

CALL TO ORDER AND OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS NOTICE

Chair Glorianne Robbi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Glorianne Robbi; David Wang-Iverson; Joan Sank; Tim Martin; Fred Gardner; Dee Kellogg; Barbara Sageser. Absent: Kat Cannelongo; Pete Fick

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chair Glorianne Robbi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Clerk Terri Stahl noted that this is regular meeting pursuant to the meeting notice published in the January 21, 2016 issue of the Hunterdon County Democrat. On March 8, 2016, 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. There being no members of the public present, motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Joan Sank, and carried unanimously to close to the public.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Glorianne Robbi distributed the latest list of members to the Committee. January 11, 2016, Minutes were approved on a motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Tim Martin, and carried unanimously. Glorianne Robbi thanked the committee for their support and added her appreciation to Tim Martin for accepting the Vice Chair position.

BILLS OF THE EVENING

A bill for \$80.00 for Tim Martin’s registration at the NJ Land Conservation Rally on March 19 was approved on a motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Joan Sank, and carried unanimously.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Glorianne Robbi added the Job Posting and Description for the Farmland/Open Space Preservation Committee Administrator.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Higgins Parcel: Lisa MacCollum, Assistant Director of Land Acquisition, and Greg Romano, Assistant Director and Director of Statewide Land Acquisition, from New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) were present for this discussion.

Lisa MacCollum’s presentation on the Higgin’s property noted that a first “drive-by” appraisal was \$17,000 per acre. A second appraisal will be done this Wednesday. Ms. MacCollum said that lower appraisals will mean less for the purchase price. She highlighted the committed funds, including funding

from NJCF; Raritan Headwaters, an anonymous donation, East Amwell Green Acre funds, NJCF Capital funds, and County funds for a total of \$1,806,000. An additional \$250,000 still needs to be raised unless the Foundation contributes more funding. Ms. MacCollum mentioned that they are “pretty confident” about completing the first phase and moving on to the next two phases. Glorianne Robbi mentioned not anticipating County funding until the CMV (certified market value) was determined. Ms. MacCollum said that the next appraisal results will be available in a month and thereafter the CMV will be set, then onto surveys, title work, and environmental studies.

A list of open items prepared by Pam Thier was read into the record. Ms. MacCollum said that she and Pam Thier were working on the cooperative purchase agreement, and she will finish it. A “strike-out” in the agreement re: East Amwell transferring the property to NJCF was briefly discussed; the Township agreed that NJCF would be taking ownership and management of the property. Some further discussion took place on whether or not to sign the agreement now or wait until the CMV was set; it was agreed that the Township Committee will look at the agreement in April and if need be, an amendment will be made closer to closing to include the CMV.

Fred Gardner asked about the use of the Higgins property by the Amwell Valley Trail Association and a gun club. It was agreed that the land would have public access. Ms. MacCollum said that management agreements would have to be signed by both organizations. Mr. Romano briefly commented on the process to assign hunters on the property.

Motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Joan Sank, and carried unanimously to proceed and recommend to the Township Committee the contract for participation in the agreement with NJCF for the acquisition and purchase of the Higgins property, Phase 1, as drafted.

Ms. MacCollum spoke about discussions with Mr. Higgins about the phase 2 and 3 acquisitions with the possibility of an agricultural subdivision being explored. Fred Gardner mentioned the changes in terrain on the large parcel.

The Committee and NJCF exchanged comments about funding changes forth-coming, including whether Green Acres will be giving grants and problems associated with the Governor pocket-vetoing the legislation to award funds. Comments were also exchanged about the length of time that the planning for the Higgins preservation has been on-going. Both East Amwell and NJCF will go back to Green Acres for future funding for the property.

Ms. MacCollum will provide a clean copy of the acquisition agreement for the Township Committee to review for their meeting on April 14.

Glorianne Robbi asked about NJCF’s capital campaign funding. Mr. Romano added that the acquisition of the Higgins property is a high priority for NJCF, i.e., between East Amwell and Somerset, 1,000 acres will be preserved when done.

