

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee was called to order at 7:07 p.m. Present for this meeting were the following Committee members: John Cronce, George Fisher (arrived at 7:27 due to incorrect time on the agenda), Chris Kamnitsis, Rich Schaible, and Cathy Urbanski. Dan Malek, Jamie Kamph, and Hal Shute were absent. Christine Rosikiewicz, Committee Secretary, and John Dale, Township Committee Liaison, were also present.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

There was no public present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 12, 2016**

Ms. Urbanski commented that the minutes were “absolutely perfect” and made a motion to approve the January 12, 2016 minutes. Mr. Schaible seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed.

**OLD BUSINESS****Green Acres Projects**

**Green Acres Signage:** Mr. Cronce reported that this project is done.

**Farmland Preservation**

**Toll North (Amwell Chase):** Mr. Cronce reported that this property owner would like to request a State sign. This item will be taken off the agenda as it is preserved and has a new owner.

**Lambert:** This property is now preserved and will be taken off the agenda.

**Holcombe III:** Mr. Cronce reported that this property was appraised; Township Committee approved the appraisals.

**Fulper:** Mr. Cronce reported that Mr. Shute is taking care of this.

**Other**

**Farmland Preservation Signage:** Mr. Cronce spoke to Bill Millette and Rick Steffey at the County regarding putting signage on preserved land. This would show the taxpayers where their funds went to; when they drive by the land they would see the signs. Ms. Urbanski reported that the County has a printing department and can make the signs. Mr. Cronce said Raritan Township will also make signs for a fee. Ms. Urbanski will contact the County. She provided the Board with a draft of a sign she created. Mr. Cronce said the landowner he spoke to would like a Township sign rather than a State sign. Mr. Cronce suggested the following farms receive signs: Toll North on Rt. 179, Toll South, Lambert Farm, and Holcombe.

Mr. Cronce asked for the Committee’s permission to move forward with this project. Committee members commented favorably on providing Township signs and it was noted that Delaware Township has “gorgeous” signs. Ms. Urbanski asked for the Committee’s input on the sign design. It

will include the Township logo and “Thank You” to West Amwell, Hunterdon County, and the State of New Jersey. Mr. Cronce said DPW could install the signs.

Open Space Map/Conservation Easements: Ms. Urbanski updated the map and added all the conservation easements. The map includes all open space, preserved farmland, conservation easements, and County open space. She will replace the large map in the meeting room with the updated one. The cost for this update was very reasonable (\$166). There are close to 6000 acres preserved in the Township.

Route 179 Project: Mr. Cronce said he spoke to Mr. Shute regarding this proposed development on Holcombe Way where there are currently two houses. He also spoke to the County and asked if preservation was a possibility if the development has already been started. The project is now in bankruptcy. This property touches T&T (formerly Toll North). Mr. Cronce will follow up on this property. There are ten lots left. Mr. Schaible asked about zoning. Mr. Cronce replied that the developer was granted relief.

Municipal Grant Application:Ms. Urbanski reported that she submitted the Municipal Grant Application, she provided a copy for the Committee’s records.

Hunterdon Land Trust Proposal: Ms. Kamph was not present tonight. She provided the following report which was read into record as follows:

*“I think the open space committee should read carefully the proposal already in hand. HLT was very clear about what they could do for us and how much it would cost. But we need to decide where we are going with our program once the money runs out. Is the open space committee going to reform itself as a monitoring group? Do we need to hire others (HLT) to do this for us? I know we haven’t kept the kind of meticulous records we should of the land we’ve preserved: maps of the easements, copies of the deeds, etc. — the info that would enable people to use and enjoy the public open space. We’ll also have to pay some attention to maintenance of the trails, etc. But I think I’m rushing things here. I don’t think this group is ready to debate these issues, and I wonder if this is really the provenance of the (future) Township Committee. Those are my thoughts for now. Thanks for your help. Jamie”*

Mr. Cronce said the Committee is maintaining records to the best of their ability. Committee members commented on the cost of the services in the proposal. Ms. Urbanski said the map had not been updated since 2013 and is updated every few years at a cost of \$160. Mr. Cronce and Ms. Urbanski have been monitoring the easements; in 2014 they created a binder outlining all of them which is the result of over 400 hours of their work. Comments were made about not wanting to pay for easement monitoring. Currently the Township has control of these items and volunteers are providing these services for free. The Committee agreed that they would not move forward with this offer. Comments were further exchanged about the Committee changing slowly from acquisition to maintenance.

Hunting Program: Mr. Cronce reported that the annual survey was sent out to the hunting clubs and that the deer population is down. Mr. Cronce and Ms. Urbanski commented on the great job Mr. Malek is doing with this program. Mr. Malek will provide a report in April.

Trail Project: Mr. Cronce reported that Mr. Shute is working on the trail every Sunday with Alan Hershey. It was suggested the Committee walk it when it is completed. Ms. Urbanski reported that NJ Trail Association and the Sourland Conservancy has every trail on their website and suggested a booklet of Township trails be created and be available in the lobby of the municipal building.

Website: Ms. Urbanski reported that the website is up to date.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Thompson: Mr. Cronce reported that Mr. Shute and Mr. Fisher walked the Thompson land on Rt. 518. Mr. Fisher explained that this property connects Hewitt Park with the water company property and went over the property location and access. Mr. Thompson inquired about preservation to the Township.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

There was no comment on any correspondence.

**OPEN TO PUBLIC**

There was no public present.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting will be April 12, 2016 at 7:00pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Urbanski made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schaible, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m. All were in favor; the motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_

Christine A. Rosikiewicz, Open Space Secretary

*Please note these are draft minutes subject to change upon approval at the April regular meeting.*