

Open Space Committee

Andover Township

Minutes of Open Space Committee Meeting
September 25, 2007

The Chairman, Dan Freed, opened the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Present were members Dan Freed, Lois deVries, Diane Gillespie, Carla Kostelnik, Michael Morel, Cece Pattison (Alternate), Gail Phoebus. Late Arrival: Mary Grace Rudolph (8:55 p.m.). Also present: Elizabeth Lee and Andrew Szwak, Planning Consultants from Morris Land Conservancy; Mary Spector, Secretary.

The Chairman called for the roll call, flag salute and OPMA statement.

Executive session: Dan noted that Sandy Urgo from the Morris Land Conservancy could not be present tonight so there will not be an executive session.

Green Acres Grant: Dan referred to an e-mail message from Sandy Urgo concerning the possibility of applying for a NJ Green Acres grant. He noted the Open Space Committee would need the approval of the Township Committee to apply and they would need to place an ad in the local newspaper two weeks prior to the Committee meeting. The Open Space Committee does not have a specific property designated for the funding request nor will the Open Space Plan be completed prior to submission of an application. Dan stated they need to get more information from Sandy about going ahead. A motion was made by Carla, seconded by Lois, to place the ad for the public meeting and to request permission from the Township Committee to submit an application for Green Acres funding. All in favor. Motion carried.

Minutes: A motion was made by Diane, seconded by Carla, to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2007 meeting as amended. In favor: Cece, Diane, Gail, Lois, Carla, Mike, Dan. Opposed: None. Abstained: Gail. Motion carried.

Minutes, executive session: A motion was made by Lois, seconded by Diane, to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2007 executive session. In favor: Cece, Diane, Gail, Lois, Carla, Mike, Dan. Opposed: None. Abstained: Gail. Motion carried.

Adoption of Agenda: A motion was made by Carla, seconded by Diane, to adopt the agenda with minor changes. All in favor. Motion carried.

Open to the Public: Irene Christodlous noted the Township Committee mentioned the proposed purchase of property at Lake Iliff. Dan stated representatives from the Open Space Committee will be meeting with the County on the Committee's application for funding for this property later this week. The meeting was closed to the public.

Open Space and Recreation Plan: The Chairman introduced Andrew Szwak and Elizabeth Lee from the Morris Land Conservancy. Andrew thanked the Committee for arranging the tour of the township that was conducted today. He stated they have a draft Open Space Plan to show the Committee. He noted his reaction to what he saw on the tour was the opportunity for linkage of open space areas to existing preserved areas. He stated there are good potential sites for habitat

and wetlands preservation. There was some discussion about the Kirby property. Gail stated she was sorry that it had not gone into farmland preservation. Lois noted she was surprised at how large a property it is. She also appreciated the recognition of the potential greenway from Newton Country Club and the monastery across to the nursing home as a passage for wildlife. She agreed with Andrew the Hemlock Ave. site is an important piece. She asked about the Transit Village property. Gail stated the officials in Trenton were not happy when township representatives mentioned they were not going to follow through with the Transit Village Center. Andrew noted the train station is years in the future. Carla mentioned undeveloped areas along branches of the Pequest River could provide good habitat corridors. Gail pointed out the township has very few preserved farms.

Andrew brought up the lack of recreation fields in the township. The township does have fields and other recreation opportunities at Hillside Park. Gail noted the park has two handicapped swings, the only ones of their kind in the County. Andrew asked if there has been any discussion with homeowners associations in the Township about acquiring preserved land, perhaps for pocket parks. Gail referred to the trails from Kittatinny State Park. The township didn't get the grant they requested for trails connecting neighborhoods to the park. Dan noted this project should stay on the priority list. Andrew mentioned the possibility of funding from the Safe Walk to School organization. Carla noted the geography of the Township with the lack of connecting roads between the valleys makes it difficult to get around. Diane named a number of large parcels of land that could some day be developed, including the Kirby, Tyson, Tallon, Stryker and Kellogg properties.

Andrew referred to the draft Open Space Map and noted it is helpful that the township has lots of maps available. He stated vacant land that is not being farmed (Class 1) is shown in yellow on the map. He noted public lands that are not preserved could be good prospects. Gail stated the Open Space Plan will be adopted as part of the Master Plan and will be reviewed eventually by the NJ Office of Smart Growth. Andrew described the various parts of the plan that follow the Green Acres guidelines. He noted the "needs analysis" looks at the needs of specific areas in the township. The action plan includes 1, 3, 5 and 10 year plans. A greenway map and natural features map are also included. Dan noted they haven't discussed water and the impact of limestone and asked if they would be included in the plan. Andrew stated they will mention the areas of limestone fens as possible preservation sites. Gail asked about the Town Center. Andrew stated they would recommend where not to put it. He stated the next step is the public meeting which is to be advertised in the newspaper. He recommended the Committee send invitations to public groups that may have an interest. Carla asked about charity annuities. Andrew noted there are different ways to achieve preservation and that is one possibility.

Potential properties: Carla stated she will look up the Charles Smith property. Lois noted she spoke with Sandy about the property on Pierce Rd. with the deed restriction against further subdivision. Sandy told her a deed restriction is difficult to remove and is as good as preservation.

Kellogg property: Gail mentioned the owner of property on Andover-Mohawk Rd. known as the Hudson Farm West is interested in selling road frontage to the township for open space

preservation. It was discussed that Sandy could speak with him to find out more about the offer for consideration in the future.

New Business: Diane requested a new phone and e-mail list of Open Space Committee members. Dan stated he will take care of that. There was discussion about the tax rate for next year and whether to keep it at 1¢ or raise it to 2¢ as allowed by ordinance. Dan suggested the topic be discussed at the public meeting. He asked Committee members for their opinion. Carla stated she thought it should stay as is for next year. Dan agreed. He suggested they get the application moving and have at least one success, then raise the rate next year. Lois stated she thinks it should be raised to 2¢ now. Gail noted at 1¢ the township raises \$64,000/yr. She thought it should go to 2¢ but she suggested they ask the taxpayers and get some feedback.

Diane raised the issue of Committee member terms of office. She noted a lot of knowledge is needed to serve on the Open Space Committee and it takes awhile to accumulate the information. She pointed out every member's term of office expires in January 2008 and she didn't think it was a good idea to change the membership of the Committee entirely at one time. She suggested that they recommend to the Township Committee to keep the present Committee intact and give staggered terms so there will be some overlap. A motion was made by Diane, seconded by Lois, to recommend to the Township Committee that they restructure the terms of office for Open Space Committee members so that they will be staggered. All in favor. Motion carried.

Dan reminded members of the public meeting on Oct. 23 and noted the regular meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. Promotional material will be available to ensure a good turnout. Gail suggested having food available.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Mike, seconded by Gail, to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

Submitted by Mary Spector, Secretary