

Open Space Committee

Andover Township

February 26, 2008

The Chairman, Dan Freed, opened the meeting at 7:30 pm. Present were members Lois deVries, Dan Freed, Diane Gillespie, Carla Kostelnik, Mary Grace Rudolph. Absent: Alex Gilseman. Late Arrivals: Michael Morel (7:35 pm). Also present: Barbara Davis, Vice-President for Programs, Morris Land Conservancy; Mary Spector, Secretary.

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

Minutes: A motion was made by Diane, seconded by Lois, to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2008 meeting as amended. In favor: Mary Grace, Diane, Lois, Carla, Dan. Opposed: None. Abstained: Mike. Motion carried.

Adoption of Agenda: A motion was made by Lois, seconded by Diane, to adopt the agenda as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

Open to Public: A motion was made by Lois, seconded by Diane, to open the meeting to the public. All in favor. Motion carried. The Chairman opened the meeting to the public. There were no comments from the public at this time.

Public Hearing on Open Space Plan: Township Mayor Gail Phoebus thanked the Open Space Committee and the Morris Land Conservancy (MLC) for doing a wonderful job on putting together the Open Space Plan and thanked them for the time and effort they put in to produce this report. Dan introduced Barbara Davis, Vice-President for Programs of the MLC who was present to facilitate the public hearing. Barbara noted the Plan specifies that the Township is seeking to purchase and protect property. They are looking to leverage funds for the purchases rather than spending Township dollars where possible. She noted the State Green Acres program requires an Open Space Plan be prepared to accompany any grant applications.

As far as process, Barbara stated they will incorporate comments made at this hearing and get approval from the Land Use Board for the Open Space Plan as an amendment to the Master Plan. They will need a resolution from the Township Committee to accompany grant applications. She noted the goals outlined in the Plan reflect municipal priorities. The Open Space Map shows land use in the Township as defined by the Tax Assessor. Barbara pointed out the various categories of land use as depicted on the Map. She noted that 60% of Township land is potentially eligible for preservation.

Barbara summarized important Township goals including protection of the rural character and more land for active recreational use. The municipality would also like to acquire land for trails. Other goals include protection of water resources and wildlife habitat and farmland preservation. Barbara stated the Open Space Map provides layers of information and justifies possible land acquisitions. The Greenways Map shows possible greenways in three distinct areas. Farmbelts are labeled as the Pequest and the Paulins Kill. Natural Resource Greenways include the Sussex

Branch, Ballantine, Perona Lake, and Muckshaw Ponds. Recreational Greenways include the Paulins Kill and the Kittatinny-Hillside. Trails were labeled as the Andover Mine trail and the Lackawanna Cutoff. The latter trail would be continued as a trail if the Cutoff is not reactivated for rail use.

The meeting was opened to the public for comments and questions. Scott Pierce asked about the order of priorities in the list of goals. Dan noted that acquiring more athletic fields is a big priority as is maintaining water quality. He pointed out the plan is necessary for acquiring funds to purchase property for preservation. Scott asked if the Township was actively seeking land. Dan stated the Township has contracted with MLC for this purpose. He noted it is a sensitive process.

Gail brought up the subject of the budget cutbacks being discussed at the state level. Her concern was the state parks. She asked whether the State would be interested in acquiring land adjacent to existing holdings. Barbara stated that they will be interested in this in the coming year. Eric Danielson inquired whether there is more complexity to the process if more than one municipality is involved. Barbara explained that if Andover wanted to buy land in Fredon Township, Fredon would have to approve the sale by resolution. She noted it is not as complicated if the municipalities purchase the land jointly, especially if they both leverage their dollars. Eric asked whether the Open Space Committee has spoken with other municipalities about joint purchase. Dan stated he has contacted other towns as part of the outreach process. Lois noted the Open Space Committee doesn't make the purchase. They recommend to the Township Committee, so the governing bodies of each municipality would have to agree.

Barbara commented on the adjoining municipalities. She noted Green Township has an Open Space plan. Fredon Township is working on an open space acquisition. Hampton Township doesn't use Green Acres funding. Lafayette Township has an Open Space plan. Sparta doesn't want to accept state funding. Byram has an active open space program. She noted any farmland preservation projects should go through the County program. Scott Pierce asked about the farmland shown on the map. Barbara noted this information is taken from tax assessment data. Some of the farmland shown may be wood lots. There was a question about the aquifers. Dan pointed out much of the information in the Plan comes from the Natural Resources Inventory. Lois noted the Environmental Commission is applying for an ANJEC grant for a hydrological study.

Eric Danielson inquired whether Hillside Park could be expanded into the State Park so the athletic facilities would be in one central location. Barbara stated the Township should continue to have discussions with the State in this regard. She noted it has been done in other places. There was further discussion on this topic. Gail Phoebus asked about funding sources and whether the trails project should be moved from the Recreation Commission to the Open Space Committee. Barbara recommended that it stay with Recreation as the Open Space Committee shouldn't get involved with development. Carla questioned whether the strawberry farm property was deeded to the State.

Dan asked if there were any further comments. Cece Pattison mentioned it is important to remember that the Township needs taxable properties as a balance to open space. Dan stated

although there is 60% of the Township available for open space according to the plan, the Township is not going to acquire all of that property. The public hearing was closed.

Recess: The Chairman called a recess from 8:33 pm to 8:45 pm.

Summation and Next Steps: Dan asked if there was any additional feedback. Diane stated she would like to invite the public to attend future Committee meetings to keep up to date on these issues. Lois thanked the MLC for their good work on this Plan. Barbara stated she would like to get the final plan to the Committee by the third week in March and to the Land Use Board for their April meeting. She reminded the Committee that the Land Use Board will adopt the Open Space Plan as an element of the Master Plan. She noted the Township Committee does not approve the Plan, they will only approve the application for funding. MLC will supply ten plans and two CDs. The plan will be in PDF and the maps in GIS as required by the State.

A motion was made by Carla, seconded by Diane, to have Morris Land Conservancy finalize the Open Space Plan as soon as possible. In favor: Mary Grace, Mike, Diane, Lois, Carla, Dan. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Lois, seconded by Diane, to adjourn at 9:00 pm. All in favor. Motion carried.

Submitted by Mary Spector, Secretary