

BYRAM TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES, JANUARY 22, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. Present were Chair Sheila Hall, Michelle Rehse, Lisa Shimamoto, Daven Baez, Dawn Boyer, Adam Rosenberg, Caryn Segal, Rowena McNulty, and Secretary Margaret McGarrity. Also present was Mayor Skip Danielson and representatives from the Hopatcong and Stanhope Environmental Commissions, including Mary Takacs, Bernice Gleason, and Patrick Gleason (Hopatcong) and Janice Hunts and Barbara Utz (Stanhope).

Tri-town Trail Discussion

The first part of the meeting was a discussion about possible trail links among the three towns and a possible grant application to fund such a project. Aerial maps and a trail guide of Stanhope, as well as a Highlands Trail map showing the juncture of the three towns, helped visualize how trails might join near the old Cutoff bridge and make connections with Lenape Valley Regional High School, the Sussex County branch library, and the Highlands Trail. Byram's Mansfield Bike Trail already is in place, ending at the Cutoff bridge.

Stanhope's maps and trail guide are based on aerial photos and were produced with help from Dave Kunz at the Sussex County GIS Office. The aerial photo helps describe the trail routes by showing whether they go through developed or natural areas and by providing accurate orientation features. However, Janice reports that many residents find it difficult to locate themselves on the aerial photo, because there is so much information. Byram's Trail Guide is based on an abstract, simplified map, with major roads, lakes/streams, and neighborhoods shown but none of the aerial photographic detail. Perhaps the benefits of both trail guides could be merged, with all trails GPS-located; and all three towns could publish similar guides, showing where the 3 trail systems link.

Adam has been GPSing Byram's trails and will ask Dave Kunz if his information is usable on our trail map. Mr. Kunz will give a GIS demonstration at Stanhope on Friday, 1/31 and Adam will try to attend.

Janice and Barbara are both on the Stanhope Shade Tree Commission and are working on a Community Forestry Plan grant and an Open Space/Recreation Plan, for which they want to explore links with Byram/Hopatcong and also with Mt. Olive, Netcong, and the Morris Canal Greenway (Byram also connects with Mt. Olive and the Morris Canal Greenway). Skip suggested looking into an historic trail including the submerged Morris Canal tow path across Lake Musconetcong.

We should include Cliff Lundin in future meetings, as he is very knowledgeable about trails and open space in Hopatcong and about possible funding sources. Hopatcong buying a large open space parcel for trail connections. Also Don Drake from the Stanhope EC is very knowledgeable—works for County engineering.

There was discussion of a joint grant application for trail connections and trail guides; partnerships are a very positive element in a grant application. NY-NJ Trail Conference would also be a partner. The municipal trail connections plus the new Highlands Trail route would make a very strong application.

Town Councils/Committees would have to support such an application—possibly an obstacle, especially if a cash match is required?

Possible funding sources were discussed, including ANJEC Smart Growth grants (deadline is March 31) and federal Recreational Trails grants (distributed through NJDEP, with a deadline in December 2009 and grant awards only in fall of 2010), and TransOptions (Caryn and Margaret got a small grant for bike racks). Margaret will show our applications to Janice.

Other issues include types of trail surfacing, NJDEP permits for crossing wetlands (Margaret described Byram's permitting process for the Jefferson-Glenn Bike Trail and repairs to Sussex Branch Trail—it's not forbidding), trail maintenance (volunteers or DPW's?), ATV problems. Sources of information and assistance include the Morris County Park Commission, which holds workshop on trail construction; Randolph Township, which has an extensive trail system with many different uses and types of surfacing; a NYNJ Trail Conference trail maintainers workshop, which is being organized by the Byram EC, to be held at the restaurant SALT within the next month or two.

Next steps: Margaret will send around minutes and an attendance list from tonight's meeting. Sheila or Adam will contact Cliff Lundin and convene a smaller group to investigate a grant application—bring in Sussex County as another partner and a possible source of a grant cash match? The 3 towns will keep in touch by email.

If a 3-town ANJEC grant application is not to be submitted, the Byram EC decided to apply for another project, possibly a Lake Lackawanna Management Plan.

Minutes: The December minutes were accepted: motion by Michelle; second by Daven; unanimous.

Correspondence:

Musconetcong River Management Council: Margaret will find out if it is still meeting and tell Michelle, who will continue to attend.

