

BYRAM TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES, APRIL 12, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. Present were Chairman Ray Bonker, Joe Sabatini, Scott Olson, Bill Schilling, Daven Baez, Andy Kimm, Caryn Segal, Secretary Margaret McGarrity, and Open Space Advisor Sandy Urgo from The Land Conservancy of NJ.

First closed session: 7:33 p.m. *(Please see separate minutes.)*

Public session: 8:55 p.m.

Minutes:

The December 2009 minutes were approved: motion by Scott; second by Daven; unanimous. Margaret will email the February 2010 minutes for consideration at the next meeting.

Business:

Update of Open Space and Recreation Plan: The Land Conservancy of NJ will charge \$10,000, to be funded from the local Open Space Trust Fund. The Committee discussed options of doing the job in-house or seeking another consultant for a lesser price, but agreed that TLC-NJ's price is reasonable, especially given their expertise and familiarity with Byram, and that TLC-NJ has a strong reputation with State Green Acres officials and also has a good working relationship with Byram, which is worth preserving. The Committee made a unanimous recommendation to the Council to hire TLC-NJ. The kick-off on this project with TLC-NJ is the OS regular June meeting; TLC-NJ's Barbara Davis will be in charge of this project.

Ray will email to all the TLC-NJ proposal for this project.

Site visits: Committee members will meet at the municipal parking lot near the tennis courts on Friday, May 21, at 3:30 p.m. to visit the Freeman parcel (adjoins the Beckmann parcel), the Jones Lane fields, the Johnson Lake dam, and the Bell-McConnell lot in the Lackawanna neighborhood. Each visit should take about an hour. Margaret will advertise as special meeting and invite the Environmental Commission.

Financial update: Joe reported that the local Open Space Trust Fund had \$498,670 on April 5, 2010, but that \$117,344 of that (payment of NJDEP GA's share of the Vetter purchase) properly belonged in the Reserve for Debt Service, leaving \$381,326 in the Trust Fund and \$714,562 in the Reserve for Debt Service. With the income from the local OS tax and the payout of bond principal and interest payments, the Trust Fund amount will be up to about \$426,000 by year's

end, plus we will receive 50% of the NJDEP GA's share of soft costs for the Hudson Farm Greenway project. Thus, there will be roughly \$500,000 in the Trust Fund, for all purposes.

Joe is not recommending a large capital bond ordinance this year (less than half of last year's c.\$650,000), and this will be mostly for streets and roads. Bonding affects the cap, via costs and interest/principle payments; so if the cap is lowered, the ability to bond is affected.

The Committee discussed uses of the OS local trust fund, particularly regarding the development of the Jones Lane fields. Joe emphasized the need for careful scrutiny of this project and for good estimates of planning, construction, and operation/maintenance costs. Township budgets are under extreme pressure.

The Recreation Committee prefers Cory Stoner's Concept A for the fields; but there are many issues, including wetlands/buffers, the condition and use of the house, access from Jones Lane, Highlands restrictions, adequate parking, and the need for a more detailed plan. The Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental committees should work jointly on these issues. The Recreation Committee is walking the site tomorrow.

In addition to other costs, the development of fields could cost roughly \$700,000.

Bonding for such expenses adds to the local tax burden, just as would putting the OS local tax back to 2-cents/hundred.

Meeting schedule: The Committee discussed returning to monthly, rather than bi-monthly, meetings. Scott thought that bi-monthly meetings make it difficult for Committee members to retain continuity and to remain informed on important matters. The Committee agreed to advertise a monthly schedule but to allow Chairman Ray Bonker to decide when to cancel unnecessary meetings. Alternate meetings could be short and dedicated to single issues.

Adjourn: 10:02 p.m. Motion by Scott; unanimous.