

OPEN SPACE MEETING MINUTES - JUNE 8, 2020

CALL MEETING TO ORDER - Chairman Scott Olson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. This meeting has been electronically sent to the newspapers and uploaded to Byram's website, www.byramtwp.org not less than 48 hours in advance of the meeting. In addition, a copy of this notice is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

ROLL CALL - Ray Bonker, Scott Olson, Joe Sabatini, John Morytko, Erik Duch (late 7:07 pm), Scott Yappen (late 7:20 pm), Earl Riley. Ben Spinelli and Doris Flynn were also on the call.

OS FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT

- a. Reserve for Open Space - \$402,639
- b. Reserve for Debt Service - \$185,966
- c. Debt Service P & I - \$329,925
- d. Planning Incentive Grant - \$400,000

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - May 11, 2020 Regular & Closed Meeting Minutes – Motion by Joe, second by Earl to approve the revised minutes sent out to the committee today. All members in favor.

OLD BUSINESS - Review of Final Draft of Open Space & Recreation Plan with Ben Spinelli

Ben sent out the PDF of the entire plan and the comments submitted were incorporated where possible. Ben added a discussion on financing on page 64. Ray had made a request to highlight certain sections regarding capital projects and goals, which Ben did with call out boxes. Ben thanked everyone for the time that was taken to review and send comments/corrections.

Scott O. stated that what Ben has done with the Economic Development section amplifies what was done in our Economic Development Plan several years ago. Scott O. said that our trails have gotten a tremendous amount of use over the past few months, which is a great thing. Ben discussed a few other sections and went over the appendixes. The appendixes have been put in separate folders and also combined into one Appendix document. Joe will put this up on the website on the Open Space Committee page so that it is accessible to everyone, including the Council and Planning Board.

Scott Y. asked for an elevator view of what this plan delivers to the resident. Ray Bonker said it best:

1. A New 10 Year Open Space Plan

2. A targeted list of potential land acquisitions
3. A list of potential capital projects
4. New Maintenance Spreadsheets
5. A renewed Economic Development plan
6. All new Maps
7. A trail expansion plan

All this was provided by a grant from the Highlands Council via Greener By Design at no cost to Byram, which included a survey that over 1000 Byram residents completed.

Ben will make a presentation to the Council on June 16 via audio conference call. All members will have access to the plan on the website the week before the meeting. At some point over the next few months, the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on this plan and adopt it as an element of the Master Plan. Ben will attend the public hearing and make a presentation. Joe has not determined when it will be on the schedule--he will work with the Planning Board Secretary and Attorney on this.

Scott Y. said people will want to know what is at the top of the list, and what are next steps. Ben said that next steps would be implementation of the plan with sound principles. This is a 10-year plan. These things won't happen overnight, but we can select something from the plan to start with. Scott Y. stated that we recognize that people want to see a return on investment.

Scott O. stated that the plan outlines what facilities are in Byram and also at Lenape Valley Regional High School. It will be incumbent upon the open space committee to advocate partnerships to allow utilization of the facilities that the high school has such as turf fields.

Ray said we should emphasize during the Council presentation that this is our third, 10-year plan and none of these plans just sat on the shelf. We have followed the plan and accomplished many of the goals outlined in each plan. Ray thought our prior plans were good, but this plan is excellent.

Scott O. stated that a tremendous amount of money from open space funds has been spent on active recreation. We have spent it in a wise and judicious way. If we look at financials over the last 10 years and compare the amount brought in by the open space tax and the amount spent on active recreation, we would find that an enormous amount of money was spent on active recreation and a much smaller amount was spent on acquisition. The reason for this is we were able to acquire open space land with money from other funding sources, such as Green Acres, NJ Conservation Foundation, and NJ Highlands.

John Morytko said implementation will be very important. We will need clarity to move forward. Ray stated that this plan will not sit on the shelf and collect dust. We have \$400,000 in the bank and in 4 years the existing bond will be paid off. Ray is confident that we will continue to make progress and work on achieving the goals set out in this plan.

NEW BUSINESS - Timeline for remaining deliverables

- **Branding & Marketing Materials** - Ben will have materials for the Open Space Committee to review well before the August meeting (target by July 24). The graphic designer will come up with several conceptual ideas for a logo. The logo could be used for decals, and businesses would be able to apply to use the decals. There will also be informational brochures, short promo videos with photos and drone footage.

CORRESPONDENCE - Award of ANJEC 2020 Open Space Grant - \$1,450 - Joe Sabatini stated that the Environmental Commission submitted the application which focused on the identification of hot spots of emerging invasive species on Township trails. The New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team will provide 3 training sessions to volunteer groups. The Township Forester will also be involved.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE COMMITTEE DEEMS NECESSARY

The Open Space Committee discussed deer hunting on open space parcels for the 2020/2021 bow hunting season. Motion by Earl Riley, second by Erik Duch, to recommend to the Council to allow deer hunting for the upcoming bow season in the same manner as last year. All in favor.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC – No comments were made.

CLOSED SESSION – 8:10 pm - Contract Negotiations – Forester

Motion Earl, second by Erik to make recommendation to the Mayor and Council that they appoint Gracie & Harrigan as the Township forester and authorize the scope of work outlined in the 6/4/2020 proposal not to exceed \$6250. All in favor.

Motion by Joe, second by Ray to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm. All members in favor.

Meeting minutes prepared by: Doris Flynn