

Open Space Advisory Committee – April 13, 2010

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m.

Attendance

Present: Andreoli, Baran, Cronce, Fisher (Twp. Committee Liaison), Kowalski, Pfeiffer, Sommers-Sayre

Late Arrival: None

Absent: Hess

Opportunity for Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Approval of written record for 09Mar2010 meeting

Deferred to next meeting.

Future Open Space Planning – Discussion

2010 Municipal Budget & Open Space Tax Discussion – Pfeiffer noted that he had asked Township Committeeman George Fisher to attend tonight to give the Committee an update on the municipal budget. Fisher outlined the shortfall in this year's budget and the process that has been taken to try to balance the budget. He indicated that the Township Committee is discussing reducing the Open Space tax to offset tax increases elsewhere. He indicated no decision has been made and it would in part depend on what happens over the next several months with the municipal aid cuts in the state budget. Fisher noted that reducing the Open Space tax could only be accomplished via referendum. Pfeiffer asked what he should be telling landowners at this point, in particular for projects that have been in the pipeline for a while. Fisher noted that there have been discussions to reduce the tax to a level just sufficient to cover debt service but no decisions have been made. The Committee discussed the potential short and long-range impacts of the proposal on the Township's preservation program, including availability of matching funds to compete for state and county grant funding, potential lower ranking of projects in programs funded directly by the state due to lower "local commitment," potential impact on Township's bond rating, and the long-term tax benefits of preserved land vs. development. It was noted that the Township voters recently approved referendums for both county and state preservation funding. Fisher also noted that money for salary and wages for maintenance of the detention basins in Calton may be paid from open space trust funds, although the matter is still in flux. There was some discussion on costs and time associated with the work involved.

Discussion Re: Toll Project – John Cronce volunteered to lead the management of the Toll project to maintain farmland assessment and so it can be prepared for

sale. Glen Baran is working with the Community Forestry Committee in obtaining an inventory of the trees on the property. Priority is to prepare the property for sale as soon as possible. Demolition and mowing needs to be coordinated to comply with state and county requirements. Pfeiffer noted that he met with Max Spann and Max Spann, Jr. recently to obtain their recommendations for preparing the property for auction. There was some discussion about whether some income might be generated from the property by permitting hunting.

Discussion Re: Open Space Plan – Updates to the Conservation Plan of the Master Plan are underway. Sommers-Sayre & Kowalski will work with Pfeiffer to update the Open Space section.

Municipal Farmland Preservation PIG Application (2009/2010/2011 funding rounds) – Linda Weber is continuing to work on revisions.

Green Acres Funding – Nothing new to report.

Easement Monitoring

Letter from DEP Green Acres re: Easement Monitoring – No new information reported by Baran.

Update on easement monitoring activities –Baran put up a chain on the former Toll property and will continue working on posting the property.

Easement Markers for New Development – Nothing new to report.

Miscellaneous Project Updates

Discussion Re: Training Video – Attendance list will be used to document the viewer list. Either the DVD or on-line system is available to all committee members.

Gulick Road County Parkland Update – East Amwell is apparently proceeding without West Amwell Township participation but the Parks & Recreation Committee is reaching out to be more proactive.

Open Space Newsletter – Ideas were solicited by Sommers-Sayre for this year's document. Suggestions included a breakdown of the Toll acquisition costs reflecting that most of the cost was paid for by outside sources. Cost savings of using volunteers rather than paid staff should also be emphasized.

County Municipal Grant Application – Toll project will be used for the application this year.

Open Space Map Updates – Hess will need to update map to reflect Toll project closing.

Project Assignments

No additional project assignments were made.

Farmland Preservation Project Update

- Next Farmland Preservation status meeting at the Hunterdon County Planning Board is on April 21.
- Amwell Hunt, Block 8, Lots 20 & 36, 130.36 acres, Route 179/Rock-Lamb Rd.
Toll Brothers South, also known as West Amwell Ltd. Closed on March 16. Pfeiffer reported on status.
- Gulick III (Block 14, Lot 33.05) ~17 acres, Gulick Road
Agricultural division of land from Gulick I. As a condition of CADB approval for Gulick I, the Gulicks have signed an option agreement granting West Amwell Township and Hunterdon County a five year option agreement, expiring February 28, 2013, to purchase a development rights easement for CMV, which remains to be determined. Farm ranks sufficiently high to be funded via the County FIG. Appraisals completed and submitted by County to SADC for certification.
- Nunn (Block 8, Lot 29.01) ~30 acres, Mill Road
Liaison: Pfeiffer
Nunns returned the required option agreement to the County prior to the deadline. Farm will be pursued via the Municipal FIG. County will help with the GIS mapping.

Green Acres Project Update

- Bowers (Block 28, Lot 26) ~21.5 acres, Goat Hill Road
Potential conservation easement project.
- Kilmer (Block 8, Lots 14 & 15), ~62 acres, Route 179
Conservation easement project. Under contract. Environmental assessment and survey approved by Green Acres. Application approved by Board of Adjustment in March. Kilmer has requested modification of exception area.
- King (Block 13, Lot 65) ~14 acres, Mt. Airy-Harbourton Road.
Potential conservation easement project.
- Lawson (Block 16, Lot 6.01) ~15 acres, Route 518.
Potential direct state acquisition. Pfeiffer spoke with Jesse Lawson over the holidays and put him in touch with Catherine Drake. Mr. Lawson is interested in selling approximately 15 acres of his 23 acre property directly to the state. Property is surrounded by Green Acres property on three sides. Catherine Drake has confirmed application has been received by Green Acres.

Bill List

The following bills was received from Cortes & Hay, Inc.:

\$4655.95 – Toll (Title Insurance) – Billed to Toll Brothers Ord. 05-2009.

The following bills were received from Sharon Dragan, Esq.:

\$58.80 – Attend County Meeting (Feb) – Billed to Reserve for Preliminary Expenses.

\$44.10 – Attend County Meeting (March)– Billed to Reserve for Preliminary Expenses.

\$176.40 – Kilmer – Billed to Kilmer Ord. 21-2009.

\$102.90 – Kilmer – Billed to Kilmer Ord. 21-2009.

\$20.00 – Stiefel (1099 Fee) – Billed to Reserve for Preliminary Expenses.

\$2249.10 – Toll (West Amwell Ltd.) – Billed to Toll Brothers Ord. 05-2009.

\$3454.50 – Toll (West Amwell Ltd.) – Billed to Toll Brothers Ord. 05-2009.

Correspondence

No additional correspondence was discussed.

Opportunity for Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Kowalski with a second by Andreoli. Motion carried on voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Next Meeting

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 11, 2010, 7:30 p.m.