

OPEN SPACE MEETING – FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Members Present: Joseph Sabatini, Ray Bonker, Russel Raffay, John Morytko, Eric Duch, and Scott Yappen.
Also present: Township Clerk Cynthia Church, and Heather Gracie

Joe Sabatini called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Introduction of New Member – Russel Raffay

Election of Chair:

Motion by Scott Yappen, second by Eric Duch to nominate Eric Duch as Chair of the Open Space Committee.
Roll call Motion Failed.

	Ray Bonker	Eric Duch	Russel Raffay	Scott Yappen	Joseph Sabatini	John Morytko
Motion				x		
2nd		x				
Yes						
No	x	x		x	x	x
Abstain			x			
Absent						

Motion by Ray Bonker, second by Joseph Sabatini to nominate John Morytko as Chair of the Open Space Committee. All members in favor.

	Ray Bonker	Eric Duch	Russel Raffay	Scott Yappen	Joseph Sabatini	John Morytko
Motion	x					
2nd					x	
Yes	x	x	x	x	x	x
No						
Abstain						
Absent						

OS Financial Status Report:

- a. Open Space Trust Fund Balance: \$478,961.00*
- b. Reserve for Debt Service Balance: \$149,809.32*
- c. Outstanding Debt Service Balance: \$264,000.00*

Approval of Minutes – December 14, 2020 – Motion by Ray Bonker, second by Joe Sabatini to approve minutes as presented, all in favor. Motion Carried.

Greener by Design Presentation to the Township Council on 1/19/2021 – Ray provided an update to the Open Space Committee on the presentation that was given by Greener by Design at a Township Council Meeting on February 2, 2021. Ray explained that it was a presentation of all the things that the Open Space Committee approved, specifically the logs’s, brochure and the setting up of the social media. Everything was accepted at the council meeting.

Ash Tree Timber Harvest at CO Johnson – Heather provided an update on the Timber Harvest. She will be going out to the site tomorrow to see if they can get started. They will be flagging the area.

Gracie & Harrigan – 2021 Stewardship Activities -Sent out a summary to Joe on February 3, 2021 with recommendations for stewardship activities, in particular Cranberry Overlook, Tamarack Park, Glenside Park and Forest South Park, along with other considerations. Heather provided an overview of the summary. Heather thinks we there should be main concentration on Cranberry Overlook and Tamarack Park for 2021. Joe said that a resolution would need to be approved by the Township Council to encumber the fees. Motion by Joe Sabatini, second by Eric Duch to authorize a resolution to encumber fees not to exceed \$5,000 for stewardship activities, all members in favor.

Council Budget Discussion on Sports Equity and Use of Open Space Funds – Ray Bonker provided and update as it will have an impact on the Open Space funds. Ray said that the Township Council was presented with an optional budget item that will be approved in April. The idea is to have all sports organizations treated equally, by providing lining of fields for all sports. They will be purchasing a machine that will be used to line the fields and can be used to paint lines in parking lots. The cost of the equipment is around \$8,000.

CO Johnson Park Concept Plans – On January 24, 2021 Joe provided the Open Space Committee with the preliminary draft concept plans prepared by French & Parrello for C.O. Johnson Park. The Mayor and Council has asked for each member of the committee to review and offer general comments on each of the concepts. Joe said that these plans will be finalized, and a public meeting will be scheduled to review with the Mayor and Council and the stakeholders at a future date.

Ray Bonker is excited by both concepts provided. He is strongly in favor of the following:

- A. elimination of retention basin
- B. dog park location
- C. both nature trails
- D. concessions stand between fields

Mr. Bonker questioned the need for an ice rink. He expressed his concerns about the expense that would be involved with moving the Fieldhouse. Mr. Bonker would like to see a maintained paved path around the entire park exterior loop and would like to add a memorial garden or monument site.

Joe agreed with much of what Ray said. He sees that there may be challenges with parking and believes we need to maximize the available space. He also liked how they maximized the space with the two soccer fields and put in a full-size softball field. He likes the location of the playground, however, he is not in favor of the skate rink, he thinks that should be a practice area instead. Joe is not in favor of the skate park and feels that it is coming to the end of its life span. He likes the relocation of the basketball court but should also look at that area as a multipurpose space for roller hockey and possibly enclose it with a fence. Joe does not like the idea of relocating the field house and feels that the area below the lower tennis courts could be a good space for more parking.

