

Open Space Committee

Andover Township

January 22, 2008

The Chairman, Dan Freed, opened the meeting at 8:01 pm. Present were members Lois deVries, Dan Freed, Diane Gillespie, Alex Gilseman, Carla Kostelnik, Michael Morel, Mary Grace Rudolph. Absent: None. Also present: Mary Spector, Secretary.

The Chairman called for the flag salute and roll call and read the Open Public Meetings Act statement. He noted that all the oaths of office for the current term have been signed by Committee members.

Minutes: A motion was made by Mary Grace, seconded by Diane, to approve the minutes of the November 27, 2007 meeting. In favor: Mary Grace, Mike, Diane, Carla, Dan. Opposed: None. Abstained: Lois, Alex. Motion carried.

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

The Chairman opened the meeting to the public. There were no comments from the public.

Committee Membership: Dan addressed the question of Mike Morel's membership on the Committee. He mentioned that because Mike is a builder he must be careful to abstain if a conflict should arise. Dan reminded the members that this is true for all of them as acquisition of property is a sensitive issue.

Dan noted that there are two vacancies for alternates and that Laura Gilseman has applied for one of these. Laura was present and told the Committee she is interested in becoming a member as this is one way she can participate in Township activities noting she is restricted because of her job with the court. A motion was made by Carla, seconded by Diane, to recommend to the Mayor and Township Committee that Laura Gilseman be appointed as an alternate to the OSC. All in favor. Motion carried.

Executive session: A motion was made by Carla, seconded by Mike, to go into executive session at 8:15 pm. to discuss matters of property acquisitions. In favor: Mary Grace, Mike, Diane, Lois, Carla, Alex, Dan. Opposed: None. Motion carried. The Committee came out of executive session at 8:20 pm.

Update on the Historic Listing: Lois, Diane and Carla will get this list updated.

Meeting Schedule: Dan noted several meetings need to be rescheduled because of conflicts. It was agreed to reschedule the May meeting from Tuesday the 27th to Wednesday the 28th. The December meeting will be rescheduled from Tuesday the 16th to Wednesday the 17th. The reorganization meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 29, 2009.

Open Space Plan – Draft: Dan stated the draft Plan is ready for review by Committee members. It will also be circulated to the Township Committee and other Board and Commission members.

He suggested that Committee members ready to make comments tonight should restrict those to substantive issues. Typos and grammatical type errors can be collected and submitted to him.

Diane asked about the reference on page 3-2 to private lands and asked why these were mentioned. Lois pointed out the report is stating how much land is in each category. Carla noted perhaps it is not necessary to mention the owners of the private lands as it then seems to indicate that the Township might be interested in acquiring these lands. Lois stated this is standard practice for Morris Land Conservancy (MLC).

Diane referred to the Pittsgrove Open Space Plan, also prepared by the MLC, which includes a table listing amenities for recreational lands. She thought this is a good idea. She suggested adding a reference to vernal pools, perhaps in the section on water protection under goals. Dan agreed this relates to water quality and habitat protection. Mary Grace suggested adding vernal pools to the section on page 5-3 "Preserve Unique and Sensitive Environmental Sites." Carla remarked that the Committee should remember their purpose to determine which "lands should be acquired" and not to recommend how land use planning should be carried out. Dan stated the Committee by way of this report is recommending and setting priorities for land acquisition.

Carla stated the report does not mention anywhere that these properties will be coming off the tax rolls. Dan stated that issue was addressed by residents with their vote to establish the Open Space Committee and to preserve open space. Carla noted the question is how much is to be preserved. Lois noted a range is given of up to 10,000 acres. Carla questioned whether it is fiscally irresponsible not to point out that by acquiring more land the Township will be reducing the tax rolls. She stated it is necessary to keep a balance and something should be stated to that effect. Diane pointed out that keeping a balance is the function of the Township Committee. Carla commented on page 2-5, under a list of organizations, the report states something regarding the multi-state importance of aviation. She also noted on page 3-4 the open space inventory lists tax-exempt, religious and institution land. Diane stated that information came from the tax dept. Dan stated they could ask that those figures be rechecked.

