

The regular meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Present for this meeting were the following Committee members: John Cronce, Jamie Kamph, Dan Malek, Judith O'Brien, and Cathy Urbanski. Board Secretary, Christine Rosikiewicz, was also present. Marla Ashton, George Fisher (Township Committee Liaison), Rich Schaible, and Hal Shute were absent.

### **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Sean Pfeiffer spoke about conversations he has had with Toll Brothers in recent months. An appraisal application was submitted. Mr. Pfeiffer confirmed that appraisals had been completed and are acceptable to Toll Brothers. They are awaiting a resolution from the Township. Mr. Cronce has also been in contact with the County. Mr. Pfeiffer asked if the resolution was adopted by Township Committee; Mr. Cronce confirmed that it was and that the resolution will go to the County. Mr. Pfeiffer said he will talk to Toll Brothers. Mr. Cronce confirmed that the resolution was also sent to Toll Brothers. Mr. Cronce inquired to Mr. Pfeiffer if it looks right to someone on the outside that Mr. Pfeiffer is discussing this with Toll Brothers. Mr. Pfeiffer replied that if they want to call him as a courtesy he will certainly disclose it to the Committee. A brief discussion took place about the meeting being public, the conversation Mr. Pfeiffer had with Toll Brothers, and Mr. Cronce not having a problem with it.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**February 11, 2014: Ms. Urbanski made a motion to approve the minutes with typographical corrections and the following correction as noted:**

**Page 3, under Hunter Property: delete "Ms. Kamph reported that this property is up for sale"; second sentence should read: "This property will be removed from the agenda."**

**Ms. Kamph seconded the motion. All were in favor; the meeting minutes were approved with Judith O'Brien abstaining.**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### Green Acres Projects

Wooden North: Mr. Cronce reported that the only concerns are the hunting and farming on the property. There will be a meeting with the farmer in the next month. Mr. Cronce explained that since the Toll/Coleman property may be sold the hunting club utilizing that property will lose their rights to hunt on it. The club's contract runs from June to June.

The club asked the Hunting subcommittee (John Cronce, Rich Schiable, Hal Shute and Dan Malek) if they could hunt until the end of May when turkey season ends. Mr. Malek reported that he spoke to "Jim" in general about hunting and did not anticipate any problems with continuing hunting through the spring. Swapping with another property was mentioned as a possibility; this would be difficult as the new property is not in the program. This item will be on hold until the Hunting Committee can walk the proposed new property.

Halper: Mr. Cronce reported that preservation of this property is moving along. JCP&L is purchasing an easement to improve and enlarge the transfer station.

Farmland Preservation Projects

Toll North: Mr. Cronce reported that this property was accepted at market value. Mr. Pfeiffer said the only item outstanding is the resolution; Mr. Cronce will call the County follow up with them.

Coleman Farm/Toll South: This farm was auctioned; a bid was accepted by the Township. The paperwork was submitted to the State for approval. The State is questioning aspects of the auction including the advertising of it and the amount of signage. The property was mistakenly listed on Craig's List and the MLS for a minimum bid of \$800,000; the minimum bid should have been listed at \$400,000. The State is concerned the higher listing may have deterred possible buyers. The Township is going to meet with the State to discuss the sale of the property; Mr. Cronce suggested the Township have an attorney attend the meeting. Mr. Pfeiffer expressed his agreement and suggested an attorney.

Ms. Kamph inquired if the State would require the auction be run again. Mr. Cronce replied that it could. There was only one bidder for \$407,000. Three other individuals viewed the property a week before the auction. The price is higher than what it was a few years ago.

Mr. Cronce walked the farm with Mr. Rodriguez, the appraiser, last week; Mr. Rodriguez will provide an another appraisal to bring to the State meeting.

Ms. Kamph inquired what the original appraisal was. Mr. Pfeiffer said it was \$600,000, which is part of the reason the previous bid was rejected.

Mr. Cronce will attend the meeting with the State. He commented that there are over 6000 trees on the property which was a major complaint. Whoever purchases the farm will have to incur a huge cost to remove them before anything can be done with the land. Mr. Cronce provided proposals to remove the trees. He asked if removal of the trees could be taken off the top of the auction price. Mr. Pfeiffer explained that expenses would need approval from the State.

Ms. Kamph inquired if the trees could be sold. Mr. Cronce explained that he tried to sell them but was unsuccessful; he even contacted every shore community after Hurricane Sandy but there was no interest. Two different landscapers assessed the trees and said they are not worth anything. The three proposals for the tree removal were for \$143,000, \$148,000 and \$39,000.

