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**EAST AMWELL FARMLAND/OPEN SPACE PERSERVATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES: MAY 14, 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
Fred Gardner, alternate 2
Tom Jarick, 7:35
Candice Wiggum, Liaison Agricultural Advisory Committee
Tom Rue, Liaison Environmental Commission

Absent: Joan Sank
Barbara Sageser, Liaison Historic Preservation Committee

Others Present: Bill Millette, Hunterdon County
Ken Bogen, Hunterdon County
Mark Gunn, Recreation Committee

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 May 3, 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. Gardner and seconded by Mr. Wolfe was made to close to the public. All in favor.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

A motion to approve the April 9 minutes was made by Mr. Wolfe and seconded by Mr. Fick. Mr. Gardner abstained. The minutes were approved.

BILLS FOR APPROVAL

There were no bills for review.

ADDITION TO THE AGENDA

It was proposed that the agenda be modified so our visitors from Hunterdon County could conduct their presentation. This was agreed on by Committee Members.

NEW BUSINESS

1. County Strategic Park and Open Space Plan

Bill Millette introduced himself. He is the County Open Space Coordinator and Project Manager for the development of the County Strategic Park and Open Space Plan. Ken Bogen, the County

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Supervising Planner was in attendance as well. The original Open Space Plan came about in 2000 after the Open Space Tax was approved. The plan has not been updated since 2000. Maser Consulting has been doing the work, including surveys and public meetings. The County is on the cusp of being ready to release the Plan. The Freeholders wanted to discuss the Plan with representatives from each Municipality, to make sure it is “hitting the mark”, or accurately representing each Municipality and its goal for Open Space. Bill distributed the draft Executive Summary and discussed the proposed goals from the Summary.

The County wants to determine priorities and a strategy for the end goal of open space preservation in the County. The most important response from the surveys and public meetings is connectivity - between multiple open space parcels and between communities and open space. There has been a renewed interest in the County’s participation in active recreation. Previously, there had been a sense that Municipalities should offer active recreation, not the County. Active recreation would be ball fields, and such team sports, not hiking, which is considered passive recreation.

There is fluidity in the ways that the County can support connectivity between parcels and between communities. There are many partners and funding sources and the County can help with all of these. It was noted that the County does have a scoring system for funding and acquisition of both open space and farmland.

The interplay and importance of Farmland preservation was noted as part of the Open Space Plan. The State Farmland preservation program does not allow for public access, so this would impact the potential connectivity of parcels. The State does not like to have the public enter onto active farm properties, even if a strip for trails were preserved at the time of preservation. There are significant areas of concentrated farmland in the County that makes sense for farmland preservation.

There is a vision for expanding the trail network, connecting the existing trails and communities, in a broad sense. The County wants attainable goals in this plan.

There is a stewardship section to the plan, which includes deer management and managing invasive species. The deer management program is reviewed annually. It is a management program, not a recreational hunting opportunity. It was noted that the Sourlands Conservancy and Farmland Bureau is working on deer management. Stewardship plans are being created for each individual property, so that there is specific attention to the needs of each property.

South County Park was discussed. Currently, there is only one County active recreation park. The public feedback requested more active parks. South County Park is an area that could support active recreation in the southern area of the County. There is a large analysis regarding the size and scope of active recreation offered and the location of any potential active recreation. With enough interest, South County Park would be developed with active recreation opportunities.

More funding could be made available for Municipalities to develop active recreation on park space. Currently the only funding for this would be the Municipal Open Space tax funding,

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however, for municipalities to use this money for development improvements, they need a Recreation and Development Maintenance Plan. Most towns do not have this.

The Municipal Open Space Tax fund was reviewed in more detail. This money is the amount each municipality gets back from the County Open Space tax annually. Currently East Amwell's amount is approximately \$21,000 a year. These funds can be banked, or spent annually. The rules for the use of these funds are governed by the State statute creating the Open Space Tax. The Municipality should spend the money as though it were the County. Acquisition of open space or farmland property, historic preservation, debt service payment related to acquisition, and the development, improvement, and maintenance of open space facilities are approved uses. If the County, or a Municipality, wants to spend money to develop, improve or maintain a property, it needs a Recreation and Development Maintenance plan to demonstrate that the Municipality will be good stewards of the park development.

