

OPEN SPACE MEETING – November 3, 2021

Members Present: Joseph Sabatini, Ray Bonker, Russel Raffay, John Morytko, Eric Duch, Scott Yappen, Alex Rubenstein

Also present: Michael Piga, Ben Spinelli, and Caitlin Phillips

John Morytko called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Welcome a New Member- Alexander Rubenstein has been appointed as a member to the Committee.

OS Financial Status Report:

Reserve for Open Space- \$521,052.06

Reserve for Debt Service- \$107,727.46

Mr. Sabatini noted that the Finance Department posted the Open Space levy and will move a percentage of that into the reserve for debt service at the end of the year. Mr. Bonker said they used to track the outstanding balance on the bonds as well.

Trails

Sussex County Open Space Trails Grant

Mr. Spinelli said this Trail Grant program has a maximum amount of \$5,000. They allow in-kind services from the municipality to serve as part of the match. The materials costed out would help as a reserve for later projects. This grant is a reimbursement type grant, so invoices would be presented for this. He incorporated the use of volunteers for this. They may want to go back to the County next year for a Phase 2 grant. He anticipates that this grant application would be favorably viewed, likely a lot of grant applications being submitted. This requires a Council resolution of recommendation, which Mr. Spinelli can draft. Mr. Bonker asked about the deadline being December 2nd; Mr. Spinelli said it's ready to go for that date barring any edits. Mayor Rubenstein asked what this grant is for. Mr. Spinelli said it's for purchasing materials to mark out and sign the trail systems, to start an early phase of Byram's trail goals. Mr. Bonker noted that this encompasses the three new trails at CO Johnson Park and the trail behind the future dog park.

Mr. Sabatini asked if these numbers for the DPW have been validated and reviewed with Mike. Mr. Spinelli said no, he's looking to see if the Committee thinks these are accurate—he used an hourly rate plus a percentage for benefits. He also put volunteer time, which needs to be calculated at \$15 an hour. Mayor Rubenstein asked what the County has in their Trust Fund. Mr. Sabatini confirmed that the matching requirement is dollar-for-dollar, so this project should be closer to \$10,000 rather than \$31,000. He noted what they're spending, time-wise, for this project is not worth the \$5,000. Mr. Spinelli said he doesn't think they'll actually use all that time, it'll be done mostly by volunteers. Mr. Sabatini asked who manages the volunteers. Mayor Rubenstein noted that the Sussex County Trust Fund has \$4.9 million. Mr. Bonker said that's the acquisition of land fund. Mr. Spinelli explained that over the summer they created a new category of grant for trails, paid out of the same trust fund. They've set up a grant program that has a maximum award of \$5,000. Mr. Sabatini said the other money is marked for farmland preservation; Mr. Bonker said 90% goes to farmland. Mayor Rubenstein said this doesn't seem like enough money. Mr. Bonker noted that there will be another program for maintenance issues. Mr. Spinelli said this grant isn't the stewardship portion yet. Mr. Morytko noted that we're doing the projects anyway, so having any grant money will help this process along. Mr. Sabatini noted there's no project plan; it's

not outlined which volunteers are part of this and who is leading them, and there needs to be further information about the kiosk funds and design details. He thinks this should be submitted as a multi-phase project. He thinks the cost of materials and hours for building each kiosk will be more than presented. Mr. Raffay said the design presented would be more like \$500 for the lumbar, with a day and a half for each kiosk with a few people working on it. Mr. Morytko said he doesn't envision the DPW building these; they need to account for the volunteers. He thinks that for the project, you can demonstrate that someone like the DPW will build these, to show the labor costs, but it doesn't necessarily need to be them. Mr. Sabatini said he doesn't want to put in all this work for only \$5,000; the project should be presented to reflect the scope of work encompassed by the grant funds. That way, the projects can be put in phases and it can be covered for each step.

Mr. Morytko noted that they should be getting grants to fit projects they want to do, rather than come up with projects to get a grant. For this grant, these are trails they're planning on working on. Mr. Bonker said they should look at this as the beginning of an annuity; they'll apply for this every year and can let them know more money will be needed for all the projects the Committee is looking to accomplish. Mr. Sabatini noted that the amount of time and resources to accomplish this project is not worth the money awarded. He added that if this is something we really want, the Committee could pay to have someone come in rather than rely on volunteers. Thinking this is "free money" doesn't consider the coordination of efforts to get the project done. Mr. Duch noted that there are a lot of volunteers in town, but they lack a trails committee to take the task up and maintain the trails. Mr. Morytko noted that they should strive to include volunteers, but understands what Mr. Sabatini about organizing people. Mayor Rubenstein noted that they all want the project to happen, and they know the public wants it, so they should just get it done and have the grant cover what it can. Mr. Sabatini said that part of Heather's scope of work is getting volunteers together for trail maintenance, and that would tie into this.

