

**Military Installation Remediation and  
Infrastructure Authority (“MIRIA”)  
Board Meeting Minutes  
June 4, 2021**

In attendance:

BOARD:

Todd Stephens, Chair  
W. William Whiteside, Vice Chair  
Thomas Panzer, Secretary  
Theresa Harmon, Treasurer  
Tara Conner-Hallston  
Scott DeRosa (attended virtually)  
Gregory Nesbitt (attended virtually)

STAFF:

Larry Burns, Executive Director  
William Gildea-Walker, Deputy  
Director  
Mary Eberle, Esq., Solicitor

Mr. Stephens opened the meeting with a Pledge of Allegiance at 9:03 AM in the Horsham Township Municipal Building at 1025 Horsham Road.

Mr. Stephens asked if there were any question or comments from the audience. There were none.

Mr. Stephens asked for the will of the board regarding the May 7, 2021 meeting minutes. Amr. Burns confirmed that Mr. Panzer provided him with minor revisions that were mostly typographical in nature. Ms. Harmon motioned subject to those minor revisions to approve the minutes to the May 7 board meeting. Mr. Whiteside seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Stephens asked if the Executive Director had a report. Mr. Burns confirmed that in May MIRIA activity was rather busy. Six grant applications were received totaling about \$13.8 million with local effort contributions of \$3.16 million and that a supplemental package was supplied the board with information on each submission. As required by Act 101, a certification of local effort was submitted to the PA Department of Revenue. He noted that in the prior grant cycle, that applicants made applications based on their communities needs and that different grant amounts at varying multiples of local effort contributions were received. He confirmed that many applicants were coached through the grant application process to attempt to maximize both individual and of all applicants grant awards. He indicated that he has performed a cursory review of the applications and expects a full review and underwriting of each grant later in the summer. He reminded the board that in March an amended Designated Authority Application was provided to the Department of Revenue seeking to add 7 new parcels to the designated parcels

with acreage totaling 19.112 acres. He advised that the Department of Revenue had approved 5 of those parcels, denied 1 parcel and requested additional information on the 7<sup>th</sup> parcel, being 723 Dresher Road. In early May, additional information was provided and in late in May on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Revenue approved the parcel as part of the Zone. Mr. Burns commented that behind the scenes, he was aware that Chairman Stephens had had discussions with the Department of Revenue about the denied property, 500 Enterprise Drive and with his frustration that a property that had been vacant for longer than a year was not approved. Mr. Burns further confirmed that the MIRIA's compliance consultant, Deana Zosky had submitted the master list/annual report of all parcels and businesses in the Zone to the Department of Revenue as required by Act 101.

Mr. Burns confirmed that as it relates to projects, that MIRIA yesterday closed on the purchase of 986 Easton Road, the former Grandma's Grotto property. He noted that on the list of checks, that check #1077 to Laurel Abstract in the amount of \$630,454.17 which was the purchase price plus closing costs had been add, and asked that board members note that in their motion when the list of checks is addressed. He reminded the board that regarding the 368 Easton Road property, that it was agreed to walk away from the project for this cycle. He noted that the property owner showed some interest in addressing a Phase 2 environmental study, and that if so the property may be revisited in a future cycle. The road network study is underway and Eric Frary of Michael Baker International is in attendance and will provide the board an update. As it relates to the recreational field study, on June 18<sup>th</sup> SFA will be in town and we will be meeting with them as part of continuing the process to get the feasibility study underway. He commented that later in the meeting he'll be reintroducing a request to talk with a communications firm. A memo in your package discusses that. In past months we had come to a conclusion how communication efforts could be addressed, but over the last 60 days we've learned a lot about the limits of the capacity of the township to afford us use and time of their communications staff and that we should use an outside firm that may be right-sized for our needs and budget. He confirmed that was his report and offered to address any questions.

Mr. Stephens asked that before questions that he wanted to follow-up on two points, that he had talked with the Secretary of the Department of Revenue regarding the denied property at 500 Enterprise Road. All these properties Designated by the authority to be in the Zone, have to be deteriorated or underutilized, is the definition that is included within the statute. From the beginning, the Department of Revenue and this Authority have been going back and forth really trying to understand the definition that the Department of Revenue has been applying. We learned through our first round that their definition of underutilized meant at least 70% vacant, which seemed a little different than what I had anticipated when drafting the statute. None the less, we felt OK, those are the rules and we can probably play by the rules. We have to play by the rules. This year, when we submitted a property that was 100% vacant and it was rejected, I took real issue with that. I don't know how much underutilized a property could be than one that sat vacant for over a year. I spoke with the folks at Revenue, initially a Deputy Secretary, and