The Committee thanked Ms. MacCollum and Mr. Romano for coming this evening. Some comments were made by Committee members regarding obtaining funding for the next phases.

Candice Wiggums came into the meeting at this time and announced that she was just appointed as the Agricultural Advisory Liaison. The Committee welcomed her.

ROSI LIST

Glorianne Robbi explained that before she left, Pam Thier completed an up to date ROSI list, which was an inventory of the recreation and conservation areas owned by the Township in its entirety or partially. She and David Wang-Iverson will take a copy to the County at a meeting on Wednesday, and a copy was submitted to Green Acres with the completed grant application. Dee Kellogg asked about the benefit to owning more land, asking if this is why Pam struck out the NJCF ownership clause in the Higgins agreement. Glorianne Robbi said that by owning the property, there are management issues and also upon preservation, the land comes off the tax rolls. Glorianne also provided information on a Green Acres compliance visit last year, during which the Officer felt that East Amwell was doing an “excellent job.” She also mentioned that Pam Their has now obtained a new position at Green Acres in the stewardship and compliance section.

OLD BUSINESS

Open Space Trust Fund Plan: Glorianne Robbi explained a change to Hunterdon County’s plan that was first released at the end of 2015; it met with opposition by many of the municipalities with its intent to redistribute the funds. A 2/2/16 press release from the County Dept. of Planning, Economic Development, and Land Use was distributed, indicating that the money will continue to be appropriated according to the 2008 ballot question.

NEW BUSINESS

Job Posting and Description for the FOSPC Administrator: Glorianne Robbi said that both were updated as of last week and posted on the Township’s Bulletin Board and on the website. They were also sent electronically to all the Hunterdon County municipalities and to some non-profits. She will attend a career workshop at the Land Conservation Rally on Friday and distribute copies there. She asked that Committee members “get the word out.”

Land Owner Outreach: Glorianne Robbi provided handouts to the members, including the May 2015 Updated Preservation List, a list of targeted farms, and the ROSI list. The lists were discussed in detail regarding property owners who have been contacted by phone or letter in the last six months, property owners contacted directly by the SADC, and properties contacted by non-profits. Committee members reviewed the lists, commenting on some of the properties. Glorianne Robbi noted one property on the list (Drift) that was acquired with federal funds and is monitored by Hunterdon Land Trust. Barbara Sageser commented on one property (Perkovich) with an historic house.

Dee Kellogg asked about prime soil v. state soil. Glorianne Robbi explained that prime soil scored higher as being quality agricultural land. Fred Gardner commented on woodland being less desirable for farm preservation. Further comments about the Higgins land (later phases) were mentioned, i.e., slopes, forested area, an old air strip, etc.

REPORTS

Glorianne Robbi reported about the satisfactory preliminary assessment on the Mudd Property, a two acres parcel with no frontage that D & R Greenways is interested in acquiring because of proximity to other preserved land.

Fred Gardner said that the Planning Board is continuing their work with the COAH issue.

Candice Wiggum said that the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be working on a new mission statement.

Dee Kellogg said that the Environmental Commission is working with Blaine Hummel on the Roadside Clean up and continuing their work on easement inspections (water and environmental). Letters regarding access to the easements are being revised to encourage more participation.

Barbara Sageser spoke about Historic Preservation continuing their work on photographs of historic dwellings for the Hunterdon County Master Plan with a large number of dwellings, and the County asked for more places to be included. There will be a second open house at Clawson House on April 16 and 17 from 1 – 3 p.m. The East Amwell Historic Society is working on more grants to for work at Clawson House with a goal of completion in two years. Jim Davidson will give another presentation of the Dark-side of the Sourlands on April 1.

Glorianne Robbi announced that Greenfest has been cancelled for 2016, but there is a group of people interested in working on the structure of the event for 2017.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The meeting was open to the public. There being no members of the public present, motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Tim Martin, and carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

NEXT MEETING The next meeting will be scheduled for May 9 if there is any business.

ADJOURNMENT Motion to adjourn was made by Joan Sank, seconded by Tim Martin, and carried unanimously at 8:55 p.m.

Terri Stahl, RMC/CMC, Municipal Clerk

