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**EAST AMWELL FARMLAND/OPEN SPACE PERSERVATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES: APRIL 9, 2018
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 1070 ROUTE 202, RINGOES, NEW JERSEY**

CALL TO ORDER & OPEN PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

Present:

Members: Pete Fick, Chair, liaison Recreation Committee
Erica Johanson, Vice Chair, via phone
Richard Wolfe, Mayor's Designee, liaison Planning Board
Barbara Sageser, Liaison Historic Preservation Committee
Candice Wiggum, Liaison Agricultural Advisory Committee

Absent: Fred Gardner, alternate 2
Joan Sank

Others Present: Tom Jarick

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chair Fick. In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, it was stated that this was a regular meeting held pursuant to the meeting notice published in the January 11, 2018 issue of the Hunterdon County Democrat. On March 29, 2018 notice of this meeting was filed in the Township Clerk's Office, sent to the Hunterdon County Democrat, and the agenda was posted on the bulletin board.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The meeting was open to the public for comments. A motion by Mr. Wolfe and seconded by Chair Fick was made to close to the public. All in favor.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

A motion to approve the March 12 minutes with a slight amendment was made by Mr. Wolfe and seconded by Chair Fick. The minutes were approved.

BILLS FOR APPROVAL

ADDITION TO THE AGENDA

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Wertsville Industries Update

The Committee members discussed the results of the County Open Space Advisory Committee meeting of March 19. There was a good turn-out from East Amwell. It was noted that members of the County OSAC needed proof of the benefits of preservation and did not like spending a large portion of the annual budget for one project. There appears to be strong support for farmland preservation, even from the Open Space Advisory Committee.

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There was a question of when will NJCF will be able to close on the Wertsville Industries property. NJCF needs to extend the option to buy the property, as they are applying to the 1772 Foundation for funding and they will not know the application results until June. It was noted that this is such a great preservation opportunity that we need to make sure the funding for this property occurs. The Historic Preservation Committee is familiar with the 1772 Foundation, since they do grants for historic properties as well as open space.

The weekly County electronic newsletter had a press release on the Freeholders' approval of the open space funding for Wertsville Industries. The next step will be to get a copy of the Resolution of Approval from the Freeholder meeting of April 3.

2. Update of Potential Preservation

It was noted that we can check off Wertsville Industries from the list of potential preservation. Mr. Wolfe noted that he created a list of farmland values when he bought his property. He is in the process of updating that information now. He wants to be able to present to the owners of potential preserved farmland the economic and financial benefits of preservation. He feels he will be able to visit with property owners around late May or early June. Various other properties were mentioned. The environmental impact of modifications done to properties that are on the Target list was discussed as well. It was noted that land trusts can preserve property faster than the State and can do more complicated transactions than the State. It was also noted that since so many land trusts have supported East Amwell's preservation effort, East Amwell residents should support these land trusts.

3. PTO Color Run/Greenfest Update

The PTO Color Run will be September 29. Allison Castellano will work with Ms. Fullerton to invite appropriate organizations to create a Greenfest event along with the Color Run.

4. SADC Appropriations Meeting Update

There will be a meeting on April 26 with SADC and County staff for FOSPC to discuss the Township's Farmland Plan and obstacles to land preservation. There will be a pre-meeting on April 20 at 12:30.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Township Communications Opportunities

Ms. Johanson will be on the Website Committee and wants members to think about how to educate residents of the Township about open space issues and interests. There is interest in being creative for the website. The new website is expected to be user-friendly and provide real-time information for residents during emergencies. The new website is anticipated by the fall.

2. Funding needs of the Open Space Trust Fund

As part of this discussion of the Open Space Trust Fund, the expenditures were reviewed. Clawson Park and Recreation field maintenance were the largest use of the \$2,498.80 spent so far out of the Trust Fund. There has been little revenue into the Trust Fund, as the municipal taxes have not been collected. There is an aim to complete the Clawson House so we can begin having events there and make Clawson House self-sustaining. Similarly, there will be an aim to create a non-profit group to support Clawson Park, so that group could do fundraising. This way,

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less money is being used from the Open Space Trust Fund for uses other than acquisition. The Township Committee will look into charging fees for the use of the fields and amenities at Clawson Park. There may be grants available for the tennis courts.

3. Hunterdon County Community Day

Committee members like the idea of a booth at the Hunterdon County Community Day. Need activities to draw kids. The Historical Society may help out with the booth. Whichever group runs this, needs to collect a table, a tent, and the banner from the basement. Tom Jarick offered chicks to attract kids. Ms. Fullerton will check for other groups interested in participating at the Community Day.

REPORTS:

Administrator's Report

The County staff meeting in March was cancelled. The meeting for April has been scheduled for 9:30 April 18.

Lisa MacCollum mentioned some issues with the environmental liability regarding Higgins phase two. NJCF is thinking of doing an agricultural subdivision in order to get rid of this environmental issue. NJCF anticipates extra funding for Higgins due to environmental hazards, so the Township Green Acres funding is anticipated to be used for Wertsville Industries.

There was a discussion regarding the ability to rent Township property for deer hunting. Most open space properties are held by land trusts, who manage the hunting on these properties. The Township does not have many, or any, properties that would be conducive to renting out for deer hunting. In the past, there was a preference for the Township to not manage deer hunting, due to the potential for liability.

Historic Preservation Report:

Historic Preservation prepared a grant application to the County for \$70,500 for interior work on the Clawson House. The preservation effort has turned the Clawson House from a run-down farmhouse to a focal point in the Township. There will be an auction to raise money for Clawson House by auctioning off the extra furniture and items donated to the Clawson House. It was noted that the residents have been happy to donate their items to be displayed at the Clawson House.

Agricultural Advisory Committee:

After a snow delay last month, the Deer Management Symposium was held at the Sourlands Conservancy. There has been an ongoing coordinated effort between Townships to manage the deer within the region. At that meeting, it was proposed to designate the Sourlands as a Special State Area, so the deer can be hunted commercially. This way, the hunters can sell the meat. The regional municipalities are working together to complete the necessary legislation to enact the Special State Area. There will be more meetings in the next few weeks to move this forward. The deer survey was completed. There are 120 deer per square mile in East Amwell. We have more than Hopewell!

CORRESPONDENCE

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All correspondence was reviewed during previous agenda items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The meeting was open to the public for comments. There was a motion by Mr. Wolfe and seconded by Chair Fick, to close to the public. All in favor.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be May 14, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Fick made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Wolfe to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recording Secretary

date _____

DRAFT