Mr. Duch asked if there are other options to ask for money through the County. Mr. Spinelli said right now this is the only grant available. He agrees with Mr. Sabatini about the approach of the grant process, doing the trails in parts with an encompassing application. Mr. Yappen said he'd be interested in drafting a "reconsider" letter noting that there is a need for more than \$5,000 for the projects they're after. There was further discussion on the trails included in this grant. Mr. Spinelli confirmed the trails would be from Cranberry Overlook to Old Indian Spring, and the dog park to Tamarack. Mr. Sabatini added there'd be kiosks for those trails. Mr. Bonker said he's be okay with doing a bit more for the grant and have half covered, but doesn't want to lose the narrative that they have multiple phases to this project. Showing there's more to these projects would demonstrate the need for more grant money being offered. Mr. Morytko said if they can package them in a way to communicate that to the County, it should be presented that way with the projected total of all projects. Right now, Mr. Spinelli has to reorganize the application to reflect the Committee discussion. Mr. Morytko confirmed the Committee is on board with this being presented to the Council once the plan and resolution are prepared. There was further discussion about the pricing for this project; Mr. Spinelli recommended including extra tools and markers to make sure those are available when needed. Mr. Sabatini noted it should be priced relative to the scope of work being done, with the assumption they'll use outside labor. Mr. Duch said he doesn't see any trail work presented; Mr. Spinelli said there's not much to be done. Mr. Sabatini confirmed the area for parking is not listed in the scope of work. Mr. Spinelli said if they want a parking area, they'd put a post area and gravel for cars to park there. They don't need permission to do that, because the gravel would be on an existing pull-off.

Mr. Sabatini motioned to allow Mr. Spinelli to put the scope of work together for Mr. Morytko's approval, with the understanding that there'd be a completed application and resolution by next Thursday. Mr. Duch seconded this motion, and all were in favor.

Parks

Dog Park Design Update

Mike Piga from French and Parrello spoke on behalf of the dog park project. Mr. Sabatini said there's a subcommittee that have met a few times to review the layout of the dog park. The next step is for French and Parrello to go to the DEP for a pre-application process regarding permitting. There's 2 versions of the park, the difference being parking. The goal would be to locate the larger parking across the street, and have permission from the DEP to do that without impacting other improvements for the park. If they don't agree to that, then the proposal is to go with the large parking lot. The ideal scenario is the smaller parking lot for trailhead and park access. Mr. Piga showed Concept A with a 24-car parking lot. Entering the site to the south is the dog park, with 2 main entrances for large and small dogs. Both sides have their own equipment and seating. One acre is for the large dogs and half an acre is for the small dogs. The exits are also separate, with spaces for if a dog is not cooperating. They made the proposed shed larger and moved it towards the rear. There will also be trees and garbage cans. Mr. Duch asked about the outside of the dog park area, regarding the materials; Mr. Piga said it would be kept as natural as possible. They'd change where the trail began, moving it to the parking lot, and relocate the timber kiosk and tie into the trails. Mr. Sabatini said there is no water or electric. He noted that they'll assume people will bring the water their dogs need; the area is shaded and natural with little disturbance. Having water and electric would be a challenge in expenditure. Mr. Piga said they could put a sign reminding people to bring your own water.

Mr. Duch asked about area maintenance. Mr. Sabatini said the DPW would come in through the trail; there's a gate to bring in the equipment. They want to keep the maintenance away from the front entrance of the park. Mr. Duch asked if the trails will be maintained; Mr. Sabatini said the trail will be widened, but not paved. The trail will be relocated since it goes through the proposed park. Mr. Duch noted the trails can be muddy, and wants them to be aware of this for equipment going through. Mr. Yappen asked about the sizing of the park. Mr. Piga said they looked at other dog park sizes, and they're typically about the same as what's proposed. Mr. Sabatini said they did a topographic survey and there's little disturbance needed. It was shifted because of the existing terrain. There's not a lot of work needed besides erecting the fencing areas, and most of the work is towards the parking.

Mr. Piga said for Plan B is 126 parking spaces with additional handicap spaces. They haven't shown how the detention would work for this; there may be a rain garden, and they'll have some plantings. The rest of the design is the same. Mr. Sabatini wants to ensure that there's no encroachment on a nearby easement. Mr. Duch asked about a path from the parking to the baseball area. Mr. Piga said they're not trying to entice people to walk down the Roseville Road area. Mr. Duch said the larger parking area is ideal for the residents in the area for better access. Mr. Sabatini said the Committee's recommendation is Plan A. There's an existing parking lot on the other side of the street, and they could possibly extend it to the right of the soccer fields. Under the Highlands requirements, the footprint can only increase by a certain percentage. They're trying to show the DEP that they can do Plan B, but it's not ideal. If relief can be granted, they'd like to downsize the parking so that the trail and dog park access is emphasized, and then put the remaining parking on the other side, without it impacting the percentages they're depending on for the CO Johnson project. If the DEP says no, then they'd have to go to Plan B. Mr. Duch noted Plan A parking will be filled by people attending events, and then dog park patrons won't have a spot. He thinks Plan B gives more options for developing CO Johnson. Mr. Morytko said ideally they have the parking on the side of the parks so that people are directed to the use they're there for. There was further discussion about parking. At the DEP meeting, they'll get an indication of any concerns to address in the final design. They'll also get more indication about stormwater management. Mr. Duch wants to know the difference in cost for each stormwater plan. Mr. Piga noted they'll also looking at this from a safety perspective. Mr. Bonker said the next step after the DEP meeting is to present to the Council with cost

