

Delaware Township Open Space Committee Minutes
Monday, September 21, 2020
Prepared by Katherine Fullerton, Open Space Coordinator

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Attendees are asked to announce themselves when they come into the meeting, so that all in attendance can be aware of each other. If using the computer video, we ask that you change your name upon entering the meeting.

Open Space Chairperson Rosalind Westlake called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm. Open Space Coordinator Katherine Fullerton took the roll call. In attendance were: Larry Coffey (joined at 7:40), Emy Drew, Joshua Goldman, Kathy Katz, Susan Lockwood, Steven Smotrich, and Rosalind Westlake.

Member Smotrich made a motion to approve the July 20, 2020 meeting minutes and Member Goldman seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Update of Existing Applications

The OS Committee received an update on the following applications:

- Maresca –
The application is moving forward. The State is working on an amended final approval removing the requirement for the cemetery access. SADC is also working on finalizing the survey to make sure the easements are correct.

- Lee/Lau –
The Township is in a similar place with Lee/Lau. The survey is being finalized to SADC specifications and the closing details are being prepared.

- Curtis Farm – NJCF has applied to SADC for a Non-profit grant. The status of the grant applications are still being worked on by SADC. All we can do is monitor the application.
- There is a new application that has been made. A very enthusiastic couple has purchased a farm along Sergeantsville Road and would like to preserve their 12-acre farm. They are adjacent to the preserved Emmons farm, so they could be preserved. However, there is a property adjacent to them for sale that would increase their area to 30 acres. Both the County and the Township's Agricultural Advisory Committee would prefer to see the application include this adjacent farm. However, the asking price of this property has made including it challenging. Coordinator Fullerton is working on finding alternate funding sources to work on achieving this preservation effort.

Discussion of Open Space Referendum

Chair Westlake summarized the discussion from the July Open Space Committee meeting. The consensus is that Dilts park is in need of maintenance. The rest of the Township open space is well maintained, either by volunteers or by the State. The Open Space Trust Fund should be reserved for open space acquisitions. The issue about whether the funds are legally restricted due to the Bond indentures is under review by the Township Bond Counsel.

Given this summary from the Chair, she expressed the view that the Township should continue to be financially responsible for the maintenance of Dilts Park. She also noted that the Township has access to funds from the County, approximately \$25,000 a year, that has not been used before. Coordinator Fullerton explained that the Township has not utilized this fund for maintenance costs before, because the Township was not able to. In order to use these funds for maintenance projects, the Township must submit an Open Space Improvement and Maintenance Plan. The Recreation Commission has been working on this document, preparing a wish-list of potential projects for open space properties all through the Township. Member Smotrich reported that the Recreation Commission will be meeting in October to finalize the Plan. The Township Committee will need to approve the Open Space Improvement and Maintenance Plan, but it is Coordinator Fullerton's understanding that once the County receives the Plan, the Township can request funds that year. It was noted that the Township has used this fund previously, for acquisitions and debt payment.

Committee members were excited by the idea of an Open Space Improvement and Maintenance Plan and a new use of the County funds to help fill the funding gap for maintenance of the Township open space properties. It was also hoped that by having a Plan, there can be a better budget for the expenses of maintaining Dilts park. There was also a suggestion that a maintenance requirement could be included in the easement of open space properties, so that stewardship is considered during the preservation process going forward. Member Lockwood suggested that the Township's White Oak trail should be included in the Improvement and Maintenance Plan. Member Katz elaborated on this, explaining that the Environmental Commission has maintained the White Oak Trail previously, charging costs for brush clearing and other work. It was also suggested that a summary of the expenses of the

\$38,000 that has been spent annually on Open Space maintenance could be helpful for determining the costs associated with the Improvement and Maintenance Plan. It was also suggested that the Recreation and Environmental Commissions should work together to confirm that all the open space properties are included in the Plan.

Chair Westlake opened the meeting to the public and called on them as she saw them across her screen. Roger Byrom thanked Chair Westlake for her leadership. He asked if the Township knows when we will hear from the Bond Counsel. Unfortunately, we do not know when the Township will hear back from the Bond Counsel. Alix Bacon recommended that the Environmental Commission should work with the Recreation Commission to review stewardship at Dilts park. There are waterways there and some areas that are being mowed that might be able to be maintained differently with a more environmental approach. Otherwise Ms. Bacon appreciated the use of the County funds for the maintenance work. There were no other comments from members of the public.

Chair Westlake wrapped up the discussion by commenting that there has been a good discussion on the topic of the use of the Open Space Trust Fund for maintaining Township open space properties. She feels the Committee has resolved the issue and finds that a referendum is not appropriate or necessary. Member Coffey made a motion that it is not appropriate or necessary for the Township Committee to use the Township Open Space Trust Fund for funding the maintenance of Township open space properties. Member Smotrich seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Larry Coffey - yes, Emy Drew - yes, Joshua Goldman - yes, Kathy Katz - yes, Susan Lockwood - yes, Steven Smotrich - yes, and Rosalind Westlake – yes.

County Open Space Committee Update

Member Goldman reported on the County Open Space Committee. There were Municipal Grant applications – one was for a barn roof replacement that seemed more than it should have been. The Committee agreed to support a property in Readington that was requesting preservation funding. There was a request for Disc Golf at Deer Park. The County has no facilities for Disc Golf anywhere, so this is a good suggestion. The County is also looking into an RC model plane flying zone area, possible at the South County Park. There are many aspects to this use that the County must take into consideration before they finalize a flying zone area.

Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

Member Smotrich had nothing further to report on from the Recreation Commission, everything of importance was already discussed.

Comments from the Committee

Member Coffey expressed support for Deer Management within the Township, per the earlier comment on stewardship. Member Goldman thanked Coordinator Fullerton for her work on finding the County funding, so the Township could come together on this work. Member Lockwood thanked Coordinator Fullerton for her work on the Farmland Preservation Plan. Chair Westlake requested that the Farmland Preservation Plan be on the October agenda for discussion. The Farmland Preservation Plan was last

written in 2010, and SADC has now required municipalities to review it every 10 years. It is a useful document, but Coordinator Fullerton mentioned that the voices of the Committee members are still needed. Only the statistics have been updated and there are many places where residents need to update the Plan.

Chairperson Westlake opened the meeting to the public. Roger Byrom also commented on the Deer Management program – he is now having issues with Coyotes. He wondered if there is a Coyote management program. There does not seem to be. There were no other comments from the public, so she closed the meeting to the public.

Member Lockwood made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Member Drews seconded the motion. The meeting ended at approximately 8:15pm.