

**Military Installation Remediation and
Infrastructure Authority (“MIRIA”)
Board Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2021**

In attendance:

BOARD:

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

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 9:00 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 March 8, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Nesbitt motioned to approve the minutes of the March 8th 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 since our last board meeting, that staff on March 12th had submitted the Qualified Authority Amendment to the Department of Revenue. The amendment proposed adding 7 additional parcels to the MIRIA Zone Designated parcels, which are next expected short-term to boost available funding, but all 7 are potential redevelopment projects that may provide additional funding in the coming years. He noted specifically the BB&T Bank branch at County Line Road and Easton Road which was just breaking ground on a redevelopment. Mr. Burns also confirmed that the MIRIA’s audit firm Maillie LLP had been in and field work for the 2020 audit was completed on March 16th. Additionally, the engagement agreement for Michael Baker for the road network and intersection study was executed on March 26th and work on the project is underway. He confirmed a market opportunity study related to open space and recreational fields would be under discussion today. Regarding the potential acquisition of two blighted properties discussed at the last board meeting, an agreement of sale was executed on March 18th for the property at 986 Easton Road, the former Grandma’s Grotto property. A phase 1 on the property was ordered on March 19th, title insurance was also ordered, and MIRIA was in possession of a commercial broker prepared market valuation on the property which valued the property in the range of

\$625,000 - \$675,000. Regarding the 2nd blighted property potential acquisition at 368 Easton Road, an agreement of sale was executed on March 23rd. a Phase 1 ordered on March 25th, title insurance was also ordered, and in our file was a commercial broker prepared market valuation which valued the property at \$340,000.

Mr. Burns confirmed that he and our solicitor Mary Eberle have had extensive conversations with local water providers over the last month and one half. It appears that this year Upper Southampton Municipal Authority may submit a grant application and MIRIA staff is aware that Lower Gwynedd and Ambler were discussing a potential grant submission, and there is a zoom meeting on Monday with them to learn more about their project.

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. Ms. Conner-Hallston motioned for approval of the list of checks for MIRIA operational expenses in the amount of \$10,016.33. Mr. Panzer seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stephens asked for the will of the board regarding the approval of the PLGIT supplemental list of checks. Mr. DeRosa motioned to approve the PLGIT supplemental list of checks to be paid in the amount of \$2,287.72. Mr. Whiteside seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stephens noted under additional business was to consider the engagement of communications/public relations vendor to manage the MIRIA's social media efforts. Mr. Stephens noted that communications have been discussed for several months regarding overall communications with our community, with local water providers, and to engage and look for the business community support of the program and to provide transparency for the operation of MIRIA. Mr. Stephens invited Mr. Burns' comments on the subject. Mr. Burns confirmed that he went out to four firms. That this process required him to more fully develop a communications plan for MIRIA. He expects to be able to lean a little on the township and to work with their communications clerk with some of these efforts. Mr. Burns made note of the new township newsletter that had recently been mailed and also to the business attraction brochure that he created for Horsham Township, with the help of Fran Cymbala of Communications Services and Support, who he has recommended to help us with our social media presence. That firm has also provided us an ala carte menu of various support functions and pricing. Mr. Burns confirmed he'd be further evaluating what we can do in-house, and what ala carte services should be farmed out, with the hopes of providing at the next board meeting a proposed amended budget that would include the additional communications related costs. Mr. Nesbitt noted that the approach recommended seemed like a short-term solution and inquired if Mr. Burns had any thoughts regarding a long-term plan regarding communications. Mr. Burns acknowledged that he felt that MIRIA's communications with this approach could well be handled for the next two years, and that he remained open to reviewing options of sharing an employee with the township or hiring

a MIRIA employee to assist in these efforts. Mr. Burns acknowledged that while we had a very strong first year of MIRIA funding, that this year as a result of some changes in the employers in the MIRIA Zone and the impacts of COVID, that funding in this year is expected to be substantially impacted and much reduced from initial years' results. Mr. Nesbitt asked if long-term it may make more sense to hire a social media coordinator for MIRIA who could also help with other communication functions? Mr. Burns confirmed that long-term that may be beneficial, though he is very comfortable with the outside firm and is open to evaluating the merits of both on a regular basis. Mr. Panzer asked what the perceived financial commitment was that we are discussing? Mr. Burns confirmed that management of the social media was \$300 per month and would be a total of \$2,100 for the 7 months representing the balance of the year. For 2 mailers of 8-12 pages each, which would be designed in-house, the cost of print and mailing to more than 12,000 Horsham residents and businesses would be about \$15,000. Mr. Panzer indicated that in review of the proposals provided in the board package, that some of these proposals were as high as \$240,000 for services. Mr. Burns acknowledged that he was very specific in the zoom meeting as to a scope of work and that a full review of SWOT analysis and charrettes as proposed by some, seemed over-kill for the messaging of the MIRIA authority. Mr. Nesbitt motioned to approve authorizing staff to engage and enter into an agreement with Communication Services and Support for administration and management of the MIRIA social media efforts with the fee for those services not to exceed \$300.00 per month. Mr. Whiteside seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stephens asked for the will of the board regarding the next agenda item seeking approval to authorize staff to engage and enter into an agreement with Sports Facilities Advisory for a market opportunity analysis and study of the open space and sports fields in Horsham Township. Mr. Stephens elaborated that that the genesis of this goes back several years. The Greater Valley Forge Tourism Board several years ago approached several communities including Horsham, with an interest to driving economic development in the county, in the region, and in particular to Horsham by bringing a youth sports complex here of some sort. Part of our mission is to deal with economic development of the Willow Grove Naval Station, which obviously is a sizeable piece of land. There are also many, other large parcels around the base property. The idea here is to engage this entity who does this all day, every day, to do a study to see whether it's feasible to have some type of youth sports complex on the base or near the base to drive economic development of the base. Many of the proposed features on the base itself, like a conference center, hotels restaurants, things like that, are all the types of amenities that typically are the economic development beneficiaries of these sort of youth sports complexes as they are developed around the country. This company in Florida, this is their niche and this is what they do. Mr. Stephens questioned if Mr. Burns had anything to add? Mr. Burns confirmed that he had seen their work before and had reviewed the study they prepared for the Greater Valley Forge Tourism Board. He also reviewed other materials they had prepared as they were originally involved with the Spooky Nook sports complex on the front-end. The company has the capabilities to partner long-term, though that's not what we are talking about today. The

