

**Ligonier Beach Park Development Committee
Public Meeting at the Ligonier Fort**

February 19, 2020

110 people signed in at the registration desk. A survey was given to each attendee. Note that the majority of the surveys were completed prior to the meeting and discussion of the property.

Larry Shew called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Committee Members Present were:

Larry Shew, Chairman
Scott Matson, Ligonier Township Supervisor
Dan Weimer, Ligonier Township Supervisor
Bob Gangewere, Ligonier Planning Commission
Shiela Grimm, Ligonier Planning Commission
Butch Bellas, Ligonier Borough Mayor
Julie Donovan, Ligonier Resident
Ben Faas, Ligonier Township Engineer
Terry Carcella, Ligonier Township Manager
Tracy Krowchak, Ligonier Township Staff
Keith Ashley, Ligonier Township Staff
Bethany Caldwell, Ligonier Township Staff

Committee Members Absent were:

Mickey Corb, Ligonier Planning Commission
Melissa Eller, Ligonier Resident
Mark Sorice, Ligonier Resident

Terry Carcella led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Larry Shew opened with comments about the property's history and the Township's goals. He clarified that the property was not purchased with tax dollars nor would tax dollars be used to refurbish/rebuild the property – that was and will be done with grant money. The Township will be responsible for operating & maintaining the property, but has no intention of getting involved in private business. Instead the Township is interested in private-public partnerships and the purpose of tonight's meeting is two-fold: to inform the public of the property's current conditions and collect comments on what should be done with the property. The Township will consider keeping the pool if a realistic plan including resources and capabilities are identified. Again, the Township's interests are:

1. Saving the historical significance of the property
2. Public use
3. Obtaining private funding for its development

Mr. Shew went over the agenda – there will be an engineer's report, an opportunity for the public to comment and a couple presentations. He asked everyone to be respectful of each other's ideas and opinions.

Ben Faas, the Township's Engineer gave a presentation on the condition of the property and its buildings that included both historical and recent photos. He showed drone footage of the 2018 flood event. Current estimate to rip out and rebuild the pool and all the buildings as is = \$8M. He summarized development challenges into 3 categories:

1. PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permits – the location is along Route 30
2. DEP Regulations
3. Floodplains / Floodways

Comments and Questions from the Public:

1. Ed Schmidt, Rector – suggested the youth / high school residents be consulted, as they will be responsible for the property in 5-10 years
2. Question for Mr. Faas – what elevation do we need to raise to? 2 ½ feet
So it's costly, but possible? Yes
3. Ralph Bennett, Ligonier resident commented it was a tremendous roadside attraction, especially when the trains were operating it brought people into town with their picnic baskets. Ligonier Beach has been a part of the town's history for almost half as long as this town has been in existence. The challenge is daunting, but a private franchise for profit - that rents the pools & buildings from the Township could be an economic boon. Asked to keep it a pool as it would not change the character of our town.

Mr. Shew clarified there is no plan to close or open the pool, this is just a meeting to get ideas. The decision will be made by the Supervisors.

4. Someone from the audience (did not state their name) asked if there was an estimate of the cost to open the pool? Mr. Faas stated their estimate is \$8M to rebuild the pool and buildings.
5. Patty Ostrosky, Ligonier resident commented it could be a recreational / educational site. Asked if stormwater / floodwater could be routed underground, suggested diking as a possible solution or build buildings with flooding in mind on the lower level and recreational / occupancy use on the second level. Suggested year round use and development in stages to take advantage of grant opportunities.

6. Warren Babish, Ligonier resident moved here 9 years ago from the city and offered an outsider's perspective – stated the pool is only used part of the year, why not focus on something with year round use – something for all ages, kids, veterans, seniors. A community center? Something to draw people...
7. Don Accorsi, Nick Gallo's nephew, his dad helped build the pool and he worked there – offered to share his knowledge about the site and answer any questions about the property / buildings.
8. Sharon Detar, Ligonier business owner has been involved with the Rec Board and the hiking / biking trail projects. She mentioned the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor and that the pool has been an important roadside attraction like Bedford's giant coffee pot or the Ship Hotel. She said our kids have to go to Derry or Latrobe to swim since the pool closed and that a pool is a community asset.
9. Scott Haines, Chamber of Commerce mentioned there are different ways to preserve history, suggested plans should be multi-faceted, multi-demographic and be long term with different revenue streams for success. Look at Laurel Mountain – it has opened and closed several times over the years. He appreciates the pro-active stance, as it is an eyesore on a major thoroughfare. Preservation can bring the community together.
10. Ann Woodall, Ligonier resident that lives near the Beach. The 2018 flood event did a lot of damage to her property. She observed a steady decline in pool attendance over the years – not sure why, was the price too high, other pools in the area, the weather?
11. Question about the Beach sewage – Mr. Faas stated it has public sewage
12. Question about the Beach's liquor license – Mr. Carcella stated the Township did not purchase the license.

Debbie Nicely gave a presentation on the pool that included a video clip of Rick Sebak's "Things that are still here" series that featured the property. Debbie did a lot of research on pool compliance / regulations, the business of operating & maintaining a pool, and networked with others that run pools. She offered to work with the Township on a plan to reopen the pool, utilizing a non-profit to administer and operate in a way that is self-sustaining (e.g. organizing events & fundraisers). She mentioned a grant program that can bring the pool into compliance with current safety regulations.

Melinda Clark gave a presentation on repurposing the pool into an aquatic landscape with a multi-purpose community center. She proposed a use that would generate revenue for the Township year round as well as grow local jobs. Her ideas included a green "LEED" building, modern / cutting edge architect, something innovative that would draw / attract people and boost our tourism economy.

Mr. Shew closed the meeting with a reminder that there would be another community meeting on Wednesday, March 25 at 7 PM. He said the Township is open to all ideas and asked that anyone else wanting to give a presentation at the next meeting, get in touch with Mr. Carcella at the Township.