Scott Yappen liked plan number two. He likes the centralized concession stand. He would like to see an increase to the parking. He is happy with the dog park, soccer and football fields and thinks that the skate park should remain.

Eric Duch would like to keep the skate park but move it near the entrance near the basketball courts. He would like to see sidewalks connecting the inside of the park. Eric likes the second plan and that the retention basin is gone. Alex said that the retention basis will be relocated beneath the field.

Russel Raffay asked the about the storage sheds. Joe said he would like French & Parrello to provide a creative approach for storage that can be used between seasons.

John Morytko liked both plans but had concerns about the practice space. He would like room for all those who do not use the regular playing space to have an area that they can use. John likes the addition of extra shade trees and the new location of the playground. He likes the idea of the nature trails. John expressed his concerns about the relocation of the recreation center; however, he does like the concession stand location. John said that he likes the idea that Joe had about a roller hockey area being incorporated with the basketball space. John also likes Ray's point about walking trails.

Alex said that we should not get rid of the existing field house and likes the concession stand out in the middle of the park.

Greener by Design - 2021 Scope of Services – Greener by Design provided Byram Township with a proposed scope of service for the 2021 calendar year. Joe and Ray had a meeting with Ben about the scope of service. Joe provided an overview of Greener by Design and the scope of service that was provided. Ray explained that in the past they would usually pay \$12,000 per year for an open space consultant. The scope of service provided a lay out of the services that will be provided to Byram Township from Greener by Design, in particular Ray highlighted the specific priorities for 2021. Ray highlighted the following areas (but not limited to):

Assist the Township with long-term strategies for the implementation of strategic initiatives outlined in the 2020 Open Space & Recreation Plan. Specific priorities for 2021 include the following:

- i. Pursue access to the two high priority parcels necessary for extension & expansion of the trails system.
- ii. Develop Kayak/Canoe access to the Musconetcong River.
- iii. Maintain Social Media Sites/produce relevant & appropriate content.
- iv. Utilize Marketing & Promotional Materials to Implement Economic Development Plan Recommendations
- v. Work with Hudson Farms on Trail Access/Development/Wayfinding
- vi. Develop Grant Application for Sussex County Trails Program
- vii. Assist French & Parillo as needed on C.O. Johnson Development including working with the Highlands Council on Permitting
- viii. Incorporate Walking Paths in C.O. Johnson into Trails Plan
- ix. Identify & Pursue Other Grant Opportunities

John said that overall, he was pleased with what was presented by Greener by Design. Scott Yappen did not feel that enough time was given to review the proposed scope of service for 2021. He feels that some the items on the scope of service are not necessary what we may want to do, if we eliminate items A & B can be bring the cost down. Ray said that he did not agree, as if a requisition for property is to come up, we need to make sure we are ready to act on it. Joe said that it is up to the Open Space committee to provide GBD with a plan of action for all times listed and then work with him on prioritizing what should be done to maximize on the dollar. Joe Sabatini made a motion, second my Russel Raffay to recommend the scope of work to the Township Council.

	Ray Bonker	Eric Duch	Russel Raffay	Scott Yappen	Joseph Sabatini	John Morytko
Motion	x					
2nd					x	
Yes	x	x	x		x	x
No						
Abstain				x		
Absent						

Reports from Committees:

Environmental Commission – Eric Duch – the Environmental Commission will be holding an Arbor day event and will be giving away seedlings. They are interested in what they can do to plant seedlings on park property. The Environmental Commission will be holding two trail cleanups and will hold another invasive species training.

Recreation Committee – Scott Yappen reported that the Recreation Committee had a discussion on C.O. Johnson Field.

Planning Board – John Morytko reported that the WaWa was approved.

Adjourn – Motion by Joe Sabatini, second by Scott Yappen to adjourn the meeting at 10:26 p.m. All members in favor.