

1. **Meeting Called to Order** – The meeting was called to order by David Spirk at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.
2. **Roll Call – Present** – David Spirk, Chairman; Tom Butera, Vice Chairman; Niloofar Aflatooni, Krista Baum, Bill Ross, Frank Thompson, Members; Jason Banonis, Council Liaison; Diane Palik, Township Staff. **Absent** – Keith Meier, Member; Breanna Kemmerer, Mason Simms, Colin Griffith, Junior Council Members. **Guests:** Atom Kallen, Bridge Lussier, Kristen Lockett.
3. **Approval of April 12, 2021 Minutes** – Krista Baum moved for approval of the April 12, 2021 minutes, second by Tom Butera. Motion passed 6-0 (Absent – Keith Meier).

4. **Presentations**

- **Blessing Boxes** – Kristen Lockett was present. She’s a resident of the Township and supports the Blessing Boxes in Hellertown. She thought maybe we could eventually have one or more in the Township. The theme is to take what you need. It’s kind of like of a national thing or movement for people in need. It’s based on the honor system so those in need take what they need and there are those who replenish it as they can.

Kristen said the boxes are accessible 24/7 for donations and those in need. They have a group on Facebook called “Hellertown-Lower Saucon Neighbors Helping Neighbors” which is a private group and people are always offering things and helping others, even pre-pandemic. The Blessing Boxes are within walking distance for a lot of people for people who don’t drive.

Kristen said they are thorough on monitoring on a weekly basis what’s going in these boxes. They remove older items, take things out that might freeze, things that may spoil in the warm weather and everything is shared on their Facebook page. They definitely have people active in using the Blessing Boxes and people are still donating to them.

Kristen said there is an increased need in our area for something like the Blessing Boxes. Some of the items that can be donated are non-perishable foods such as canned goods, boxed meals, breakfasts, pasta, baby foods, toiletries, paper products, masks, and cold weather accessories. The ones that are in Hellertown are at the Dewey Hall, Christ Lutheran Church, Hellertown Borough Hall, First UCC and one is going up at St. Theresa’s church.

Kristen said the Hellertown boxes were built by Scouts and possibly even a Girl Scout. At the Township, they could acquire more if there are multiple occasions available in the Township as a Girl Scout said she will build as many boxes as needed. They will request building materials/donations through their Facebook page.

Kristen said for the maintenance of the boxes, the Saucon Valley Handyman have donated their services/times/materials whenever repairs are necessary.

Kristen said they have 859 members in their Facebook group between Hellertown and Lower Saucon. People having postings like the Blessing Box looks empty, one looks full, things like that. People suggest other things that could be put in there like the homeless population who could use something like a can opener. There’s a woman who set up an Amazon wish list for things that are very inexpensive and for people who don’t want to go out in the weather. They’ve gotten a lot of support and people are really eager to participate in. One person just donated \$20 after she read about it and told them to buy soup or whatever they needed for the box.

Jason Banonis said it was a great presentation and gives him a greater understanding what the Blessing Boxes are. He thinks everyone is doing a great thing for the community and commends her and others for those efforts.

Dave Spirk said they've seen a lot of presentations and this was well thought out, right to the point, and he felt like pulling out a \$20 bill when she got done. We'd have to know where you would want to put one or two up. Would you be spearheading the donations of materials as well as the installation of it or would you prefer our Public Works install it which what may be what Council wishes to do. Those logistical things are what we should talk about next.

Kristin said it's not a problem finding people to be willing to make the boxes, but she's sure they will get donations. There are plans on line and it's a big thing for communities across the nation. She would head up the donations which would be put on their Facebook page. It's up to you where you would want these boxes. They haven't had any problems with any of the boxes.

Dave said we have Town Hall Park where the municipal hall is. Kristen said that's the park she is talking about. Dave said Town Hall Park makes more sense. It's within walking distance for a lot of people who live by Town Hall Park.

Frank Thompson said it's a great presentation. If you are having good sense in Hellertown which is a more walkable community than Hellertown, do you have any experience with semi-rural Township's like ours where people would have to drive to it?

Kristen said she doesn't but she could do a little bit more research and can get more information. They think the park at Town Hall is a pretty well visited area. They feel there is a need in that area. She lives close enough where they can be there almost every day. Frank said that would be a good place to start.

