

OPEN SPACE MEETING – May 11, 2026

Members Present: Messrs. Sabatini, Dlugos, Duch, Bogardus, Esposito, Morytko, Mayor Rubenstein
Also present: Secretary Caitlin Phillips

This meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mr. Morytko.

OS FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT:

Reserve for Open Space: \$437,098.69.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 13, 2026 minutes. Mr. Dlugos motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Bogardus. All in favor.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Trails Grant Updates

Mayor Rubenstein noted Hudson Farms may be able to help with the funding and work on the trail for the portion on their property. Mr. Dlugos said the grant is well written; it's clear what they're asking for and the map enhancements are useful. Mr. Morytko said it'll depend on how many applications the County gets. Mr. Dlugos said the Fire Department was flagging the area, and are not sure when the burn will be in the fall. They may have a conflict with the trail work and the flagging.

Trail Signage and Mapping

Mr. Esposito said the Historical Society may be able to help with this work. Mr. Dlugos said there's an interest in the history of trails, and there is upcoming work with the Highlands. Having better signage would help. They have Green Acres signs and bollards. He drove near Ridge and Valley Conservancy areas, and the signage was helpful, and includes area maps and historical information. The Environmental Commission applied for an ANJEC grant in 2024 for mapping updates. The Land Conservancy map would be comparable to what the Trails Conference offers. Mr. Dlugos provided the higher-end pricing for better material signs. Mr. Morytko said these would help with visibility, for people looking for this information. Mr. Esposito said the Historical Society wants higher-end signs so we don't need to replace them as often. Mr. Dlugos noted the price difference is only a few hundred dollars. He added that the Stag Lake group may help fund an area map because it'd help people know where the official trail is. Mr. Morytko said they can bring this to council if the Committee is supportive. Mr. Bogardus said they should be consistent with the sizes and logos. Mr. Sabatini said they did this years ago with an ANJEC grant. They had posts/plaques with descriptions of trails, with QR codes. He noted people ask for Byram Trail Maps at the office. He likes the idea of having as a printed document for the office, which can be updated with historical references. Mr. Dlugos said some people in the area don't know some trails around here exist. With the signs, they can indicate this is a township-owned nature preserve. Mayor Rubenstein said the first item should be unifying the information, like the website or app. They should get pdfs together for trail information. Mr. Sabatini said they should focus on what comes up if you search on the internet for trails in Byram. Mr. Dlugos said the design fees were built in to the estimate. Mr. Morytko said he's supportive of moving forward with this, and they can start the mapping portion. Mayor Rubenstein said a platform should be selected, and they should decide what signage and design they want to use. Mr. Sabatini asked who is managing the project. Mayor Rubenstein said it should be the town. Mr. Sabatini said it may get complicated with bidding. Mr. Esposito said the entire project is under \$13,000, which includes installation. Mr. Dlugos said it's about \$2,000 per sign. They are thinking of doing this for Cranberry Overlook, Tamarack, Briar Ridge, and Glenside Woods. They are also considering the Lubbers Run Trail. Mr. Morytko said they could ask the Land Conservancy for a proposal. He noted this is something they'd do even if funding they're aiming for isn't provided.

Forestry Updates

Mr. Dlugos said he's concerned about the barberry in Briar Ridge. They'll be doing herbicide and mechanical removal of barberry. He suggested giving Ms. Gracie a map of the areas and have her get companies to look at sites and give proposals. Mr. Sabatini said Ms. Gracie has done this before. They can tell her to do what she did last time. She came out with a general map of property boundaries and identified areas, and requested quotes for herbicide treatment and brought it back to Committee. After that the scope of work gets authorized.

MEMBER REPORTS

Mr. Dlugos said he's in a group that helps promote recreation in the Highlands. They collected information and looked at maps, and Byram will be a hotspot because of highway access nearby. The Trails Conference is starting a program in conjunction with the Highlands Council. Byram seems to meet much of the criteria already. They showed a promotional page for a trail town, depicting trails and businesses. Mr. Morytko said Waterloo Village works well with this. Mr. Dlugos said he'd like to connect trails from Tamarack to the Wespy property. He noted he was told we likely wouldn't get this, because of liability issues. Two ideas were offered to him, including a history trail. They could partner with Hudson Farms, and build a viewing platform on the tunnel. They'd get fencing to resolve liability issues. They could also bring the trail over the center of the tunnel, so people don't go through. They would need more access to nearby property, and this would be steeper. Mayor Rubenstein said they have a good contact at the DOT. They could speak to them and note that having a marked trail may help keep people in safe areas. They should ask them first before looking at other options. Mr. Esposito said at CO Johnson Park, they could have a platform area near the gorge. Mr. Sabatini said the fencing is roughly the property line, and there are stakes in the area.

Mr. Sabatini said a Boy Scout worked on a project at the Johnson dam, including benches and a trail clean-up. Mr. Esposito asked about the trail crossing for the Andover Mohawk area. Mr. Sabatini said the County put those in. When a crosswalk is added, the engineer needs to sign off on them. The town's engineer isn't okay doing this because of sight line issues.

Mr. Dlugos said there was a nature photography class at the schoolhouse, and some people at this event expressed interest in joining the Trailkeepers. They could do a second class mainly outside. Ms. Phillips mentioned Mr. Dlugos' message about hemlock trees. Mr. Dlugos said the NJDEP is planning to sell woolly adelgid-resistant hemlocks in the fall, which could help with restoring areas in Byram.

Mr. Dlugos said the Recreation Department has spoken to him about the idea of trail passports for families. The Environmental Commission held an Earth Day event on a nature trail. They scrubbed algae off the signs and removed invasive species. They're looking to propose an annual award for Community Stewards. There is a person in town that's great at removing invasive species, and they'd like to give them the award for being an inspiration to others to start getting involved with this as well.

OPEN TO PUBLIC

No public was present.

ADJOURN – Motion by Mr. Dlugos, second by Mayor Rubenstein, to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 pm. All members in favor. Motioned carried.