

**DRAFT**

**OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING**

McDade Administration Building  
Planning Department (4<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
640 South Broad Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068  
*\*\*Meeting via Zoom online\*\**

**April 4, 2023**

**PRESENT:**

Leslie R. Floyd  
Haig Kasabach, Chair  
Alan Hershey, Vice Chair  
Michael Shine  
Anthony Cucchi

**REPRESENTATION:**

County Executive  
Assunpink Rep.  
Piedmont Rep.  
Planning Board Rep.  
Park Commission Rep.

**ABSENT:**

**NON-VOTING:**

**PUBLIC:**

Mr. Kasabach called the April 4, 2023 meeting of the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board to order at 5:00 p.m.

**I. STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE**

Ms. Floyd announced that pursuant to the Sunshine Law, notice of this meeting was mailed to the Trenton Times and was posted on the County Planning Department's website, including a public zoom meeting link and instructions.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Kasabach requested correction to December 6, 2022 minutes; Ms. Fagan was absent. Ms. Mager was in attendance at the December meeting.  
Ms. Mager made a motion to approve the December 6, 2022 minutes as corrected. Mr. Hershey seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT: None**

**IV. OLD BUSINESS: None**

**V. NEW BUSINESS:**

Mr. Kasabach stated that the reorganization new business for the day. Ms. Floyd took over stating Mr. Kasabach could not lead since he was not Chair at this time. Motions called for Chair or the slate. Mr. Shine made a motion for the slate, which was seconded by Ms. Mager to keep the slate as it currently is. Motion unanimously passed.

Ms. Floyd requested that the dates for the 2023 calendar year for Open Space Meetings that she had provided be put up for approval. Mr. Kasabach called for a motion. Motion called by Mr. Hershey, seconded by Mr. Shine. Motion unanimously approved.

## VI. DISCUSSION:

### A. Project Updates

#### 1. Open Space: Ms. Floyd reported the following:

##### a) County Open Space

1. The County is in preliminary discussions with Penn East for land on Blackwell Road in Hopewell, land abuts Mercer Meadows. Discussions over an agreement of sale. No agreement has been reached as of yet.

#### 2. Farmland:

b) Later this month, the County should close on the 400 acre Kerr Farm, on Bear Tavern Road in Hopewell. Will be preserved as four, 100 acre farms per the family. It is the largest remaining farmland preservation parcel left in the county. The deal has taken more than a decade to be accomplished.

#### 3. Park Development project updates: Mr. Cucchi reported the following projects are still in the design and permitting phase:

a) Moores Station quarry – Trap Rock is still in the process of decommissioning quarry operations. They removed a transformer with the assistance of JCP&L this week. The 25 year rights to the quarry end at the end of April, and will transfer back to the County for management. This may take a bit longer for the inspection of the property. Trap Rock may need a short extension to address any issues that arise in inspections. In discussion with the County Executive's office for a potential event to hand over the ownership with press, etc.

b) Dam Site 21 – DEP permit issued to move forward with lake dredging. Now finalizing bid specification and will be going out to bid in the month ahead to hire a dredging contractor, and gain final permitting approval. Also in the process of finalizing trail design on the property. Work is awaiting review and approval from the Office of Dam Safety which approves any changes or alterations to the location. Mr. Kasabach asked if there were still elevated trails in the plan, Ms. Floyd stated it was the Canopy Walk. Mr. Cucchi states that is still part of the plan, but approval from the Dam Safety Committee at DEP and NRCS would need to be approved to move forward. If there is no adverse impact on the dam, DEP permitting can move forward for the elevated structure, which would also provide ADA access to the top of the dam.

c) Trenton Wharf Property – NJDOT is in the process of constructing a flood wall that will precede park improvements. Parks has finalized designs and permit modification applications that need to be approved by the State Historic Preservation Office to allow park improvements to be included in the final construction of the project. DOT is reviewing the permit applications. Permits should be cleared in the next three months.

Ms. Mager asked if the County, when dealing with projects that requires multiple permit applications, etc., has worked with the Office of Permitting and Project Navigation – DEP to coordinate the efforts? Mr. Cucchi replied he wished they had initiated that process earlier. He states they reached out to them later into the process, but states that they have been helpful, specifically David Pepe.

#### 4. Stewardship - Mr. Cucchi reported the following:

- a. Just wrapped up community-based deer management in. Pilot program that allowed for additional deer harvesting that goes beyond the traditional deer hunting season. Were able to harvest almost as many deer as the traditional deer management program. Would like to continue next year with the program.
- b. Successful prescribed burns at Mercer Meadows for the 4<sup>th</sup> year. State of NJ Forest Fire Service were unable to schedule an additional planned burn at Baldpate Mountain. Will need to wait until next winter.
- c. Invasive species management.
- d. Roebing Park Living Shoreline project to preserve archeologically significant portions of property - permitting has been difficult. Trying to control erosion naturally along the edge of the creek that drains the marsh. Park Commission has been dealing with the Army Corp of Engineers, DEP and SHPO, who are making design changes. Parks is finalizing plans to meet with everyone's approval. Parks will be submitting revised permits with the plans in the next month.
- e. Alan Hershey states he and the trail volunteers he works with have been having trouble finding a project for this year. They realize there are some trails on Baldpate Mountain that need some repairs. They would not be using chainsaws. Mr. Cucchi suggested that he reach out to Mike Long from Parks to coordinate trail work as there are other groups that will also be doing trail improvement work.

**B. 2023 Tax Levy**

Ms. Floyd stated she circulated a resolution for the tax levy and the policy used over the last few years – she is recommending that the Open Space Board recommend to the administration to keep both items the same for 2023. Ms. Mager made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Hershey. Both items unanimously approved.

Mr. Hershey asked about the project cap, and if any projects in the last couple years had hit the 1.6 million dollar limit. Ms. Floyd stated one of the Princeton Ridge projects had. Ms. Mager stated that they County put in direct county funding to help bring the project to completion. Ms. Floyd stated there were grants as large as that and as low as \$18,000, and both cases, locally important land was preserved.

**VII. CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**VIII. CLOSED SESSION** (if necessary): None

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**Short discussion re: staffing in the Planning Department.** The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Leslie R. Floyd* (crt)

**Leslie R. Floyd, Acting Secretary**