Jason said a lot of the parks we have are used by people with few houses located in proximity, and what comes to mind is Southeastern Park and Woodland Hills Preserve, which are used by people who drive there. The parks that come to mind that are probably most used by local residents walking to them would be Town Hall Park and also Steel City Park. Kristen said that one definitely came up in their group also.

Dave said perhaps you should pick a park first and we can make it more complete to Council. We can make a recommendation that's open-ended and ask you go to the Council meeting and they would hear P&R recommendation and you could answer some questions. We don't have to debate it again, and just say that we recommend the first Blessing Box in either Town Hall Park or Steel City Park based on your groups own recommendation but that you go to the Council meeting when this recommendation would be heard to answer any questions and give a definitive answer as to which park you wish to put your first box in.

Krista Baum said she has been part of the Facebook group and it is phenomenal what all of you do. There are many members who participate and fill the boxes. She would support proposing those locations as the amount of people who are in the group right now would be able to support that. She's located by Town Hall and she could check on the box and would recommend both sites.

Niloofer Aflatooni said she looked at the Facebook page and the location is important. We have to make sure we have enough people to see it and use it and then after that we can go on.

Bill Ross said it's a tremendous idea. He doesn't see a downside to it at all. It will benefit the community greatly. He is impressed by it.

Tom Butera said he likes the idea and could go in both locations as well.

Jason said maybe the committee wants to make a motion for one or the other or both and then get Leslie's input at the Township Manager. She may have a sense as to where the Blessing Boxes should go and she might say it would be great in both locations.

Dave said if the group wants to do both, why not, it's a great idea. Do we do one or the other or both? Krista said the goal of the Facebook group is not only for the Blessing Boxes, it's very active in many other ways. This is just one component of it.

Nilo said you mentioned the private a couple of times, how can one be a member. Kristin said just search the group on Facebook and they may ask you what your address is. It's a private group. Krista said anyone can join, it's more for a targeted audience.

Krista moved that the P&R Board recommends to Council that the group "Hellertown Lower Saucon Neighbors Helping Neighbors" put either a Blessing Box in Town Hall Park, Steel City Park, one or the other or both and that we would support either one of the initiatives from that group. Second by Tom Butera.

Dave asked if any residents had any comments. Atom Kallen said he lives in Steel City and he wanted to offer his help. Bridget Lussier said it's a great idea and while we were on the call she joined the group on their Facebook page.

Motion passes 6-0 with Keith Meier absent.

Jason said you should talk to Leslie Huhn, Township Manager for the May 19th Council agenda. Diane Palik said she will send Leslie's email address to Kristen. Kristen said would she be answering questions. Jason said yes, it's Township Council, the elected officials, so you would be presenting to Council and the general public. Leslie can give you all the details on that but he thinks the presentation you gave this evening would be similar to the one you would present to Council.

5. **Citizen Non-Agenda Items** – None

6. **Updates**

- **Little Free Library at Southeastern Park** – Tom had a drawing that he put up on the screen for the Little Free Library (LFL) at Southeastern Park. He said the idea behind this is we are trying to capture a barn theme. The one area that was problematic was the stone area so they eliminated that component. It will be fabricated with PVC materials and it does not break down or attract insects. It comes white and the red we will paint on. The door will open and we can consider making the windows a little bigger so you can see inside. It's 2'x2' with a roof on it. If you've seen the one over at Polk Valley, this one will sit on a 6'x6' post just like that one does. Public Works can put the post in for us and we can come and drop the piece down on top of it.

Dave said it's very doable. Tom would be happy to make it again. He said it was Bridget's daughters who came up with this idea and they would like to be stewards of it as well, meaning they will let somebody know if there is damage to it or something isn't working out. They will help put some books in it when the time comes and Atom has a very large number of books that he is willing to donate and he could be a good resource for her daughter's if they have questions in the future. Bridget said her daughters are excited for it to come into fruition.

Atom said how big is the door? Tom said it's around 18" to 20" in diameter. Atom said he's happy to help provide some initial books. Krista said she also has books to donate.

Tom said this is the same footprint as to what's in Polk Valley Park. It should operate just fine.

Dave said Tom could build this in the next month or two. We would work with Roger Rasich in setting the whole thing up. We'd pick a spot or maybe Bridget would like to pick a spot at the park. That spot should be pretty close to the parking lot in an area that if he brings the equipment in to cut the grass, it's not going to get in his way. If you make it closer to the road, it's deep into the parking lot, off the parking lot or right when you come in. Not in front of a parking space that it gets blocked in.