they were not receptive to altering their position. Then I had a meeting with the Secretary of Revenue, and while it was a very cordial and pleasant conversation, he was also not interested in altering their position. I did have some conversations with the Secretary about ways that we may be able to streamline this process and make it much simpler, both from their perspective and ours. I am hopeful that we may continue to work the Department of Revenue on the legislative side to try to make some tweaks so that we don't have to go through this back and forth, over providing leases and trying to track down all this information, so that we have a much clearer understanding and a bright line that we can follow about which properties can be included in the Zone. That remains a work in progress. Mr. Stephens noted that another thing he wanted to highlight was last year through this program we were able to help residents in Horsham Township, Warminster Township, Warrington Township and in the Borough of Ambler. It is worth noting that for this years' applications, we are expanding our reach a little bit. We now have the Upper Southampton Municipal Authority as an applicant over in Bucks County. We also have Ambler Borough back in, but this time on behalf of residents in Lower Gwynedd Township. I just wanted to highlight for the members that this program is reaching more communities in our region that have been affected by these chemicals as a result of military installations. I think that's encouraging and I'm proud of the work that we've been doing and will continue to do and the expanded reach that we are taking on.

Mr. Burns interjected that before we move on, that he had been remis to point out that as part of the board package distributed that a revised MIRIA Zone map which includes the additional parcels that were added, and that deteriorated property #1 discussed in our December meeting and on the list of potential properties to acquire, that the list of checks include a check to Indian Valley Appraisal Company for \$3,500.00. We did get the appraisal on deteriorated property #1 and the summary page of the appraisal is in your package. Mr. Stephens asked if there were any additional questions, and there were none.

Mr. Stephens referred to the next agenda item of bills or communications and asked for the will of the board regarding the list of checks. Mr. Stephens confirmed that the list of checks provided today includes check \$1077 for \$360,454.17. Mr. Burns replied yes that is correct, the check is denoted in the top of the list and does not affect the total dollar of operating expenses on the list of checks. Mr. Whiteside motioned for approval of the list of checks for MIRIA operational expenses in the amount of \$38,368.56 and further move to approve check #1077 in the amount of \$630,454.17 which was used and previously authorized for the purchase price and closing cost related to the property at 986 Easton Road. Mr. Panzer seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stephens confirmed the next item on the agenda was a presentation by Eric Frary of Michael Baker International on the status of the road network study. Mr. Frary talked at length and used a power point presentation regarding the study's scope and the intersection and corridor locations and discussed those areas as detailed in the power point presentation. Upon

conclusion, Mr. Frary asked if there any questions? Ms. Conner-Hallston asked if pedestrian cross-walks would be addressed in the study? Mr. Frary confirmed that walkability is a key issue through the township and they would most certainly evaluate them as part of the scope of the study. Mr. Nesbit inquired that following Ms. Conner-Hallston's questions, long-term should we be considering a pedestrian bridge to provide access to the developed base property and across Route 611? Mr. Frary confirmed that was a very good point, that a widened Route 611 would not be safe to cross and indicated that he would work with the township to analyze where a pedestrian bridge might be best placed. Mr. Panzer indicated he had a comment and a question. He confirmed that this level of review, renderings and information in this detail, is very exciting as the Route 611 and County Line Road is a gateway to Bucks County. He then asked the question on what the MIRIA's role in the end product of the results of this study? Ms. Eberle confirmed that MIRIA has the authority to work on these improvements and it is part of the scope of the authority the legislation gave this board. When you look at the uses of the funds that are generated in the MIRIA Zone, the reimbursement of expenses that were charged to residents as the result of PFC's and the connection of houses that are on wells that are affected by PFC's is one use. But the other use is to generate economic development and transportation improvements for the redevelopment of the former Willow Grove Naval Air Station. Mr. Panzer indicated the response was helpful, and commented that in a greater context that these improvements in Horsham Township would facilitate better access beyond Horsham. Ms. Eberle responded that yes, Route 611 provides access to Warminster and Warrington and that improvements there and on County Line Road would most certainly provide better traffic flows through the whole 611. Mr. Frary interjected that part of the purpose of this study is to lay out a map or frame work that could then be implemented either by the township, the county, the state or a private developer. So, whether incorporated into comprehensive plans or as developments be considered, the township, the county would have the plan for the development of a property, Hankin Property for example, make sure you incorporate this cut-through. Any other parcels that might be impacted? Basically, it's the beginning of a comprehensive plan available to the township, the state, the county that may be implemented over the course of several years. Mr. Panzer inquired whether we actually implement any of it or do we make recommendations which are then trickled down, over or up for a need to a local municipality? Ms. Eberle confirmed that as the legislation was drafted, you have the authority to implement these initiatives. Mr. Panzer requested that from a board perspective, what the expectation of a deliverable or process would be? Mr. Stephens commented that from his perspective, he thought that the first step that was critically important, was this study. So that we could try to get a handle on what are all the projects that need to be done and then we can figure out which projects can be part of development plans that might be submitted to Horsham Township, or even Warminster or Warrington depending on where they are located, if they are along County Line Road, or even beyond. But I thought the first step just in identifying the needs, was this study. Once the study is completed, we can have that dialogue about what projects, if any, we want to pursue or what projects we want to recommend others pursue, whether its public or private entities. Mr. Panzer indicated he agreed 100 percent and acknowledged at a minimum, we would have compiled data