FOSPC members were interested in creating a Recreation and Development Maintenance Plan for East Amwell. As there is only one plan in Hunterdon County, there is no template for this plan. It was suggested that the Parks and Recreation Committee should contact Bill for assistance so that we can have a funding source to maintain Clawson Park.

The Committee thanked Bill and Ken for the presentation.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

OLD BUSINESS

1. SADC Appropriations Meeting Update

The Committee reviewed the meeting with the SADC staff regarding state Appropriations. It was recognized that, due to their bureaucratic process, it would be easier for East Amwell to purchase properties to preserve and then submit an application to the SADC for reimbursement. The SADC staff seemed comfortable with this process, as long as the State appraisal process was used. It is hoped that various land trusts will be able to assist us in this endeavor. It was noted that East Amwell is ahead of other Townships in terms of preserving farmland.

2. Hunterdon County Community Day

Members were requested to sign up for a time at the East Amwell booth. It was noted that at least four members would be participating. There had been concern from the Environmental Commission running the booth that there would not be enough people to watch Mr. Jarick's chicks, but he was not sure that they need that much attention, since they would be in a cage. Ms. Fullerton will follow up with the Environmental Commission to confirm names and contact information.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Annual Report

The wording for the annual report was reviewed. Some tweaking of the document was needed. It was noted that the first and third paragraphs belong closer together, as they reference similar topics. Ms. Fullerton will work on rewriting the paragraphs so they can flow better.

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Committee members decided that FOSPC should request Banish to update the Open Space Map with the properties that have closed in the last two years filled in with the appropriate color. As we are still waiting for Higgins Phase 2 to close, it was decided to indicate this with hatch marks, which will make more of an impact on the map.

REPORTS:

Administrator's Report

It was noted that the total spent out of the Open Space Trust fund has gone up to \$4,405.93, for the maintenance of Clawson Park and the recreation fields. The revenue has gone up, since tax payments have been made. The Township received \$2,006.05. As noted earlier in the meeting, the Township just received the Township's portion of the County Open Space Tax for the past two years, which totaled \$43,998. This money will be used for Clawson House debt.

Mr. Fick and Ms. Fullerton met with County staff on April 18. At this meeting, Mr. Millette suggested that the County would like to manage two Township properties adjacent to a County property. Mr. Gardner moved a motion allowing the County to manage these properties. Mr. Wolfe seconded it and the Committee members all agreed.

It was noted that SADC should be discussing the appropriations at their monthly meetings this summer or fall. Ms. Fullerton plans to attend these meetings, in case East Amwell needs to be represented.

NJCF is working on an application to the Planning Board for a subdivision to cut out the pond on Block 35 Lot 2. It is anticipated that this should be a simple application, but it still needs to comply with all the legal requirements of a subdivision application.

The Van Doren property did close on April 27, 2018 with the SADC buying the development rights.

Historic Preservation Report:

Ms. Sageser submitted a report via email: The HP committee and Historical Society will participate in Community Day. We will share the tent provided by Dee Kellogg and the Environmental Committee. Mary Van Horn is arranging our volunteer roster.

We have been invited to participate in the Sourland Festival and are working on logistics. Clawson House is coming along well and an opening date of September 22 is planned.

Agricultural Advisory Committee:

Ms. Wiggum reported for the AAC: Letters on Deer Management will be going out with the farm assessment forms. Part of this letter will include an inquiry about any interested people to participate in Deer Management.

Environmental Commission:

Mr. Rue reported for the Environmental Commission: Dee Kellogg is Chair, Lisa Davis is Vice Chair. James Edwards is a new member. The EC is still missing one member. They went to the Township Committee asking for funds to do a new Environmental Resource Inventory, as it has not been updated since 1974. The Township Committee did not approve the funds for a consultant, but wanted to do more research. At this point, Mr. Rue and Mr. Wolfe expressed confusion, as each person's understanding of the current status of this request differed. More

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information is needed to clarify the final action for the Environmental Resource Inventory. The Environmental Commission will be sending out letters to property owners with Conservation Easements, as the Township is supposed to monitor the easements yearly. The plant swap will be this Saturday and the clean-up was the busiest they have had.

CORRESPONDENCE

An article that Mr. Wolfe had found was copied and shared as correspondence. There was a letter from Green Acres announcing their updated Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. This document had been emailed to FOSPC members. There was a letter from Stefanie Miller with an update on the SADC activities for the month of April.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be June 11, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Gardner made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Wolfe to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8.58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recording Secretary
_____date_____