

SUSSEX COUNTY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 25, 2016

The meeting opened at 7:30 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  
Louis Caruso  
Lisa Chammings  
Donald Ploetner

MEMBERS EXCUSED: R. Michael Dolan

STAFF PRESENT: Autumn Sylvester, Program Coordinator  
Antoinette Wasiewicz, Recording Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Freeholder Liaison Carl Lazzaro  
Jean Murphy, Vernon Township  
Rich Krasnomowitz, Hamburg Borough  
Mike Klune, Branchville Borough  
Gene Crawford, Montague Township  
George Lippencott, Stillwater Township  
Jack Branagan, Stillwater Township  
Sara Branagan, Stillwater Township  
Elide Young, Hopatcong Borough  
George Schilling, Hopatcong Borough  
Jule Gurman, Hopatcong Borough  
Alice Brees, Sussex County Division of Planning  
Jim Ayers, Frankford Township  
Alison Littell McHose, Franklin Borough  
Scott Olson, Byram Township  
Joe Sabatino, Byram Township  
John Morgan, Andover Borough  
Ed Szabo, Stillwater Township

Cliff Lundin welcomed those in attendance. He said the members of the Open Space Committee were appointed by the Freeholders and that they are advisory to the Freeholders. Sussex County has a long history of open space. In 2002, they adopted a referendum that provided funds for Farmland Preservation and Open Space at 90% for Farmland Preservation and 10% for Open Space. The original Open Space Committee commissioned the Morris Land Conservancy to do prepare an Open Space Plan for Sussex County, a requirement in order to qualify for State funds for Open Space acquisition. The Open Space Plan is now being updated by The Land Conservancy of New Jersey.

There was a separate referendum passed in 2005 that expanded the County acquisition program. Last fall, the Open Space Referendum passed by a wider margin than any of the three prior referendums. The County received a grant through the Open Space Institute as part of the Delaware River Planning Effort to receive a grant for The Land Conservancy to update the Open Space Master Plan. The Open Space Committee met with every town to discuss their needs. The County wants future acquisitions to be targeted to be the critical lands needed to protect water in Sussex County.

**MINUTES CORRECTION/APPROVAL:**

A motion was made by Glenn Schweizer to approve the Minutes of December 17, 2015, as presented. The motion was seconded by Donald Ploetner and carried unanimously.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Autumn provided the Open Space Committee with an article relating to the distribution of the Open Space Farmland Preservation funds from the business tax. There was also a request from the NJ Audubon looking for a letter of support in support of their NFWF Targeted Watershed Implementation Grant.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

A. OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE:

Mr. Lundin turned the meeting over to Barbara Heskins-Davis, the Vice President of Land Acquisitions for The Land Conservancy of New Jersey.

Ms. Davis thanked those who attended this evening's meeting. She noted that many of those in attendance this evening also attended the December 2015 meeting. She

introduced Miranda Spencer from the Open Space Institute. Ms. Davis said the Open Space Institute is involved with the William Penn Foundation, which has invested quite a bit of money into the protection of the Delaware River Watershed. The William Penn Foundation funded the Sussex County Open Space Plan update project. She also said that when she submitted her report of the plan update, she invited the Open Space Institute to meet with the Open Space Committee.

Ms. Davis said that the maps are still being worked on. Each town was provided with a copy of their Preserved and Public Land map. She did a Power Point Presentation of an update to the Open Space and Recreation plan which is also a follow-up to the 2015 Open Space Referendum which provided for the renewal of the Open Space Trust Fund. This update is strategic and targeted and will also address stewardship. She displayed a map of permanently protected land showing farmland preservation and open space conservation. There are several components to this update. There is the prioritization of water resources and the protection and stewardship of those water resources. They are also looking at the trails in Sussex County, how they connect and where the gaps are. Most of the towns named trails as their priority.

Barbara Davis did a Power Point Presentation which outlined the three different focus areas in identifying water importance: the Hydrology, Water Quality for both surface and aquifer water and Aquatic Ecosystem Functions. Each focus area has been broken down into Characteristics. For Focus Area 1, the Characteristics are: Identifying Hydrologically Stressed Watersheds; Preserve Prime Recharge Areas; Preserve Forest Areas; Preserve Wetlands; and Preserve Floodplains.

The Second Focus Area is for Stream and Aquifer Quality. The Characteristics for this focus area are: Maintain Forest Areas; Maintain Riparian Areas; Karst Topography; Preserve Wellhead Protection Areas; and Surface Water Reservoir Protection. The Third Focus Area is for Protecting Aquatic Ecosystem Functions. The Characteristics for this focus area are: Maintain Riparian Areas; Protect Headwaters to Streams; Preserve Wetlands; and Preserve Unique and Unusual Aquatic Habitats.

The meeting was opened up for questions from the public.

Scott Olson suggested that the maps show qualities of adjoining land where there is an unpreserved parcel in the middle of preserved parcels. Ms. Davis said the focus of this project is for water. Water values can be shown for protected lands. It will be very difficult to show if the land was protected for another value.

Dan Kadish asked if it were possible to reproduce the maps by municipality to go along with tax sheets. Chairman Lundin said the County does not have the funds to do that but the system and data will be available. It was always the plan to make the information usable and accessible to the municipalities. Barbara Davis said the perfect follow-up grant is to create an interactive model.

Ed Szabo asked if it is anticipated that imminent domain will be used in the acquisition of properties. Chairman Lundin said the Open Space Committee's primary goal has been that for every purchase, there is a willing seller. The Freeholders have been very clear that they do not want this used for condemnation purposes. The County also needs endorsement from the municipality. Barbara Davis said that The Land Conservancy works throughout the State and she has never seen a County, through their Open Space Program, use imminent domain.

Jack Branagan asked for more information about grant funding. Barbara Davis said there is grant funding available for both land acquisition and land stewardship. She said she is trying to set Sussex County up so that it can take this document and work in partnership with the volunteer boards to educate the towns as to what funding is available.

Nathaniel Sajdak said when Ms. Davis asked him to be a part of this project; he saw an opportunity to bring together open space acquisition and stewardship in a unique way. One of the funding sources Ms. Davis spoke about has provided a means for a lot of conservation partners to work together. His organization is directly involved with water quality, restoration and improvement projects. One of the ways to do that is to identify key areas of concern. This is an opportunity to take scientific data that identifies projects that will restore, maintain or enhance something in this County that has ecological or watershed significance.

Jim Ayers talked about the high water chestnuts problem. He felt that properties should be looked at to see if they have this invasive species because it has the ability to destroy ponds and lakes.

No other comments were offered. Chairman Lundin said that additional comments may be emailed to either Autumn Sylvester, himself or directly to Barbara Davis. When the Open Space Committee visited the towns, at least four towns said that they either had projects ready to go or had projects that they were interested in. The Open Space Committee will take applications anytime during the year. He encouraged the towns to bring their applications in.

A member of the public requested a copy of the Power Point Presentation. Ms. Davis said she will be able to send them out in a week. Autumn suggested that anyone who wanted a copy of the presentation, add their email address to the sign in sheet.

B. LETTER OF SUPPORT – NJ AUDUBON DELAWARE RIVER RESTORATION GRANT APPLICATION:

The Open Space Committee was provided with a copy of the letter of support to the NJ Audubon.

**MOTION:**

A motion was made by Donald Ploetner authorizing Autumn to send a letter of support to the NJ Audubon Society for the Delaware River Restoration Grant Application. The motion was seconded by Louis Caruso and carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

All business having been completed, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Donald Ploetner. The motion was seconded by Glenn Schweizer and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.