Dave moved to recommend to Council to allow this design and a location either near the entrance to the parking lot where the driveway hits the main parking area or at the end closer to the park and that we ask for Council's advice on that position, but that we would have it identical to Polk Valley Park's installation in conjunction with Public Works. Second by Niloofar Aflatooni.

Jason said the design looks great, and when this gets in front of Council, he's going to recommend that all LFL that are put up on Township's parks use this design, it's really a great country type of design and it would be nice to have this consistent throughout all the locations. We look forward to having more around the Township.

Dave said the one at Polk Valley Park is a book design and the idea was we were having contests for design. In the next contest, it was going to be for Town Hall, and Steel City had a steel design, but we'll bow to whatever the Council decides in that regard.

Jason said he's excited by this design. By no means is he trying to take away enthusiasm or interest in the project so to the extent that it benefits the LFL by having residents compete and come up with designs, that's fine too.

Tom said one thing about each of them being unique is that maybe down the road people can actually visit the LFL and see what is unique about each one. It could become some sort of attraction at our parks.

All in favor, motion passes 6-0 with Keith Meier absent.

Krista said do these LFL's appear on a map, how do residents know where they are. Jason said we can have Leslie add that to the website, so to the extent that people are accessing the map from the Township website and we can drop a marker in each park map to indicate where each of the LFL's are located. We can do the same for the Blessing Boxes as well.

- **Little Free Library at Steel City Park** – Tom said we will have to push this one ahead, but it's a little bit more challenging with the I-beam component. Dave said we will revisit this in June.
- **Snack Stand at Polk Valley Park** – Dave said thanks to Jason for bringing the snack stand issue up. We'd really like to see some traction being done with it. If any component, that people think we want water, we want electricity, we want or require bathrooms, he'd like to start with baby steps so if we just get a rectangular building and then later as time moves forward we could do more. There is water in that park, there are wells. The wells were sunk when the park was built. There is not municipal water or sewer. We don't even have to approach that yet, just concentrate on a building, a shell, a roof that can be locked and opened for the various athletic programs and quite frankly anyone who wants to use that park, any group, and that's the goal just to get things rolling.

Dave said he's assuming Hanover Engineering (HEA) has not really gotten anywhere yet on this. Jason said HEA is going to be looking at this to see what is there and what may be available and what may be needed depending on the level of this. He understands there is water in the park, but the water is over by the dog park. Just to have a basic structure without any amenities to it is much easier. Sandy Yerger raised some questions which are valid and among them is who is going to be using this, how is it going to operate it and who will be responsible for opening and closing it and taking care of garbage and things like that. Those questions are going to have to be addressed to Council's satisfaction. He thinks it's a good idea to have this and will help our youth sports and it might be helpful to start engaging them now to demonstrate their commitment and interest in this. Hearing from them would be beneficial to Council. This won't be brought up at the next Council meeting, but the next time he gets word of this at the meeting in June or after that, HEA may have some questions and it would be helpful to have someone from P&R come to the Council meeting and explain what

the hope is and have the sports organizations and other stakeholders come forward and say to Council exactly what the value is.

Dave said he agrees. That's the way to go and the ownership we talked about with the various sports groups donating time and effort as well as having them lead the charge to get donations and materials is the way to go. A lot of parks in the valley, some have nothing, it's not a big lift to say we have a building that is utilized and shared by the sports organizations and/or other organizations in the municipality. He asked Bill Ross what fields are there no buildings and/or are there buildings in shambles and not taken care of.

Bill Ross said it's hard to say as there are so many different degrees of parks within the Lehigh Valley. A lot really only have one or two fields, they don't have a lot of facilities. The bigger parks have about eight fields so there are a lot of facilities there. Polk Valley Park is more in line with those type of facilities when you consider we have three fields there for multi-sports and Polk Valley doesn't have those facilities.

Dave said we have three fields, two baseball fields and a dog park on 48 acres. Bill said it's a really sizeable facility compared to others and very spread out as you really aren't looking at a lot of conjunction except in the parking areas. It is trailing in facilities for comfortable sized parks.

Krista said do they call them snack stands. When we use that term, it's under the assumption food is going to be served. What about food service guidelines? What happens if we offer electricity and someone brings a hot dog machine and everyone gets sick? Does that put the Township at risk? Would it be safer to call it something else? She fully supports this, she's just concerned with food safety guidelines.

