

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING

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

December 5, 2023

VOTING MEMBERS:

(Present)

Leslie R. Floyd, County Executive Representative
Haig Kasabach, Chair, Assunpink Representative
Alan Hershey, Vice Chair, Piedmont Representative
Anthony Cucchi, Park Commission Representative
Wendy Mager, Millstone Representative
Emily Blackman, Mercer CADB Representative

(Absent)

Michael Shine, Planning Board Representative

NON-VOTING:

Cindy Taylor, Mercer County Staff

PUBLIC:

Rick Lear, D&R Greenway Land Trust

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Kasabach called the December 5, 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. Hershey made a motion to approve the June 6, 2023 minutes. Ms. Mager seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

IV. OLD BUSINESS: None

V. NEW BUSINESS:

Princeton Municipality grant application for fee acquisition of Lanwin I property, Herrontown Road, Princeton Municipality (Block 1001 Lots 1, 2, & 14). Certified Market Value (CMV) of \$6,495,000. Princeton has requested the maximum grant funding of \$1,600,000 and an additional \$500,000 in direct funding for a total of \$2,100,000 (32% of CMV). Princeton Municipality will own and manage the property for conservation and passive recreation. Mr. Hershey moved for approval, seconded by Mr. Kasabach. Motion to pass approved unanimously, with Ms. Mager abstaining.

D&R Greenway grant application for a conservation easement and public access easement on Carcagno, 289 Pennington-Harbourton Road, Hopewell Township (Block 50 Lot 6 & 6Q). Averaged Appraised Value (AAV) of \$711,070. D&R Greenway has requested \$284,428 in grant funds (40% of AAV). Mr. Hershey acknowledged building a trail on the 12-acre public access area may be difficult given the wet terrain, but such a trail can connect to existing trails on the Cifelli property to the west and will satisfy the public access required for Green Acres funding. A 15-foot wide trail easement on the east side creates the opportunity to connect to township-preserved open space. Mr. Cucchi recognized that public access is not a requirement for County funding, and that the board should assess the project based on its overall conservation values. Ms. Mager moved for approval, seconded by Ms. Blackman. Motion to pass approved unanimously.

The board further discussed strategies to influence Green Acres to adjust the scope and interpretation of the public access requirement to include public access values (ie. buffers and scenic vistas), rather than solely access easements and trails.

VI. DISCUSSION:

Project Updates

Ms. Floyd provided an update on the Conrail “Rails to Trails” project, stating that the project is currently halted as there is not a willing seller. Hamilton and Robbinsville remain interested and engaged.

Ms. Floyd also provided updates to the farmland program:

Kerr Farm (400 acres on the east and west of Bear Tavern Road) is slated to be preserved as four farms via agricultural easements by the end of the year.

The County recently auctioned two farms in Hopewell, the Wert Farm on Mine Road and Rt. 31, and the Chowdhury Farm on Pennington Titusville Road. Both will go back into private ownership around the end of January, subject to agricultural easements.

1. Park Development Project Updates: Mr. Cucchi reported the following:

- a. Moores Station Quarry – Official handoff from Trap Rock to the County took place in late September. Staff are studying the pace at which the quarry pit refills with water, to better understand where it will find an equilibrium depth. Continuing to maintain internal roadway for emergency access. Planning to begin design and permitting for public access in the new year.
- b. Dam Site 21 – County awarded a contract for dredging the lake. Contractors secured a lake lowering permit and the lake level has been lowered to dry the lakebed in preparation for dredging. Dredging to begin early next year. For trails, staff are waiting for a few signatures from easement holders and then staff can formally submit permits to DEP for constructing a trail network.
- c. Trenton Wharf Project – Received a grant agreement from HUD, so the County now has the ability to commit funds to the project. However, State DOT needs to redesign the flood wall prior to moving forward with park improvements. This may delay park improvements for another year.
- d. Lawrence Hopewell Trail (LHT) – Went out to bid for upgrades and design improvements to Lawrence Hopewell Trail at Rosedale Lake and Old Mill Road. This area suffered from erosion caused by heavy rains.

2. Stewardship - Mr. Cucchi reported the following:

- a. Submitted an application to the State for a Community Based Deer Management permit. If the permit is awarded, this will expand deer management to golf courses and portions of Roebling Park.
- b. Looking to renew a five-year permit for phragmites management at Roebling Park.
- c. Wrapping up Spring Lake parking lot and green infrastructure project. Newly installed rain gardens will help manage stormwater and improve water quality of the lake.

Mr. Hershey asked about County funding for Municipalities and nonprofit organizations for reforestation projects. Ms. Floyd stated there are currently no grant programs designed for this. The possibility of new grant programs will be discussed with the incoming administration.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE: None

VIII. CLOSED SESSION (if necessary): None

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 5:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Taylor

Cindy Taylor, Acting Secretary