

SUSSEX COUNTY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 24, 2011

The meeting opened at 7:38 p.m. by Chairman Lundin in the Freeholder Meeting Room at the Sussex County Administrative Center, One Spring Street, Newton, New Jersey. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-1 of 1975, as amended. Notice has been forwarded to the newspapers and posted on the bulletin board maintained at the Sussex County Administrative Center for public announcement.

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cliff Lundin, Chairman
Glenn Schweizer, Vice Chairman
Lisa Chammings
Wolfgang Gstattenbauer
Lori Intoccia
Keith Utter

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Ailish Hambel

STAFF PRESENT: Donna Traylor, CADB Coordinator
Antoinette Wasiewicz, Recording Secretary
Freeholder Liaison Rich Vohden

ALSO PRESENT: None

For the benefit of the four new members, Chairman Lundin took a few moments for introductions.

MINUTES CORRECTION/APPROVAL:

A motion was made by Glen Schweizer to approve the Minutes of July 22, 2010, as presented. The motion was seconded by Cliff Lundin. All were in favor, with abstentions from Lisa Chammings, Wolfgang Gstattenbauer, Lori Intoccia and Keith Utter. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Glen Schweizer to approve the Minutes of September 23, 2010, as presented. The motion was seconded by Cliff Lundin. All were in favor, with abstentions from Lisa Chammings, Wolfgang Gstattenbauer, Lori Intoccia and Keith Utter. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Glen Schweizer to approve the Minutes of October 28, 2010, as presented. The motion was seconded by Cliff Lundin. All were in favor, with abstentions from Lisa Chammings, Wolfgang Gstattenbauer, Lori Intoccia and Keith Utter. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

A. FREEHOLDER RESOLUTION OF APPROVAL FOR 2010 APPLICATIONS, 11/23/10:

The Freeholder Board gave Final Approval for last year's applications for the full amounts that were recommended. Last year there were three applications which were evaluated by the Open Space Committee. There were presentations by each of the applicants and the Committee visited the parcels. The Committee made a determination and a recommendation to the Freeholder Board.

The contracts for the three current projects have not gone out yet. The Final Approval was received in November and typically, County Counsel has contracts out within 30 to 60 days. As the program developed there were some challenges with the existing contract and County Counsel has been working on the contract language. All three applicants were notified that they are going to be funded.

B. PIG AMENDMENT, GREEN ACRES, 11/23/10:

An Amendment to the Green Acres Project Agreement for Sussex County's Planning Incentive Grant has been received. This Amendment extends the project period until November 9, 2012. The project must be completed and funding disbursed within this time period.

C. NJ FOREST LEGACY SUPPORT, J. ESKILSON, 11/30/10:

County Administrator, John Eskilson, sent a letter to the USDA Forest Service in support of "Working Forests, Healthy Forests" application by NJDEP and The Land Conservancy of New Jersey for Forest Legacy Funding for federal fiscal year 2012. The preservation of over 3,000 acres of New Jersey is an ambitious project and will be difficult to accomplish without the assistance of the Forest Legacy Program.

D. D. SNYDER RESIGNATION, 12/28/10:

A letter was received from Dennis Snyder resigning from the Open Space Committee effective January 1, 2011. Mr. Snyder said he is now retired and plans to spend winters in warmer climates and therefore, would not be able to attend meetings regularly. He thanked Donna and the members for the opportunity to serve on the committee.

E. APPOINTMENT OF G. SCHWEIZER TO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, 1/5/11:

A Resolution was received from the Sussex County Clerk of the Board regarding the appointment of Glenn Schweizer to the Open Space Advisory Committee. Mr. Schweizer was appointed for a 3-year term, expiring on December 31, 2013.

F. REQUEST FOR FUNDING UPDATE, D. TRAYLOR TO B. RE, 1/26/11:

Donna sent a memo to the County Treasurer advising him of certain parcels in open space that had withdrawn and the dates that some reimbursements have occurred.

G. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR TO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, 1/27/11:

A Resolution was received from the Sussex County Clerk of the Board designating Cliff Lundin to serve as Chairperson and Glen Schweizer to serve as Vice-Chairperson of the Open Space Advisory Committee for the year 2011.

H. APPOINTMENT OF L. INTOCCIA TO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, 1/27/11;

A Resolution was received from the Sussex County Clerk of the Board regarding the appointment of Lori Intoccia to the Open Space Advisory Committee. Ms. Intoccia fills the unexpired term of Dennis Snyder for a term beginning immediately and expiring on December 31, 2011.

I. APPOINTMENT OF L. CHAMMINGS TO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, 1/27/11:

A Resolution was received from the Sussex County Clerk of the Board regarding the appointment of Lisa Chammings to the Open Space Advisory Committee. Ms. Chammings fills the unexpired term of Lou Cherepy for a term beginning immediately and expiring on December 31, 2011.

J. APPOINTMENT OF W. GSTATTENBAUER TO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, 1/27/11:

A Resolution was received from the Sussex County Clerk of the Board regarding the appointment of Wolfgang Gstattenbauer to the Open Space Advisory Committee. Mr.

