

PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP EAC MEETING MINUTES

The Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council meeting was held on Tuesday, October 13, 2015 at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, Pennsylvania

EAC Members in attendance were: EAC Chairman Terry Kleintop, Vice Chairperson Robin Dingle, Robert Cornman, Bruce Rabenold, Supervisor Jane Mellert, Don Moore, Robert Simpson.

Also in attendance: Tom Petrucci, Plainfield Township Manager and Mike Kukles from Ott Consulting Engineers.

EAC Chairman Terry Kleintop opened the meeting at 7:00 pm

MINUTES

Terry Kleintop asked for a motion to approve the September 8, 2015 minutes.

Bob Cornman made a motion to approve the September 8, 2015 minutes. The motion was seconded by Bruce Rabenold and passed by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Item for Consideration and Discussion – Proposed Property Acquisitions for Plainfield Township - West Side of Route #33 Trail Head (Eighth Street Extension)

The following attendees were introduced.

Bryan Cope – Northampton County Open Space Coordinator

Dawn Gorham, Ph.D. – Director of Land Preservation Wildlands Conservancy

Christopher Stroehler –Senior Conservation Planner, Wildlands Conservancy

Christine Dettore – Regional Advisor, Northeast Region Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources **was not able to attend.**

Claire Sadler – Conservation Coordinator, Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc.

A map titled Plainfield Township Potential Trail Connections was reviewed.

Dawn Gorham and Christopher Stroehler addressed the EAC members. The Wildlands Conservancy would like to assist the Township in the acquisition of the Curcio and Harper tracts in order to provide Open Space and an Appalachian Trailhead parking lot. This would create a trail hub of connections to the Appalachian Trail, PPL Trail and a possible proposed connection to the Plainfield Township Recreation Trail.

The Wildlands Conservancy members have been talking with the landowners Anthony (Skip) Curcio about the purchase of the property which is approximately twenty (20) acres and fifteen (15) acres from Harper. Harper has two separate parcels a seven (7) acre and an eight (8) acre tract.

Estimated prices requested are as follows:

- Harper - \$165,000 approx. \$11,000 per acre
- Curcio \$10,000 per acre \$200,000. The property owner has been trying to sell his property for about 3 years. The three parcels were timbered during the summer of 2015.

Appraisals would need to be done on the properties. The Township cannot offer more for the acreage than the appraised value. Wildlands representatives have spoken with Curcio. The Pennsylvania Game Commission owns the surrounding land area.

Jane Mellert asked since the United States Fish and Wildlife will own a large portion (Federal) and the PA State Game Commission already owns all of the land area near where the proposed parking area is proposed, why isn't the State of PA or the US Fish and Wildlife purchasing the property?

The PA Game Commission is only willing to offer \$200 to \$400 per acre for the property. In early 2016, the US Fish and Wildlife Services will own the contiguous land area on the east side of Route #33. Christopher Stroehler estimated that the property would be appraised at approximately \$4,000 per acre.

The properties would have to be surveyed and appraised. The Wildlands Conservancy proposed the next steps of the process.

- Appraisals (Wildlands would oversee this process)
- Grant applications to Northampton County, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor,

Bryan Cope noted the area for the National 911 Memorial Trail – From the Pentagon to the Trade Center

Bryan Cope noted that Northampton County does not accept a project without a Resolution of Commitment being passed. Don Moore asked what Northampton County program umbrella the project is under. Bryan Cope responded that this is land preservation and would be under open space.

Christopher Stroehrer and Dawn Gorham noted that the existing parking lot area to the Appalachian Trail is not large enough and is too dangerous.

Jane Mellert asked who would maintain the road to the parking area. Response was the Game Commission. (At this point no one has walked the area in order to research the feasibility) The Township would be responsible for the cost to develop the parking area and future maintenance.

Mike Kukles noted that everything north of Eighth Street, the orange dotted line on the map is zoned as the Blue Mountain Conservation Area and ten (10) acres are required in order to develop. Bob Cornman. Noted if it is one track and you want to subdivide then you cannot create a lot.

Bob Cornman asked for the approximate cost of having the properties appraised. Dawn Gorham estimated \$2,000. Chris can recommend an appraiser. A State certified appraiser would be required.

Bob Simpson would like to have the development feasibility of the Skip Curcio and Carl L. and Webster H. Harper properties determined by Mike Kukles. Mike Kukles noted that he does not believe that there are any utilities in the area.

Don Moore noted that he has a concern over connectivity. Christopher noted that right now Bushkill Township purchased a property to expand their Township trail area.

The next steps were discussed.

Step 1 – Take it before the Board of Supervisors to see if there is interest

Step 2 – If interested move forward with an appraisal

Step 3 – Are the property owners willing to accept the appraised value?

Step 4 – Grants will help fund acquisition, and possibly the appraisal

Robin Dingle made a motion to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors that there is enough merit to the project and long term benefits to the area to move forward with getting an appraisal of the properties and the Board should approve Mike Kukles to determine the development feasibility of the properties for purchase. Bob Simpson seconded the motion.

Discussion

Don Moore discussion – Would the appraiser consider if the tracts are sold together. A list of appraisers to be provided by Wildlands should be considered.

Jane Mellert discussed that the development feasibility should be determined first and the second step should be the appraisal process. Why should an appraisal be paid for prior to determining if the Board is interested or knowing the development feasibility.

