

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING

McDade Administration Building
640 South Broad Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068

June 5, 2018

PRESENT:

Leslie R. Floyd
Haig Kasabach, Chair
Alan Hershey, Vice Chair
Frank D’Amico
Tricia Fagan (arrived late)
Jennifer Rogers

REPRESENTATION:

County Executive
Assunpink Rep .
Piedmont Rep.
Ag. Board Rep.
Cultural Rep.
Park Commission

ABSENT:

Michael Shine
Wendy Mager

Planning Board
Millstone Rep.

NON-VOTING:

Emily Blackman
Lisa Fritzinger

Secretary
Assistant Planning Director

Chairman Kasabach called the June 5th, 2018 meeting of the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board to order at 5:00 PM.

I. STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Ms. Blackman announced that pursuant to the Sunshine Law, notice of this meeting was mailed to the Trenton Times and the Trentonian, and was posted in the County Clerk’s Office and the County Administration Building.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hershey made a motion to approve the April 3, 2018 minutes. Mr. D’Amico seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved. Ms. Rogers abstained because she was not present at the April meeting.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Rails-to-Trails, Hamilton/Robbinsville

Ms. Floyd reported that the negotiations with Conrail continue. We still expect a positive outcome and hope to have news to share at the next meeting.

4/3/18 Rails to Trails

Ms. Blackman and Ms. Floyd reported that the negotiation with Conrail is ongoing. There are no updates that can be publically shared as yet, but there has been some positive progress.

10/10/17 Rails to Trails

Ms. Fritzinger reported that the County is still negotiating about the acquisition cost. Conrail is in the process of contacting landowners adjacent to the corridor to see if any want to purchase land. Conrail does not want to donate too much of the value of the corridor because of the precedent it might set for its other corridors around the country.

8/8/2017 Rails to Trails

Ms. Fritzing reported that negotiations are continuing. The issue is on the price. The donation from Conrail is lower than we were lead to believe. We still expect to get the property well below appraised value. Even once we have an agreed price, the County would not enter into an agreement until the Environmental Assessment is completed.

6/6/2017 Rails to Trails

Mrs. Fritzing reported that negotiations are still ongoing with Conrail.

2/7/2017 Rails to Trails

Ms. Fritzing reported that Hamilton Township has passed a resolution in support of taking ownership of the Hamilton section. With both Townships in support of the project the county has meet with Conrail and has begun negotiations with the possibility of a significant donation. The County anticipates a response for Conrail in 6-8 weeks.

12/6/2016 Rails to Trails

Ms. Floyd reported that she has reached out to Hamilton to follow up on the meeting that was held. She felt that Hamilton received the project favorably.

10/4/2016 Rails to Trails

Ms. Fritzing reported that a four page color Vision Plan has been created by Rails to Trails staff. It will be used for meeting with Hamilton Township. Informal discussions with Township staff about the projects, indicates that a meeting with the Mayor will be possible. If the Mayor is supportive we will continue negotiations with Conrail.

8/2/2016 Rails to Trails

Ms. Fritzing reported that the project is moving along nicely. The County had a meeting last week with Rails to Trails people and D&R Greenway. Appraisals have been completed and have been giving to CONRAIL. CONRAIL requests that the County make an offer on the amount CONRAIL will contribute. The County is working on putting together information on the project to provide Hamilton due to the importance of having Hamilton on board with this project. Ms. Fritzing notified the board that the parcel of land the County is purchasing is owned by CONRAIL.

B. Herrontown Woods Transfer

Ms. Floyd reported that the transfer of the Herrontown Preserve from the County to Princeton is almost complete.

4/3/18 Herrontown Woods Transfer

Ms. Floyd reported that the Powell property closed and both Powell lots will be managed by D&R Greenway Land Trust. The transfer of the Herrontown Woods property to Princeton is in process and should be completed soon. The County will continue to own the two Powell lots.

10/10/2017 Powell Property/Herrontown Transfer

Ms. Fritzing reported that we should be able to close soon on the second Powell lot. There is a berm that needs to be removed that required a wetlands permit. The contactors have obtained the permit and are in the process of the removing the berm and some debris now. Ms. Floyd updated the committee on the transfer of Herrontown Woods from the County to Princeton. Both Powell lots will be transferred to Princeton as well – the County is working through the Green Acres property transfer process.