Gstattenbauer fills the unexpired term of Richard Vohden for a term beginning immediately and expiring on December 31, 2012.

K. COMMON WATERS FUND, 2/14/11:

An e-mail was received from Stephanie Pendergrass regarding the launch of the Common Waters Fund. This new fund will provide cash grants to support the protection of forests, in places throughout the watershed that are especially critical for protecting drinking water supplies. The Common Waters Fund hopes to award one million dollars in grants over the next 18 months for land protection and forest management actions designed to protect streams and keep forests as forests. This fund is a new initiative by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, with the financial support of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and will be divided among NJ, NY and PA applicants.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. UPDATE ON CLOSINGS:

Donna provided the Committee with a chart outlining the history of the Open Space projects. The program began in 2002. The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (then the Morris Land Conservancy) was hired as the County's consultant to prepare an Open Space Plan. An approved Open Space Plan is needed in order to receive State Planning Incentive Grant monies. The first funding round was also in 2002.

The chart showed projects that have already been finalized and whether it was through fee simple or through a conservation easement. Donna explained that the lands are preserved in perpetuity and there are recorded land use restrictions. The chart also showed projects that were given approvals but were withdrawn by the applicant and projects that have not been given approvals.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. REVIEW OF OPEN SPACE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS:

Rules and Regulations – The Rules and Regulations were adopted as revised in July 2004. The Open Space Program began with a ballot question in 2000 to authorize funding for a dedicated tax. Prior to that, the County had a \$3 million bond act for Farmland Preservation. Once the Garden State Preservation Trust was enacted as a stable funding source for 10 years, the Counties needed to mirror that so that they would have money available and be eligible under the program requirements at the State and Federal levels to utilize these monies.

Donna reviewed the Rules and Regulations and explained in detail the following: Eligible and Ineligible Applicants; Eligible and Ineligible Acquisitions; the Allocation of Funds; the Creation of the Sussex County Open Space Trust Fund Advisory Committee; Terms of Office; Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson; Acquisition Strategies; Amendments; and Definitions.

Application Package – A copy of last year's Application Package was provided to the Committee members. Donna said that prior Committee members have gone through the application and made some major changes. A cover letter goes out with the application to all of the towns and environmental non-profits that have shown an interest in this program. The Application will be updated for this year if necessary. Donna asked the Committee to review the application before the next meeting. She plans to send the application out in March.

The application asks for basic information from the applicant regarding property characteristics; the owner description and development characteristics. A tax map is required which outlines boundaries of the site and identifies adjacent land uses. A street map showing the property location is also required. The application also asks for information regarding the owner of the property and project costs. Lastly, a One Page Narrative that highlights specific aspects of the property is required.

Applications are due in August and site evaluations are done between the August and September Open Space meetings. During the September meeting, the applicants do a conceptual presentation and answer any questions that were raised during the site evaluations. Evaluations and recommendations are usually done in October.

Funding – Donna explained that the County funding is through a Dedicated Tax and at one point, it collected \$7.4 million. During the economic downturn in 2009 the tax was decreased, resulting in \$2.8 million being collected. Last year the tax was again decreased by another 50% and the County raised \$1.4 million. Currently, there is talk that the tax will be decreased by another 50%, bringing the funding down to \$700,000. This decrease also brings down the dedicated tax to less than one half cent and will result in the loss of some Planning Incentive Grant funding.

The meeting was opened to the public.

Chairman Lundin asked Freeholder Liaison Vohden when the new budget would be approved. Freeholder Vohden said maybe at the next meeting. There was some discussion about sending a letter to the Freeholder Board regarding the dedicated tax.

MOTION:

A motion was made by Glenn Schweizer to direct staff to prepare a letter from the Open Space Committee to the Freeholder Board to remind them of the critical nature to keep the dedicated tax above one half cent in order to keep the Open Space program viable. The motion was seconded by Lisa Chamings and carried unanimously.

B. PRESENTATION SUGGESTIONS:

Donna said that Eric Olsen did a great presentation on the Upper Delaware Watershed for the Common Waters Project. She also said that a survey on the Paulinskill Valley Trail is being done and a power point presentation would be available in the future. There is also a committee working with Rails to Trails. Chairman Lundin suggested that Donna arrange for Eric Olsen do his presentation at the next Open Space meeting.

C. APPROVAL OF 2011 MEETING DATES:

The Schedule of Meeting Dates for 2011 was provided to the Open Space Committee members prior to this evening's meeting. Chairman Lundin requested that for the month of September, the Open Space Committee meeting be changed from September 22 to September 29. Also, due to a conflict in Donna's schedule, the March meeting will be changed from March 24 to March 31.

MOTION:

A motion was made by Wolfgang Gstattenbauer to approve the 2011 Meeting Dates as amended. The motion was seconded by Glenn Schweizer and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

All business having been completed, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Keith Utter. The motion was seconded by Glen Schweizer and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.