

BYRAM TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES, APRIL 9, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 p.m. Members present: Chairman Ray Bonker, Eric Duch, Scott Olson, Joe Sabatini, John Morytko, Bob Brady and Andy Kimm. Ron Farr and Ben Spinelli were also in attendance.

Ray introduced Bob Brady, who is the Recreation Representative. The members introduced themselves. Ray briefly explained the history of the Open Space Committee. In the past, acquisition was primary. Now we are looking at maintaining the open space parcels that were purchased in the last 15-20 years.

Ron Farr officially retired, which will give him more time to dedicate to Byram Township.

- Ron has done little work on the trails in the past 2 months. Work will pick up in about 1-2 weeks.
- Ron submitted a thorough list of stewardship projects for 2018-2023, totaling \$105,400.00. This is a large number to fund, but we would rely on grants to fund a major portion of this.
- Ray stated that there are still some items that Ron can work on that has already been allocated for. Joe stated that we want to get the deer management plan ready for our next meeting and send the recommendation to the Mayor and Council. If we are going to change the ordinance, we need to get that ready before September. Joe asked Ron to give Ben a target date by which he will get the outstanding items done and Ben will manage this to make sure the deliverables are met. We want to show that we are getting things done. Joe's goal is he would like to see the existing scope of work completed by Ron by the end of June.
- Ray asked if we can push Sussex County to open the grant application for maintenance of open space parcels. Ben Spinelli said he would call on Wednesday, April 10, and see where the process is and let them know that Byram is ready to file an application.
- Ray reported that he participated in a meeting with Ben, Tom Collins, Mayor Rubenstein, Scott Olson, and Joe regarding the use of open space funds. The majority of the Council wants to move away from acquisition. Joe explained some background that led up to this meeting. Attorney Tom Collins researched using open space funds on recreational improvements on open space parcels. During the meeting, Ben was asked to put together a proposal for an overall analysis of our open space parcels and how and if they can be used for recreational purposes; work in our economic development plan, stewardship, trail management, etc.
- Ray stated that everyone looks at the open space tax differently—environmental, forestry, recreation—both passive and active. The open space committee is uniquely situated. We are a committee of committees.
- Ben has an outline of the proposal which he will circulate. He said that we should look at it from a 3-prong approach. Inventory of OS, evaluate the properties to see what they are good for and establish what the land is useful for. It will answer many questions people have. He will update the mapping, so that we can look at how the properties connect and what we will use them for. Ben will look at stewardship in the overall plan and explain why it is important. Ben will also research what grants are

available to fund these projects. Our open space funds can be used to leverage grants. This plan will be used to help make good government decisions. Before this plan is finalized, there will be public hearings and stakeholder outreach. Eric asked about a timeline. Ben said it would take 9 months to 1 year. It would be comprised of 5-6 elements and will be an update to our Open Space and Recreation Plan which is part of our Master Plan. Joe would like to see the proposal broken down to sections. The first goal is to inventory the OS properties, and look for a grant to do that. Ben stated that having a rational plan with a budgetary element, helps you when you go for grants. When people evaluate the grant application, they will see that it is a realistic budget with a thorough plan, which makes the application much more competitive.

- Joe explained that we are trying to get a resiliency grant through NJUCF to update our hazardous tree inventory. Joe also discussed the possibility of adopting a tree ordinance which would put the responsibility of trees in the right-of-way on the property owner.
- Andy announced that the Annual Tree Farm Day will be on Friday, June 1st at Stag Lake. Local officials are invited to attend. He will forward information out to Joe. There will be exhibitions going on throughout the day, such as a horse logging demonstration, portable sawmill demonstration, tree ID walk, etc.

Closed Session: The Committee went into closed session at 8:20 p.m.

Return to Public session: 8:32 p.m.

Forest South Report – Ben reported that we had a phone conversation with our attorney, the seller’s attorney, a representative from Forest South, Joe and Doris. We ironed out all the problems and the remaining issues will be addressed asap. We should be closing in a few weeks.

Johnson Parcel – Waiting for Larry Fink to get back to Ben. Ben provided the forest management plan for the Johnson parcel. Ben expects to close by the beginning of June. Ben will check to see if we have to put the money out at closing or if the third parties who are involved will pay at closing. \$460,000 purchase--\$230,000 from Highlands, \$115,000 from PIG, and \$115,000 from OSI and the balance from our OS funds.

Larry Johnson Parcel – Ben will get in contact with new owner to see if they are willing to sell a small section of their land to the Township as soon as a closing is set for Johnson. If he isn’t willing to sell, we could ask for an easement. We want this land to connect to the very large tract of preserved land owned by Peter Kellogg.

Approval of February 12, 2018 minutes both regular and closed session: Scott made a motion, seconded by Andy to approve the closed and open minutes. All in favor.

Open Space Financial Report – Joe reported that there is \$458,055 in the local open space trust fund. We have not encumbered anything for the Johnson property yet. In the reserve for debt service there is \$267,880. The outstanding Debt Service balance is \$478,125. PIG balance is around \$400,000.

Tamarack Park Update

- Joe will be meeting with Cory Stoner to find out when these projects are going out to bid and being constructed. Joe hopes to get the irrigation done by the end of June and the paving will happen July/August, which is piggybacking on another paving job in town.

Trails – Eric provided an update from the EC and said they have a new member. There will be a trails maintenance day in May. Eric said everyone is invited to help. He will ask Donna to get the information out to the Recreation and Open Space committee. Joe would like to see the committees walk the trails and report any trees that have fallen on the trail back to Donna. It will then get added to a DPW work order. Bob Brady stated that he could bring a group of 10/11 year old kids on the trails to assist. Eric will be meeting with the president of Jorba, which is the bike group, to see what their interest is in our trails.

Other Business - We received a letter from The Land Conservancy regarding available funding for updating our Open Space and Recreation Plan. They anticipate Green Acres funding to be available in 2019. We will have Ben look into this grant for updating our plan.

Open to the Public : No comments

Adjourn: 9:08 p.m. Motion by Scott Olson, second by Andy to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.