VOTE - The group wanted the motion to stand as is. The motion passed with six (6) members voting yes and Jane Mellert voting no.

Chris can recommend an appraiser. – Need a State certified appraiser

PPL/Met Ed Vegetation Management – Claire Sadler will be coordinating a meeting with the utility companies and local officials.

Claire Sadler noted that Dan Kunkle has contacted PPL and will work on a date with PPL to meet. Bob Simpson and Robin Dingle noted some of the notification problems they have had with the utility companies coming onto their property without proper notification.

Northampton County Open Space Plan

Bryan Cope – Is proposing the use of money (approximately \$300,000) out of the Natural Features budget for stream protection and land restoration. It will be voted on when the Open Space plan is voted on in November or early December.

Open Space Plan has water quality as #1 farmland preservation #2 and natural features #3

Jane Mellert noted that the EAC has discussed in the past that when farmland is preserved, then some natural features on the land are preserved.

Recreation Trail Buffer Protection – Conservation/Buffer Easements

Terry Kleintop asked Chris and Dawn how to preserve a buffer area along the recreation trail. The current trail area right-of-way is 60 feet wide.

If the Township wants an additional easement area then you would have to go to each property owner to discuss the easements and the property owners will usually want to be compensated.

Bruce Rabenold noted that the Township has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to build and construct the recreation trail and the Township has not done anything to protect it.

There was a resident that cut down trees along the trail (timber harvest). It was noted that this has not been a common occurrence in the past.

Chris and Dawn noted the following:

- The Township can deal with the individual landowners.
- In the Riparian Buffer model there is not currently a trail buffer
- Adopt an Official Map that helps open the door and then you have to pay to acquire the easements that you want to preserve
- Chris Stroehler was given copies of Township Ordinances #357 and #342 in the weeks prior to the meeting for his review

Don Moore suggested raising the awareness of the community for protection of the buffer areas.

OLD BUSINESS

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company LLC – AECOM Progress Update – Act 14 – Notification General Permit 8 & 11 Application for the 2015 Pennsylvania Project Anomaly Project – Anomaly Digs #16, 24 and 25

Tom Petrucci reported that AECOM will attempt to go northeast in order to minimize and try to avoid the wetland area. It is a good outcome for the Township

PA DEP Growing Greener Plus Grant Update – Little Bushkill Creek 2014 DEP Growing Greener Plus Grant

The ELM Group received formal notification that the contract was cancelled.

At this point the next steps are as follows:

- Terry, Robin and Tom meet in order to go over the scope of work. The scope of work, financials etc. will be determined in order to add to the RFP.
- Have a draft of the scope of work for DEP before the January 27, 2016 deadline.

- Review the draft RFP to hire an Environmental firm in January 2016
- Advertise the RFP in February 2016
- Have a contract for consideration by the end of March of 2016.
- Have a firm under contract and ready to resume the stream testing by May of 2016

Terry Kleintop - By the November 2015 EAC meeting they hope to have a map of the sampling locations, scope of work, etc.

Rasleytown Road Bridge Replacement County Bridge #213 at the Little Bushkill Creek General Permit Plan Review– The meeting that they held on location on September 2, 2015 helped to determine that an open bottom structure could work. The plan will move forward with the 24 foot bridge span.

Stephen Boone of Borton-Lawson Engineers said he is impressed with the Township. The Township stayed on top of the notification and review process and submitting comments about the bridge replacement.

Northampton County Farmland Preservation Update – The Northampton County Farmland Administrator, Maria Bentzoni, directed the closing of eight preservation easements during the month of August.

Terry Kleintop noted that at this point the proposed Northampton County 2016 Budget only shows one (1) million for municipal parks. So there is only one (1) million out of the three point seven (3.7) million originally proposed by prior Count Executive John Stoffa included in the proposed budget. The only money for farmland preservation is from the Chrin development. Every time Chrin sells a piece of property for development he has to pay a percentage toward farmland preservation. There are discussions going on at the County level. The Township should send out a letter to the property owners regarding the farmland preservation process. The letters should go out in October or early November.

Terry Kleintop does not think that the Township should put any money forward to Northampton County for State matching without a guarantee from the County that the match the Township will receive is as calculated per the state formula.

Don Moore reviewed the proposed Northampton County Budget and he called Northampton County Council Member Scott Parsons and Northampton County Executive John Brown. John noted that the County is not putting additional money into the Farmland Preservation Budget when there is currently three (3) million remaining in the preservation account.

The EAC members noted that the State will only match new funds budgeted for 2016. It would be good if Northampton County continues to provide the incidental costs and conducts the administration of the Farmland Preservation properties.

Bob Cornman made a motion to request that the Township mail out the annual farmland preservation process information letters to eligible Plainfield Township property owners. Don Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Comprehensive Map MS4 Sites and Piping Update – Tom Petrucci

MS4 Comprehensive Map – The Board of Supervisors voted to move forward with the quote at the September 9, 2015 meeting. Ott Consulting Engineers now has the data from Keystone Consulting Engineers and has moved forward with the GIS mapping work of the MS4 locations

The next MS4 report is due November of 2016. Tom Petrucci inspected 20 outfalls last week and filled out checklists on the outfalls in accordance with the MS4 requirements.

PUBLIC COMMENT

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Bob Cornman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:31pm. The motion was seconded by Don Moore and passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, EAC Secretary