Mr. Pfeiffer commented on the lack of tax revenue from the property.

Lambert: Mr. Cronce reported that Mr. Shute is working on this. The County is scheduled to visit the property.

Green Acres Projects (revisited)

Hewitt Park Expansion: Mr. Cronce reported that last month the Committee decided the proposed lot should not be purchased with Open Space funds. Since the last meeting Mr. Cronce, Mr. Malek and Mr. Shute visited the property. He reported that Green Acres funds could be used. The Township believes the property would be an asset if purchased. A favorable comment was made about the purchase; other comments were exchanged about the price being too high. The property is a one acre lot; it is unknown whether there is perk and water. The Township would need to determine if it could be used for additional parking.

Ms. Urbanski said Township Committee would like an appraisal. Ms. Kamph commented on spending Open Space funds and that the appraisal will cost money.

Mr. Cronce inquired if the Committee should advise Township Committee to use Green Acres funding. The Committee discussed whether this property was an asset including the frequency it would be used for parking at two times a year, it's favorable "fit" for parking for the park, and the high price of the property.

Mr. Pfeiffer said he was approached about this property seven years ago. A donation of the property to the Township was mentioned; this was also discussed by the Township Committee.

Mr. Cronce said this Committee can advise Township Committee if desired; this item would be tabled until the May meeting.

Other

Easement Inspections: Ms. Urbanski reported that the final grant report is ready for the easement project. She read over the report with the Committee. The work was completed by volunteers; sixty-five out of ninety-nine easements have been inspected and the remainder will be done this summer. The delay in completion is due to the snow and ice this past winter. Favorable comments were made about the new map. Ms. Urbanski went over the cost of the maps; every receipt and invoice needed to be scanned in and submitted. The report will be presented to Township Committee when complete. Mr. Cronce thanked Ms. Urbanski for all her hard work on this project.

Trails: Mr. Cronce reported that the Trail Committee discussed building a trail on the Calton property. Ms. Urbanski referred to the information on the NJ Trails website. She inquired about the trail on the municipal property. Favorable comments were made about the trail; mowing needs to be maintained.

Website: Ms. Urbanski will make sure the Committee page on the website is updated.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Hunter Property (B 30 L 12): The property owner would like to move the existing exception area. Mr. Fisher, Mr. Shute and Mr. Cronce met with the property owner. The Committee discussed this request and reviewed a map of the property. If the exception area was moved the existing buildings would need to be cleared out or there would be two exception areas. There is a public access easement around the property; the Township reserves the right to fence between the fields. There was discussion on whether a new road would need to be constructed if the exception area was moved. The effect of the move on the view on the property was discussed.

Ms. Rosikiewicz read for the record the April 3, 2014 letter to Mr. Shute from Allison L. (Bud) Etchells, Broker and Owner, Allison L. Etchells Real Estate Broker & Consultant, regarding the three acre non-severable exception being moved.

*Dear Mr. Shute,*

*As per my e-mails to you, after showing the property and improvements to prospective purchasers, I have been asked, if the Non Severable Exception can be moved. This would be predicated on the existing improvements be removed, the ground area that is under the improvements being restored.*

*All of the barns and outbuildings are totally spent or functionally and physically obsolete. The house also needs too much restoration that a purchaser would exceed the economic value of the improvement, far exceeding the value of a preserved property in the area.*

*As you are aware I have received correspondence from a Pam Thier, at DEP informing me, that it would be difficult and would need the blessing of West Amwell Township. Your last e-mail to me stated the Open Space Committee will be meeting next Tuesday and I would make myself available for that meeting to discuss this matter in further detail.*

*I have made two (2) maps, sketching a proposed area for the new improvements. I feel that the intent of the New Jersey Greenacres and West Amwell Township Farmland Preservation program would be greatly enhanced by a new agrabase being built, this is what the program is all about if considered.*

*Very truly yours,*

*Allison L. (Bud) Etchells*

*Broker and Owner*

It was mentioned that currently the fields are being mowed. Setting precedent was mentioned again.

The Committee agreed to send a letter to Township Committee to advise that they do not recommend the exception area allowed to be moved.

Ms. Kamph said the house is historic although it may not be on record. The property is sixty acres.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Mr. Pfeiffer will advise the Committee if he hears anything else from Toll Brothers.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting will be on May 13, 2014.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Urbanski made a motion, seconded by Ms. O'Brien, to adjourn the meeting at 8:37p.m. All were in favor; the motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Christine A. Rosikiewicz  
Open Space Secretary