estimates. Mr. Piga said he'll let them know when they'll meet with the DEP. Mr. Bonker said he wants this work to begin in the spring.

Approval of Minutes – August 9, 2021

Mr. Bonker motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Yappen. All in favor. Motion carried.

Invoices

The Committee reviewed the invoices submitted, which were already paid.

OLD BUSINESS

Forest Stewardship

Stand 20 Review

This is focused on taking down small and medium trees to open up the forest and promote growth. Ms. Gracie included 3 bids from companies who would do this work. Mr. Bonker noted this is the most recently acquired property, where trails would be put in. This seems like a high impact, low cost area. Mr. Sabatini said if this is in the approved scope of work, it doesn't need to go back to the Council. Mr. Morytko said they'll give her direction to go ahead with Tim's Timber for this project. The three bids were for \$1,200; \$1,950; and \$2,500, with the lowest cost being their recommendation. Mr. Sabatini motioned to tell Ms. Gracie to continue with the \$1,200 bid, seconded by Mayor Rubenstein. All were in favor.

Potential Musconetcong River Kayak Launch

Continental Drive Location

Mr. Morytko said he looked at this location and it would definitely be a project. Mayor Rubenstein and Mr. Raffay also walked the area and agree that it would not be easy. Mayor Rubenstein thinks if this is something they'd want, they'd likely need to get an engineer to look at the area and see if it's feasible. Mr. Raffay said it'd be very steep to go down there, and parking was an issue. Mr. Duch asked about the Waterloo Road side. Mayor Rubenstein asked if there's any demand for this. Mr. Duch said he thinks there's demand but the access is limited. Mr. Sabatini said Waterloo Village has existing kayaking now; if there's a way to work with them to have parking there, they could get into the lake area. Mr. Morytko said that was his thought as well after inspecting the Continental Drive location. It meets the desire to attract people, and partners with Waterloo, which is a great asset to the town. Mr. Sabatini said there's also access there to other tributaries. The access would likely be through the maintenance gate if it is allowed. Mr. Duch noted it'd be important to discuss how that would impact their patrons on the site. Mr. Morytko said he'd reach out to Waterloo to get that discussion going.

Historic Preservation

Lost Hamlet of Byram Historic Markers

The Historic Commission went to the county to discuss markers. They've been approved for one. They've asked if the Committee would be willing to fund one of the markers, or cover some of the cost. The total would be about \$1,200. The location of the marker was discussed. Mr. Sabatini said he doesn't have an issue paying for this out of the Open Space Trust, but the Mr. Gonzalez needs to submit an application with a request for funding, that would go, by recommendation from the Committee, to the Council. The application should have a narrative with a sample of the sign

and where it's located and why it's important. Mr. Sabatini said he must have submitted an application to the county, so he could use the details from there. Mr. Duch said he'd want to see what will be on the sign.

MEMBER REPORTS

Mr. Bonker said the Council has discussed Subcommittee meetings, and they decided to let the Subcommittees choose if they want zoom or in-person meetings, or hybrid meetings. Mr. Bonker said that for the Open Space Committee zoom makes sense, because it would help to have professionals present. Mayor Rubenstein said he prefers virtual meetings, and Mr. Duch said he thinks other meetings have had higher participation with they were online. Mr. Yappen said the Recreation Committee has been meeting in person, and he prefers this. Mr. Morytko said he's okay either way. Mr. Raffay said he agrees with Mr. Bonker that it's easier to coordinate on Zoom. Mr. Sabatini said the majority of the Committees seem to prefer Zoom for the flexibility, and when people are away, they can still attend. He noted that some of the recent Recreation meetings had trouble with a quorum, so having zoom meetings could help make sure enough people are there to vote. Mr. Morytko said there may be times where an in-person meeting would be better, for special circumstances, but they'll just advertise it that way when something comes up.

Mr. Duch said they had an invasive event last month in Glenside Woods. The property was in good shape, but they had an issue following the trail in terms of blazes. He thinks this is an example of how a trails group could help.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Morytko opened to the public. No one from the public came forward. Mr. Morytko closed to the public.

ADJOURN – Motion by Mr. Sabatini, second by Mr. Bonker, to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 p.m. All members in favor.