Bill said at this point, it isn't even something we could consider as the structure we are looking at wouldn't have electricity, or wouldn't have any running water. It would just be a place where you could sell bottles of water and pre-packaged snacks. Down the road, we could consider that if we add electricity to it. Right now that's putting the cart before the horse. It's not something that is even conceivable right now.

Dave said it's a great question. We have youth basketball, wrestling, he owns a restaurant, and there's something called Serve Safe kitchens. At these youth events, you have food prepared at someone's home, it's donated and sold. If that was a prerequisite and the State Health Department says you can't do this at any youth basketball game or tournament or baseball, there wouldn't be a hot dog sold across the State.

Krista said that's very helpful as she has a food background, and she's wondering how are you going to get someone who will take over the food responsibility. Dave said theoretically the hot dog sales and even potato chips and soda are technically donations. He's been through it, we've had questions like this and he's been the President of the Wrestling Club since Diane gave it up, and we'll have events where we have 300 or 400 people in the gym and serve them all day long, 10 hour events. The snack stand at Dimmick Park is the hub of the park. It's one of the greatest meeting spots for the Hellertown-Lower Saucon community and the snack stand, we call it the Field House, and he agrees we shouldn't call it the snack stand. Krista said if we can change the name, she would feel more comfortable. Dave said he would call it something like the Field House or the Polk Valley Building, whatever.

Dave said he wants to impress upon everyone, let's just get a building up, a shell of a building. Once we do that, people will start to congregate around it, it's a meeting place for the parents, they get to know each other and it builds community bonds.

Jason said he's going to suggest in addition to the structure, that electricity be provided as well and he says that for a few reasons. There are tournaments or times when this building may be used that

operations that will start before daylight and end after darkness and there should be lighting on the exterior of the building for security reasons. We don't want people breaking in. There should be lighting on it so anyone like the police or the public that goes by sees any bad operators, we want to offer them a cover of darkness there. In addition, there should also be lighting inside for the people that are working inside so they can see what they are doing and a few outlets are going to have to be required by building codes. Does that lead itself to some prepared foods, perhaps it's a hot dog maker or a crockpot. This isn't going to be a commercial kitchen and he doesn't think people are going to be going there for a gourmet meal, they are going to go to the Steel Club for that. We have to provide that as a basic element for the building. Water and sinks and sewage - that leads to a whole other level of complexity which may not be feasible for this building. If he was to add, it's not for him to make this decision, it's for the P&R to do that, but it would be his recommendation to at least include electricity in some form to allow for the basic lighting and electrical means.

Dave said he agrees too, he just doesn't want to see us take a bigger bite than the Township would like to handle. If you think the Council really is not going to make a big difference if we ask for this 12'x20' building and have basic electricity in it, if you think that's inconsequential to the whole idea of Council approving it and helping it go forward then he'd make that motion. We don't have to make a motion again. We already asked can HEA do a feasibility study and he would ask as Jason as the liaison, as you negotiate with HEA as to what they should be doing, that we just want a simple building, four walls with a light and some outlets.

Krista said she talked with Tom Carocci this week and he mentioned the Township getting \$1.7 million for COVID relief and is that something that would be appropriate to cover the electrical costs? Jason said he doesn't think so. He can't rule it out but the COVID money came with very strict limitations on what it can be used for and what it can't be used for. He doesn't recall anything within those restrictions leaving it open enough for a structure like this in a public park or electrifying it or things like that. He'd have to look again. They are related to emergency expenditures or hardships that the Township faced as a result of COVID. This structure didn't exist before COVID and doesn't exist now. He doesn't think we can say it's a hardship not to have this structure.

Krista said what about the lack of rentals that were not able to be approved over the last summer. Jason said pavilion rentals did continue, people were just choosing not to use them as they weren't having gatherings. They were available on a limited basis.

Dave said if it's on the Council agenda, he'd be happy to sit in on the next Council meeting when it's discussed. If Diane or Jason can let him know when HEA has something or if it's on the May 19th agenda, he'd be happy to join that meeting.