Update of Trail Guide: About \$900 encumbered from 2008 budget for next year. Caryn can help us get better pricing, at no profit to herself, as she is in the printing business.

Gypsy moths in 2009: Sheila will write an article for the Township newsletter explaining the difference between gypsy moths and tent caterpillars. Infestations in 2009 are expected to be less severe; 3 small areas in Byram are scheduled for spraying.

NJDOT application to NJDEP for wetlands permits/waivers for Route 206 project: Skip reported that at a January 9 meeting in Trenton, Township representatives were told that stormwater management will improve, with new basins capturing more runoff, including some uncaptured runoff from the ShopRite Plaza.

League of Municipalities and WalMart: \$200,000 in grants; more information in “early 2009.”

Billboard ordinances: Margaret found old files showing Township Attorney Megan Ward’s opinion that Byram is already adequately protected against new billboards. Our Smart Growth ordinance prohibits billboards and lighted/digital billboards; proposals to reinstate billboards along the Catswamp project area of Route 206 would have to come to the Planning Board.

NRI update: The Highlands Initial Assessment report recommends \$2000 to update our NRI using Highlands resource mapping; also we could apply for an ANJEC grant. Skip recommended doing both. Just update maps or text too? Sheila suggested our update could consist of a CD with Highlands data and interactive mapping using GIS layers.

Business:

ANJEC grant application: Deadline is March 31. In addition to the 3-town trail project and Trail Guide update, the EC also discussed the Lake Lackawanna management plan, the Green Element for the Master Plan (see below), Phase II of the Vetter/East Brookwood park development, update of our NRI. The Land Conservancy of NJ suggested an update of our Open Space Plan.

No Net Loss list of tree planting sites: Sheila to check with Joe and Chris about what’s become of these EC recommendations. Community Forestry final draft Plan coming to Open Space Committee in April for review. NOTE: The EC is invited into this process.

Draft Green Building element for Master Plan: Margaret will email to all ECers the revised draft of this proposal, rewritten to be proposed to the Planning Board and Council as a Master Plan element rather than an ordinance. This is a joint EC/Architectural Review Committee proposal.

Two ARC members are very knowledgeable about Green Building and one of them is testing to receive LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

Andover Township EC’s detention basin/rain garden grant: Sheila will investigate.

Federal infrastructure Economic Recovery Program funding: Margaret and Adolf Steyh recommended the stormdrain retrofits at Lake Lackawanna. Skip asked if Adolf also listed the small stream that floods Little Paint Way.

PSE&G powerline update: Skip noted that there is a “gathering storm of opposition,” next to be voiced at a January 28 meeting in Montville—a coalition of towns and citizen groups. PSE&G placed an “advertorial” on the Star Ledger editorial page recently threatening blackouts if the new lines don’t go through.

The Byram Council wrote to the Highlands Council calling for them to take a strong position on this project and is also writing to the State BPU (as is the Planning Board), where PSE&G has now submitted its application for this project, rather than coming to each town as they had promised.

Next Tri-County Regional Forum: Margaret will get dates from the Foodshed Alliance for the Regional Forum and also from NY-NJ Trail Conference for the trail maintainers workshop and then she and Sheila will go to SALT to work out specific dates. All to occur within the next couple of months.

Soil importation ordinance: Sheila will re-read this draft ordinance to see if it cover the situation on Amity Road. Skip asked about these piles imported soil—have they been tested? That is the EC’s specific concern. This ordinance is expected to be on a February or March Planning Board agenda.

Quarry hydrogeology report: On January 22, Margaret emailed Jim Boyle at NJ Geological Survey to ask if he has reviewed this report by Tilcon’s consultants. She will recheck. The quarry relicensing hearing is coming up sometime in about March.

Windmill ordinance: Margaret will recheck with Chris about what has been done with this draft ordinance from the EC.

Natural Heritage Priority Sites in Byram: Margaret has request in to Rick Dutko at NJDEP for more information for our NRI update. She will recheck soon—609-984-0059.

Skip asked for information on the weed choking Lubbers Run around the Mansfield Drive bridge. Margaret will call Trout Unlimited and our Watershed Ambassadors and Dawn will check with a potential Eagle scout to find ways to learn about what this is and perhaps how to get rid of it.

Adjourn: 10:25 p.m. Motion by Adam; second by Daven; unanimous.