2/7/2017 Powell Property

Ms. Fritzing reported that lot 11 is still undergoing the cleanup of the dump site.

12/6/2016 Powell Property, Princeton

Mrs. Fritzing reported that lot 8 of the property has been acquired. Lot 11 still needs to be acquired after the household dump site has been resolved. The wetlands permit for that work has been submitted to DEP.

2/2/2016 Powell Property, Princeton

Ms. Fritzing reported that the property is adjacent to Herrontown Woods. The County is working with D&R Greenway on this project. The agreement currently on the table is for the County to buy Lots 8 and 11, Lot 9 has a house that the property owners will sell separately. County will purchase the property and will provide a grant to D&R Greenway. D&R Greenway will manage the property and Mercer County will own it eventually hoping to transfer ownership to Princeton.

The only issue is the County will have to buy lot 8 first then lot 11, which has some environmental issues. However, the environmental issues involve household dumping which, the consultant involved isn't worried about. Lot 11 is also considered wetlands which require getting a wetlands permit. The County will close on Lot 8 then move forward with Lot 11 after environmental issue is resolved. The County will conduct the environmental work on both properties while the property owners will cover cost of the work. If the owners do not clean up the issues the County can rescind the deal.

C. Crosswicks Greenway (review of maps)

(Ms. Fagan arrived)

Ms. Fritzing reported that the County is currently in contract negotiations with AT&T for the AT&T property that would add to the Crosswicks Greenway. Ms. Fritzing then reviewed maps of the Crosswicks Greenway trail plan for the Board's information. Mr. D'Amico brought up the importance of farmers being able to hunt stream corridors on their properties for deer management. In the Crosswicks Greenway, most of the stream corridors have been subdivided from the farms to the north to provide land for the future trail. It would be ideal if the County could have a deer hunting program for these areas.

4/3/18 Crosswicks Greenway

Ms. Blackman and Ms. Floyd reported that the County is in the process of buying a small property from AT&T that will add to the Crosswicks Greenway to improve potential trail connections. The Board expressed interest in re-visiting the maps of the Greenway and trail plan at the next meeting.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Grant Applications

a. Sheft Associates, Lawrence Township application

Ms. Blackman presented the Sheft Associates application for the Board's consideration. Lawrence Township applied for 40% of Certified Fair Market Value (CFMV) to preserve the ~5.9 acre Sheft Associates property at 2420 Brunswick Pike, Block 2101, Lot 39, in fee. The Township also requested an additional 10% of CFMV in County Direct Funding. The Township has one appraisal that came in at \$2,800,000. They plan to also use Green Acres funding and will be getting a second appraisal and a Green Acres Certified Value. The property is adjacent to the Colonial Lanes bowling alley and Colonial Lake Park, preserved land owned by the Township. Sheft Associates, who also own Colonial Lanes, planned to build a hotel on the property (it is commercially zoned). The Township wants to preserve the land to complete the missing link in the existing trail around the Lake. The land also has environmental significance, including mature forest, freshwater wetlands and habitat for wildlife species of concern. Blue heron and bald eagles have been observed on the property. In addition, the land's preservation will provide water quality protection for Shabakunk Creek and Colonial Lake. It was noted that the Township has not asked for County Open Space Funds in 10 years and that this property's acquisition will use most of their local open space fund. Ms. Rogers made a motion to approve the application for 40% of CFMV with a recommendation that the County provide the additional 10% in Direct Funds. Mr. Hershey seconded the motion. The application and recommendation for 10% additional County Direct Funding was unanimously approved.

b. Project Updates

i. Blalock Property

Ms. Blackman updated the Board on the status of the Blalock project. NJCF is going ahead with the house subdivision as planned and so will acquire the open space portion of the property separately from the house. Therefore they will not need to come back to the Board for additional approvals.

ii. Princeton Battlefield addition

Ms. Blackman provided an update to the Board that the Princeton Battlefield addition property closed recently and is now preserved.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE: None

VII. CLOSED SESSION (if necessary): None

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kasabach made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Floyd seconded the motion. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 5:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Blackman
Secretary