certain amount of money per request. There was criterion to be met, and there was a limit to actions that could be taken. There were certain parameters that triggered the applicant to be required to get approval from the Board. She suggested that if the limit was \$100 per request, and she has to report every month or 40 days, she would remain below the above-mentioned limit of \$1000.

Mr. MacIntyre made a motion to, as part of the commitment to the community, allocate the amount of \$1000 to form an account to be used by the director to fund small projects involving the community, such as but not limited to Boy Scout/Girl Scout community assisted projects, furthermore that the director shall report any expenditures to the CEC within 45 days of the disbursement. Mr. Smith seconded the motion and a unanimous vote followed.

The policy can be edited to reflect the content in the motion. The CEC will review the draft at the next meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FALL FEST, 10/2/2021, 1:30-5:30 pm

Ms. Scott noted that there is a staff shortage currently, so she invited CEC members to volunteer for tractor driving or other volunteer posts. If anyone wants to drive the tractor, there will be training the week prior to the event. wants to she would like help starting around 10 am.

Holiday Event, Friday December 3rd

Ms. Scott stated the Department Staff is working out the plans for the holiday event. The event will be held at Heroes Grove. There will not be a drive through event this year like in 2020.

FUNDING REQUESTS

No funding requests were received.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Scott stated that the department hired a part time Special Events Coordinator. She will work about 20 hours per week, and she will attend the Fall Fest and has already started planning for the holiday event at Heroes Grove. Mr. MacIntyre requested she attend a Parks and

Rec Board meeting. Ms. Scott stated that Ashley Williams has experience in special events at a college in NC, a masters degree in entertainment and media, and she has actually done work in Mecklandburg Parks and Recreation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 5:15 pm. The next meeting of the Community Engagement Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at 4:00 pm in Room 174 of the Municipal Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Hiner
Recording Secretary