and potentially recommendations for those who wish to review and use it. It will be available. To Ms. Eberle's other point that we have the authority to implement certain things, that's the piece that gets a little muddied for me, and I expect it would require considerable discussion of effectiveness and value of the global, multiple steps. Mr. Frary commented that the example he would give is the 611 study that was done in 2015. The result of that study was the Horsham and Limekiln intersection improvement as well as the Blair Mill Road widening project. It is the beginning of a planning document that then looked at funding opportunities. If the state can't pay for it, what grants are available and how that works. Whether this board or the township or someone else, that raises the funding question and at least they have the information to make some decisions. Mr. Stephens remarked that the conversation about the new gate for the Biddle Air Guard Station. Is the gate going to be placed opposite Warrington Crossing or at Titus Avenue? I know the township has looked in the past whether there should be a left-hand turn lane at Titus Avenue going eastbound on County Line. Should there be a light at Titus? If that gate were to be at Titus, then the military would pay for the light to be at Titus. Some of these are outside of our control. But at least to have a thirty-thousand-foot perspective on all the intersections and what needs to be done, then the next step is trying to figure out how do we get them done. How can we get them completed in the most efficient way possible, working with all our the partners that we have. Whether its Warminster, Warrington, Horsham, private developers, the state, the federal government, or even county government. Mr. Frary remarked that the widening of County Line Road will provide the turn lane at Titus Avenue, though not the signal. The placement of the gate there would certainly warrant a light at that intersection. He noted you don't want to add too many signals on County Line Road that close together, but a light would be important for access to the base. He questioned who makes the decision regarding the light placement, the township or the Air Guard, or whether we have any input? Mr. Gildea-Walker confirmed that both the township and the HLRA had provided letters to the Air Guard regarding their preferred location of the gate at Titus Avenue. Mr. Stephens asked if there were any other questions. As there were none, he thanked Mr. Frary for his attendance and presentation.

Mr. Stephens confirmed the next agenda item related to the authorization of staff to engage a marketing consultant, and invited Mr. Burns' remarks. Mr. Burns referred the board members to items in the board package including a proposal for services and a memo recapping the approval in April of the plan for addressing MIRIA social media and communications efforts. He further commented that over sixty days our social media vendor has provided adequate content, but it was clear that those efforts were not as strategic as might be required. Mr. Burns confirmed that interviewing communications firms was a learning experience and in the initial round the costs based on the proposals received were substantial, and a more cost-effective plan was devised and recommend to and approved by the board. In recent weeks, Mr. Stephens referred a group, beMarketing to MIRIA staff and Mr. Burns had a zoom meeting and a follow-up in person meeting. He thought the firm was "right-sized" for the authorities needs and called the Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board and received very positive vendor references, confirming excellent work at an economical price. Regarding the beMarketing proposal, in addition to social

media management, they would also manage MIRIA's website and provide some strategic consulting monthly. The monthly retainer would be \$1,000 per month and the firm would also be available for side project assistance, to be billed on an hourly basis. Mr. Burns made the comparison that the approval of April provided a cost for the balance of 2021 at about \$4,000 and this change would bump that to about \$6,000. He also noted in April it was discussed two mailers at \$15,000 and that amount is still contemplated, and beMarketig may add some assistance in producing that product which he estimated at \$1,500. per issue. He noted that when looking at those dollars in comparison to our total budget, that he deems them a reasonable choice and that a change of direction is warranted. He commented that he and Chair Stephens have talked about trying to have a more cohesive message. While staff has tried to do that in an economical manner, leaning on township assets was not fully possible as they are stretched on covering township initiatives and that his time has been stretched managing 2 MIRIA cycles. Mr. Stephens asked if there were any questions, and there were none. He noted the other businesses the company works with including Chickie & Pete's, Parx Casinos, AMS Cardiology, Bachman, and that they were household names. Mr. Stephens asked for a motion. Mr. Whiteside made a motion to authorize staff regarding engaging beMarketing as a communications/public relations vendor to manage and administer MIRIA's communication and messaging efforts. Mr. Panzer seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stephens asked if anyone had any additional business? There was none.

Mr. Stephens reminded all that the next MIRIA board meeting was to be held on Friday, July 2nd, 2021 at 9:00 am at the Horsham Township Municipal Building.

With no other business, Mr. Stephens adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:47 am.

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Thomas Panzer, Secretary