company knows how to manage sport complexes and has expertise is building these facilities as well. This is just the first step, a market feasibility study. They'll look at Horsham and the surrounding region and help us define the type, size and scope of these types of complexes. Do local clubs have use during the week and regional tournaments attract travel sports on the weekend. Mr. Burns confirmed he was looking forward to seeing their work and what they think of Horsham for this type of product. Mr. Whiteside motioned to approve authorizing staff to engage and enter into an agreement with Sports Facilities Advisory, and or Sports Facilities Companies to conduct a market analysis and study of the open space and sports fields in Horsham Township. The fee for said study not to exceed \$21,500 plus reimbursable travel expenses not to exceed \$3,010. Mr. Nesbitt seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Stephens indicated the next agenda item was the MIRIA Municipal and Municipal Authority Grant Guidelines and asked Mr. Burns for his comment. Mr. Burns confirmed that at this time last year, the board approved the original guidelines. After a year of learning the program a little bit better, understanding the flexibilities of the program, and better understanding over time of PA 2019 Act 101, staff believed that modifications to the guidelines were required. Over the last 45 days Mr. Burns and Ms. Eberle reviewed our original guidelines and identified areas that needed to be tweaked and are looking the board approval of these revised guidelines. He noted that additionally, staff would be revising the grant application so that it might be consistent with the revised guidelines. Mr. Nesbitt inquired if the deadline for this new round of grants was May 15th. Mr. Burns confirmed that that was the case, and allows MIRIA to certify local effort to the Department of Revenue by June 1st. He confirmed that at the May meeting, a resolution authorizing staff to certify local effort funds would be on the agenda. Mr. Panzer noted that the changes mainly to bring us up to date and continue efforts. He asked if there were any material changes related to the way we are applying for or spending MIRIA moneys. Ms. Eberle interjected that most of the changes were made to safeguard the applications of the different providers. One of the things, probably the biggest change we made is, we were a little bit concerned about what happened if somebody put their local effort in and then withdrew their application. How could we make sure they get their local effort back and how could we protect everybody else's applications since awards have to be made in proportion to each other. If someone gets zero, we did not want a situation to exist where everybody had to get zero because one applicant got zero. So, we tinkered with the language in that regard. Mr. Nesbitt motioned to approve the MIRIA Municipal and Municipal Authority Guidelines as revised. Mr. DeRosa seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Stephens confirmed the next item was to consider authorizing staff to submit a certification and accounting of the use of funds to the Department of Revenue for amounts made available to MIRIA for fiscal year 2020. He noted that this was statutory requirement that we need to report back to the Department of Revenue on how funds were expended. He asked Mr. Burns if he wished to comment, and he felt the action was self-explanatory. Mr. Whiteside moved to approve authorizing MIRIA staff to submit a certification and accounting of the use of funds to the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue of the amounts made available to MIRIA in fiscal year

2020 from the Military Installation Remediation Program, with the submission to be made on or before April 15, 2021. Ms. Conner-Hallston seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stephens noted the next item sought the approval to authorize staff to engage Indian Valley Appraisal to provide a valuation on a property that was identified and discussed at the MIRIA board Executive Session on December 18, 2020, and asked Mr. Burns to comment. Mr. Burns reminded the board that he'd referred to this property as blighted property #1, which was on the top of our priority list for acquisition. Efforts were made to engage the owner but could not be brought to a favorable resolution. We are aware of more recent events that make it worth our while to get a real, full-blown appraisal on the property that in the future we may have the opportunity to either negotiate a purchase or rely on the appraisal in a condemnation. We wanted to have something that would hold up in court, that would be well-founded, and that's why we are talking about the appraisal fee discussed. Mr. Panzer commented that Indian Valley Appraisal has a strong reputation and the appraisal fee seemed to be in line. Mr. Burns commented that on the list of checks that there was a check for \$750 for ASP Realty Group. They provided a market evaluation for MIRIA on the properties at 986 Easton Road and 368 Easton Road for our file. They don't use the same methodology, they are not MAI certified, but they are highly knowledgeable about the commercial marketplace. Ms. Eberle noted that the property owner of blighted property #1 has a valuation in his head that is three times more than the valuation that we believe is appropriate or the assessed value on the county website using the common ratio. There's a bankruptcy involved and at some point, in time we may have to account for what we thought is just compensation. Mr. DeRosa motioned to approve authorizing staff to engage Indian Valley Appraisal Co. to provide a valuation and appraisal on a parcel identified as blighted property #1 and discussed at the December 18, 2020 Executive Session of the MIRIA board. The fee for said study not to exceed \$3,500. Mr. Nesbitt seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Stephens reminded all that the next MIRIA board meeting was to be held on Friday, May 7th, 2021 at 9:00 am at the Horsham Township Municipal Building.

With no other business, M. Stephens adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:17 am.

/s/

Thomas Panzer, Secretary