

BYRAM TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES, DECEMBER 13, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. Present were Chairman Ray Bonker, Joe Sabatini, Scott Olson, Daven Baez, Andy Kimm, Caryn Segal and secretary Margaret McGarrity. Also present was Sandy Urgo from The Land Conservancy of New Jersey.

CLOSED SESSION: 7:32 p.m. See separate minutes.

OPEN SESSION: 8:14 p.m.

Business:

Final version of Open Space and Recreation Plan update: The Committee discussed the re-inclusion of a sentence in the Executive Summary that specifically mentions an indoor recreation facility and pool. The Committee's recollection was that this sentence had been removed and that the general agreement at the November 4 joint Planning Board-Open Space Committee public hearing on the Plan update was that, while there should be a general summary of recreation needs in the Executive Summary, there should be no specific mention of an indoor facility/pool. The general agreement was that there would be a longer discussion of recreation facilities later at the end of the Plan update, that the Recreation Committee should generate its own detailed plan as a separate document, and that substantial capital items such as a building/pool should be reviewed as part of a Capital Improvement Plan.

The Committee considered whether to look into how this sentence ended up in the final document, whether it was an error on the part of The Land Conservancy of NJ, or if there was any discussion at the November 4 joint meeting regarding re-inserting this sentence. Margaret could recheck the sequence of draft versions of the Plan update and read the minutes or listen to the tapes of the November 4 meeting.

The Committee ultimately agreed to leave the document as is, including this very general sentence about a building/pool in the Executive Summary. The process of ever getting such facilities built would be a long one, especially given municipal budgeting constraints (although bonding is outside the 2% cap) and complaints about property taxes.

Joe also explained other issues raised by the Planning Board attorney, Kurt Senesky:

- Although this is ultimately a Planning Board document, Planning Board members were not mentioned on the Acknowledgements page. A new Acknowledgements page has been inserted, containing names of members of all the boards who reviewed the Plan (Planning Board, Council, OS, Recreation, Environmental Commission) and also Township staff.

- TLC-NJ copyrighted the document, which they describe as a joint copyright with the Township. Kurt wondered if this would restrict public dissemination. Since this was agreed to in Byram's contract with TLC-NJ, the copyright will remain; TLC-NJ has sent a blanket approval for the Township to reproduce the document.

TLC-NJ will wait to generate final paper copies and CD's until official Planning Board adoption on December 16.

2010 Open Space Committee accomplishments for the 2011 Township calendar: Margaret will prepare a bulleted list for Joe, including preservation of the Hudson Farm Greenway, update of the OS/Recreation Plan, adoption of the Forest Stewardship Plan, parcels preserved this year and a grand total of preserved acreage under Byram's OS program.

Ron Farr's proposal for 2011 tasks under the Forest Stewardship Plan: Margaret will get an update on the 2010 Professional Services Agreement for initial stewardship tasks (since Ron has said he will not finish by year's end, the PSA will have to be extended) and ask Ron to price each task proposed for 2011 and provide a specific time-table for completion of each. The OS Committee will review these at the February meeting. The Committee agreed to again recommend an approximately \$1,500 PSA in 2011.

Some of the 2011 tasks, such as finalizing/implementing a deer management plan and finalizing/opening Township trails may probably be assigned to others (police department for deer and Environmental Commission, Recreation Committee, Open Space Committee for trails).

The Committee discussed the need for better coordination of grant work and trail projects among the three boards and also for better tracking of the status of grants and of who is responsible to carry them out. Margaret will update her grants spreadsheet for Joe. The Committee will discuss at its February meeting and make this a standing item on its agendas.

2011 contract for The Land Conservancy of NJ: The TLC-NJ proposal is the same as the last two years, at \$11,500. While this still seems a bargain, given all that TLC-NJ does and the limitations of trying to accomplish same in-house, the Committee discussed whether to seek a per hour or per task contract.

The Committee unanimously agreed that Joe should seek revisions to the \$11,500 contract to include tasks other than preservation, since the number of possible parcels for preservation seems to be dwindling. Possible tasks include stewardship/trail work, Partners for Parks projects, meetings with large landowners about preservation options (as the Township did at the start of the OS program), resolving the status of the Mohawk View properties, analyzing foreclosures for OS or other benefits, examining acquisitions around the edge of our parks or that connect already preserved parcels.

Jones Lane recreation development: Township Engineer Cory Stoner will submit a formal report for the February OS meeting, including:

- Results of test holes, which showed no rock formations within 10 feet and soils of sand/gravel, which are ideal for field development;
- A topographical survey of the fields/parking/access areas, to be completed this week;
- A wetlands survey which will be overlaid on the base map to determine buffer requirements;
- Results of discussions with Bill Hayden of NJDOT about access, which will probably be via a one-way Jones Lane.

The Committee also asked for Cory to supply a cost estimate for the proposed development.

Andy asked about funding and said that he is opposed to using the local open space trust fund to develop ballfields, thus depleting funds for preservation. Andy and Scott believe that many residents did not approve the local OS tax for the purpose of recreational development. Ray said there are many who do support that and that the two uses of the trust fund will have to be balanced.

Joe noted that the Council makes the decision about spending the trust fund; he estimated that Jones Lane will cost roughly \$1-1.2 million, which would require substantial bonding (including for engineering costs).

The council also must decide what to do about the Jones Lane house, which the Township construction official recommends be demolished.

Status of Recreational Trails grant application for the Brookwood (Vetter) Park: A 2011 application was submitted, after discussions with the East Brookwood water company. Scott recommended that if the grant is denied, the OS Committee should discuss using local open space trust fund money to complete the project.

Musconetcong River Management Council looking for ‘Top Ten Vulnerable Properties’: Scott will keep the Committee updated on this. The Committee mentioned the Raimo properties immediately west of Route 206 next to Lubbers Run (historic site) and the Stable parcel that lies under Lubbers Run and on the river bank on the east side of the bridge, connecting Route 206 to the Vetter/Brookwood Park parcel.

Financial update from Joe: There is \$437,939 in the local OS trust fund, without the 2010 receipts and also not accounting for the \$78,000+ from the sale of the Cranberry Ledge parcels and the roughly \$70,000 that will be reimbursed for half of soft costs on Hudson Farm Greenway/Heitman/Buis. There is \$520,155 in debt reserve.

Joe is awaiting Township Attorney Tom Collins’ opinion on whether the local trust fund can be used on all open space parcels or only on those purchased with OS funds.

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