

BYRAM TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES, FEBRUARY 7, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Chairman Ray Bonker, Joseph Sabatini, Andy Kimm, Daven Baez, Caryn Segal, Council Liaison Scott Olson, and secretary Margaret McGarrity. Also present were Sandy Urgo, from The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, Kathy Haake, Project Manager from the Trust for Public Land, and Cindy Church, a Township employee who will be replacing Margaret as secretary. Recreation Director Janet Meisner arrived at 8:20 p.m. to hear the update on the Jones Lane plan.

First open session:

Business:

Kathy Haake, Trust for Public Land, on preserving Francisco Farm: The Trust needs \$3 – 4 million by next fall to exercise an option to preserve the former Francisco Farm in Andover Borough, recently the site of a proposed Beazer Homes 500-home development with 285,000 square feet of commercial space. Potential funders are Andover Borough, Andover Township, NJDEP Green Acres, State farmland preservation. The benefits of preservation for Byram include protection of Germany Flats aquifer/recharge, avoidance of traffic impacts, conservation of regional ruralness, addition to Kittatinny Valley State Park reachable from Byram via Sussex Branch Trail.

Following Ms. Haake's visit, the Committee decided against offering financial support but in favor of sending a letter of support for the preservation efforts if TPL requests that.

Introduction of Cindy Church: Cindy is secretary to the Board of Health, performs several other functions at the town hall, and will replace Margaret as secretary to the Open Space Committee.

Closed session: 7:45 p.m. (See separate minutes.)

Second open session: 8:12 p.m.

The December minutes were approved: motion by Scott; second by Andy; unanimous.

Update on Jones Lane plans: Township Engineer Cory Stoner provided an update on the proposed development of fields and parking space at Jones Lane, at the southernmost end of the Hudson Farm Greenway (Tamarack Park). A copy of his report is attached, as is a copy of his email following the meeting and summarizing comments from the Open Space Committee. The estimated development costs for two fields, two parking areas, and an access road are \$275,000.

There were discussions about whether to have one or two access driveways and about turning lanes onto Route 206; discussions about artificial turf fields and lighting (would add roughly \$450,000 to the costs), which the Committee decided not to pursue at this time; discussions about irrigation using the on-site existing well; discussions about making room for spectators and perhaps bleachers (which are not included in the \$275,000 estimate); discussions about adding more parking.

Janet will present the plan to the Recreation Committee at its February meeting. If the Recreation Committee approves of the plan, Cory will schedule a pre-application meeting with Highlands Council staff (may take a month or two), to make sure the Township does not proceed with plans that oppose Highlands regulations. There is a \$500 Highlands fee and \$1,500 for Cory's time, including a subsequent report to the Township.

Scott suggested that the Highlands staff may accept 150 foot buffers on the wetlands between Jones Lane and Route 206, since Jones Lane already interrupts the buffer, and that we may get credit toward impervious cover restrictions (must remain below 3%) by removing the house. The strip of forest that juts out into the field space may be diminished in value for the Highlands by having a pre-existing stone wall running through it. Possibly planting new trees at the back northern corner would help resolve impervious cover issues. Cory said that 'green management' of the fields might be required.

The Council would approve a Professional Services Agreement in March for Cory's work. The Open Space Committee agreed to recommend the PSA and the Highlands pre-application meeting, as long as the Recreation Committee approves the plan.

Financial report: Joe reported that there is \$627,687 in the local open space trust fund for projects (including all of the 2010 OS tax collection, part of which has to be shifted to debt service) and \$503,093.37 in the reserve for debt service. Anticipated reimbursements for soft costs for the Hudson Farm Greenway and Heitman should total about \$70,000.

Andy asked about raising the money to build the Jones Lane facilities through fund-raising by the groups that would use the park. Although several of the sports organizations have substantial amounts of funding, issues such as field use would have to be negotiated. Joe noted that upcoming capital funding/bonding requests are already excessive and that it is not reasonable to add this project to the list.

Joe reported that a legal interpretation of the ordinance establishing our OS tax and local trust fund finds that this money can be used for the maintenance and development of all park lands, even if the acquisition of those lands was not funded out of the trust.

Updates: The updated Open Space and Recreation Plan was approved by the Planning Board. The Council approved the 2011 contract with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey.

Forest management tasks: The Committee approved Ron Farr's list of 2011 Forest Stewardship tasks. Joe will meet with Ron to establish a schedule for these 2011 tasks, the leftover 2010

Forest Stewardship tasks, and the Hazard Tree Inventory (\$7,000 federal stimulus grant, to be completed by September 30, 2011).

Environmental Commission members have volunteered to help remove invasive plants from the Arnell and Beckmann parcels, under Ron's direction.

ANJEC 2011 Smart Growth Planning Grants: Ideas for proposals from the OS Committee?

Adjourn: 9:47 p.m. Motion by Andy; second by Scott.