- Frank Thompson said regarding the Eagle Scout project, Logan is working on developing what size, the design and the cost estimate and he hopes to have something by our next meeting in June, at least his proposal. Dave asked Diane to put this project under the "Updates" list. This is in Heller Homestead Park. Jason said he mentioned this at the last Council meeting and there may be a request to Council to support it. The sense he got is that Council was very pleased with this. He put Logan in touch with Barbara, Roger and David with the Heller Homestead so he could coordinate efforts directly with them as well.

7. Special Event Applications

- **Sunset Cinema Movie Night – July 23, 2021 from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. @ Town Hall Park** – Dave said this looked complete. Was this done in the past, did this group put this on before. Diane said yes, they did. There were no problems, and everything went well. Krista said the application on the first page says "Number of Users" and they said 100-150. Then on the details on No. 13 on the next page it says no more than 100. We should get clarity on how many. It's an estimate or are we approving up to 150 or are we approving up to 100 or does that not matter. Dave said he would think that matters a little bit. Diane said she will bring it to Leslie's attention.

Dave moved to recommend to Council the Sunset Movie Night for July 23, 2021 but that Council get clarity on the maximum number either from the administration or the group themselves before Council gives approval. Jason said he'll be glad to do that.

Second by Frank Thompson. All in favor, 6-0 with Keith Meier absent.

8. **Old Business** – None

9. **New Business**

- Park Locations – Tom said Southeastern for May, Heller Homestead for June, Polk Valley for August, and Steel City for September.
- Dave said let's finish on comments for Southeastern so let's start out with Krista with the cracked slide. Krista said she brought her daughter and a friend there and her four-year old pointed it out. She wanted clarity on what she should be looking at so she brought the map and did a walk through. She looked at the application schedule for every park in terms of fertilizer, when they mow it. She couldn't clarify if there was a spring refresher clean-up because there was a downed tree on the property and it seems like they are mowing around it. There's a lot of branches, it does look like it could use a good power wash, there's a good amount of water that came through and moved the mulch. Is that what we were supposed to be looking for? Dave said yes. The PW does take care of the parks and he's know Roger does typically wait until some of the spring storms are done, but he would say it just needs a little TLC. He thinks a power wash would be nice of the pavilion, but otherwise, cleaning up the branches. One of the things that the P&R did back in 2000 or 2001 they recommended that an Agronomist go to the parks once a year, give his or her opinion on the health of the turf and what if anything should be done including fertilizer application, weed killer or whatever it may be and he believes we skipped it last year because of COVID so he would assume we are going to renew that this year with DelVal. Krista said she thinks it was on the website last May, but then she didn't see an update. Dave said he is very well known. Jason said as the Parks liaison, we'd like to remind the Township Council about that and it's been going on prior to opening Polk Valley Park. It was the impetus behind that idea of bringing a professional in to assess the issues and then give recommendations as to what has to be done. Roger takes that information and each park could be different on how it should be done. He thinks we skipped it last year like a lot of things in 2020. Dave said we've used the same company for 20 years. Frank said he went out to the park and was reminded of what a nice park it is and it's nice having a park in that community. He was impressed, the bathrooms are actually working. He did note the damaged slide because of Krista's note. That's possible it could be repaired. There's a nice sign at the back of the park that says it's a "None Mow" area and it's very well mowed, so he doesn't know what that's about. The sign says they are leaving this to grow naturally. It was mowed in the past six months or years. Everything else looked quite nice and he saw the tree that had fallen down. It is a nice layout for children and adults to use. Kudos to the Township. Diane said regarding the sliding board, Public Works is going to see if they can do a temporary fix and if they can't they will rope it off. We already are getting a quote from Boyce for a replacement if needed. Krista said thank you, it's amazing how fast you respond. Dave said regarding the natural area, that little piece of land was donated to us and they requested at that time, it gets mowed twice a year in order to keep the vegetation that is desired there. There's a certain type of wild flower that grows up. If you don't mow it, tree weed type things will start to grow in there. It's similar to the one in Kingston Park that never worked, this one actually does work.
- Dave said the next park we can all go out individually and visit is the Heller Homestead and we can report back at the next meeting. Frank said the Charlie, the Eagle Scout redid the signs at the Trail at the Heller Homestead, and did a great job for us and they are holding up very well.
- Krista said could you please add the park we look at each month as a discussion item. Diane said okay.

10. **Public Comment** – None

Parks & Recreation Board Minutes

May 3, 2021

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Dave Spirk at 7:58 p.m.; second by Frank Thompson. Motion passed .

12. Next Meeting

Monday, June 7, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m.