Carla also asked about the source of the material included in the section on open space needs (page 4-1). She questioned whether the information on water resources could be phrased in a more positive way than stating "...water resources have not been adequately protected." Lois noted this is the opinion of the MLC. Carla suggested the point should be stated to say "this is the way we should protect our water." Diane stated she compared this report to the Pittsgrove report. She noted the MLC consultants evaluate the data and state what they see. Mary Grace noted the report gives examples of what they are discussing. Carla referred to the section of page 4-3 that talks about water pollution and lists non-point source runoff from farmlands, etc. as first. She stated lawns should be first. Dan reminded the Committee that they hired MLC to do this job to help define guiding principles and set some priorities. Lois noted this section is providing background information. Carla stated these comments are more pertinent to land use than to land acquisition. Mary Grace stated these issues are systemic problems throughout the state. She noted the report provides a framework.

Lois reminded members that because of funding sources the report must be written to comply with NJ Green Acres standards. She noted this is a good consensus document because no one is thrilled with all of it. She noted on page 2-3 it would be appropriate to add the Master Plan Re-

examination Report that was recently approved by the Land Use Board to the list of documents cited. She recommends that more information be obtained about the procedure noted on page 7-2, to encourage the Township to pursue plan endorsement through the NJ Highlands Council.

Lois had several suggestions for items on the time tables. The review of zoning ordinances she thought should be moved from within 5 years to within 1-3 years. The Trails Plan for the Township should be addressed earlier because of the interest in town for more trails. Mike suggested moving that item to within 3 years, to be realistic. Carla asked whether these items, especially a review of the zoning ordinances, are the responsibility of the Land Use Board or the OSC and shouldn't the OSC just be making recommendations. Mike stated the Recreation Committee has just begun to talk about a trails plan. Lois noted it would be helpful to interact with the Environmental Commission and the OSC on this subject. Dan noted it would be good to have a plan in place when funds and properties become available.

Mary Grace suggested that the item calling for discussions with adjoining municipalities also be moved up to within 3 years. Alex stated under 7-3, working with the Sussex County Division of Planning, be moved up to year 3 also. Diane noted this time table doesn't mean they can't get started on items on the list now. Lois emphasized the items she mentioned were ones she would like to see finished within 3 years. She also noted Howell's Pond needs to be included on the maps. Alex noted the item regarding meeting with adjoining municipalities should be addressed immediately. Dan agreed. He also asked the members about page 8-9, funding sources, noting they need to address whether to use MLC for funding information exclusively or to build relationships with funding sources on their own. Dan stated he wasn't sure about the inclusion of the database of page 1 of 1 in the appendix. Carla mentioned the need for recreation space on Stickles Pond Rd. near the housing development which is a large community with many children. Lois noted recreation facilities are highlighted as a priority. Dan stated additional comments could be added.

There was discussion about continuing the review of the draft plan. Dan stated he sees the value of discussing the issues amongst themselves. He noted MLC would also like to hear their comments prior to the public hearing. Mike stated it would be useful to meet with someone from MLC. He noted they had said that they could submit the draft plan to Green Acres with a grant application. Mary Grace asked about the possibility of another meeting before the hearing in February. Dan suggested they do their homework over the weekend and get comments to him by Tuesday, Jan. 29th. He will see if a workshop meeting can be set up for the week of February 4th.

Dan noted MLC is contracted to do outreach for land acquisition. That contract comes up in May and they will need to let the Township Committee know about renewing it. A motion was made by Lois, seconded by Alex, to recommend to the Township Committee that the Morris Land Conservancy be retained for the year 2008 to do property acquisitions. In favor: Mary Grace, Mike, Diane, Lois, Carla, Alex, Dan. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Mary Grace, seconded by Diane, to adjourn at 10:05 pm. All in favor. Motion carried.

Submitted by Mary Spector, Secretary