

SUSSEX COUNTY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

APRIL 28, 2011

The meeting opened at 7:40 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
Ailish Hambel
Lori Intoccia

MEMBERS EXCUSED: None

STAFF PRESENT: Donna Traylor, CADB Coordinator

ALSO PRESENT: Eric Olsen, the Nature Conservancy

MINUTES CORRECTION/APPROVAL:

Minutes were not available.

CORRESPONDENCE:

A. GREEN ACRES OPEN SPACE AWARDS:

A letter was received from Governor Christie advising that DEP and the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) have approved Sussex County's application for Green Acres matching grant of \$900,000. This funding is contingent upon the passage of a legislative appropriation.

Donna said that the Open Space Program still has \$300,000-\$400,000 of previous Planning Incentive Grant Funds available that must be used by the end of November 9, 2012. This \$900,000 is a 25% match and not a 50% match because the County's Open Space tax is below the ½ cent threshold. Donna said she is looking into whether the previous funds will also be at a 25% match.

B. SUSSEX RAIL TRAIL BROCHURE:

The Sussex County Chamber of Commerce is the designated marketing organization for Sussex County. They received a significant grant from Division of Travel and Tourism last year and this year to do certain marketing projects for the County. The Chamber is working with the County's GIS office to develop a Rail Trail brochure. Donna said that she is on a Rail Trail Committee with Dave Kunz, from the County GIS office, the County Planning Director, Eric Snyder, Neal Leitner and many others from various organizations.

Donna distributed a draft base map which was prepared by the County GIS office using as much information as was available through The Nature Conservancy, Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge and NJ State Parks. The map shows the existing rail trails, parking facilities, visitor centers and restroom facilities. Donna stressed that this map is a starting point and is only the first version of the map. She said once the brochure comes out, each of the Committee members will have a copy to review for their input.

The meeting was opened to the public.

Eric Olsen, Andover Township said he is the Chairman of the Andover Green Team. He said he brought a concept of free bike rentals by hotels to the attention of the Town Committee.

The meeting was closed to the public.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. UPDATE ON CLOSINGS, WITHDRAWALS:

Donna provided the Committee with a chart showing the closings to date. She said there are a few projects for which the towns never requested their funding. There are two projects in Sparta, one in 2005, that closed and the Township has not yet requested the funding.

Donna said she did a complete package of all the projects that were withdrawn. This will bring the County Treasurer's records up to date. It appears the \$229,000 from the withdrawn Papakating Creek project and \$95,000 from the withdrawn Muckshaw Pond project will be available for this round. Muckshaw Pond was a Nature Conservancy project and on the chart it shows that it closed. However, there are no records to show that monies were distributed. After some research it was discovered that there was one application with two different block and lot numbers, two different owners. One of them closed, the other didn't. The contract was contingent upon both parcels. Since only one closed, it rendered the contract null and void.

Total dedicated tax monies being projected for this year is about \$677,000, less salaries and ancillary costs for both farmland and open space programs, leaving about a half million for acquisitions at a 90%/10% split. With monies from cancelled projects, Donna projected about \$350,000 available for this year. Planning Incentive Grant money is also available.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. PRESENTATION: COMMON WATERS AND DELAWARE RIVER PROJECTS,
ERIC OLSEN, TNC:

Eric Olsen said he works for The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey and he was recently promoted to run the Conservancy program along the Delaware River. His jurisdiction covers four states. The Nature Conservancy is celebrating their 60th year and has preserved 116 million acres worldwide. They are a science based organization, which identifies areas of biological diversity and then finds appropriate partners to conserve the natural areas they identified through conservation planning.

He did a Power Point Presentation showing the areas in New Jersey they've identified as having biodiversity. He said that 42% of New Jersey is still forested and much of it is held privately. The Delaware River watershed is 13,500 square miles and is the largest free-flowing river on the east coast, one of the top five in the country. This watershed provides drinking water for 15 million people. The Delaware River also has intact fish habitat and is the largest freshwater port in the world.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provided funding to TNC for a Delaware River Basin Conservation Initiative. They are doing an analysis of the entire Delaware River Basin to determine the places that would be best for protection and restoration. A map will be created to highlight projects where protection and restoration efforts are recommended. They will lobby Congress and the Senate to reintroduce the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act which will appropriate \$5 million toward the projects they identify.

Mr. Olsen talked about their ecological system targets, such as headwaters, wetlands, floodplains, large rivers, tidal marshes and marine bivalve shellfish. Because they are looking at restoration as well as protection, there might be a good opportunity to employ best management practices in the agricultural areas, plan riparian corridors, reduce nutrient runoff, etc.

The Common Waters Partnership was created four years ago. It started as a group of Federal, County, local and non-profit partners that gathered to work towards the establishment of better communication and collaboration across the three state boundaries of the upper Delaware River. Their mission is to conserve clean water and natural places through cooperation, education and research.

B. PRESENTATION SUGGESTIONS:

Donna said that one of the Committee members suggested a presentation on the Paulinskill Valley Trail and that she would try to arrange it for either the May or June meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

All business having been completed, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Glen Schweizer. The motion was seconded by Ailish Hambel and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.