

OPEN SPACE & AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Regular
Meeting Minutes
October 2, 2012**

7:00PM

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee and the Agriculture Advisory Committee was called to order at 7:05P.M. Chairwoman Sandra McNicol of the Open Space Advisory Committee called the meeting to order and read the following notice requirements.

Notice Requirements

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act and published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier News on January 19th, 2012, and by telefaxing a copy of the notice to the Star Ledger, and the Express Times on January 11, 2012. A copy of the notice was also posted in the Kingwood Township Municipal Building and Post Office on January 11, 2012.

In order to ensure full public participation in this meeting, all members of these Committees, and also members of the public are requested to speak only when recognized by the Chair, so that there is no simultaneous discussion or over-talk, and all persons are requested to utilize the microphones which are provided for your use by the Township. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Roll Call

Open Space Advisory Committee

Present

Sandra McNicol
Phil Lubitz
Diana Haywood
Richard Dodds
Lee Frank
Karen Hertzog
John Mathieu

Absent

None

Agriculture Advisory Committee

Present

Cynthia Niciecki
Elaine Niemann
William Pandy

Absent

Peter D'Costa
Ed Kralovich

2.

Approval of Minutes

Motion and Approval of June 5, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Open Space/Agriculture Advisory Committees

It was moved by Phil Lubitz, seconded by Richard Dodds and carried to approve the meeting minutes of the June 5, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Open Space/Agriculture Advisory Committees.

Roll Call Vote:	Aye	-Haywood,McNicol,Dodds, Hertzog,Niemann,Pandy, Niciecki
	Nay	-None
	Abstain	-Lubitz,Mathieu,Frank
	Absent	-D'Costa, Kralovich

Motion and Approval of July 10, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Open Space/Agriculture Advisory Committees

It was moved by Phil Lubitz, seconded by Richard Dodds and carried to approve the meeting minutes of the July 10, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Open Space/Agriculture Advisory Committees.

Roll Call Vote:	Aye	-Lubitz,McNicol,Dodds, Frank, Niemann,Niciecki
	Nay	-None
	Abstain	-Haywood,Mathieu,Hertzog, Pandy
	Absent	-D'Costa, Kralovich

Motion and Approval of September 4, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Open Space/Agriculture Advisory Committees

It was moved by Phil Lubitz, seconded by Richard Dodds and carried to approve the meeting minutes of the September 4, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Open Space/Agriculture Advisory Committees with the following correction:

Page 7. First paragraph third line (correction to the date) should be 29th of September, in place of the 22nd of September.

3.

Roll Call Vote:	Aye	-Lubitz, Haywood, Dodds, Niemann, Pandy, Niciecki
	Nay	-None
	Abstain	-McNicol, Mathieu, Frank, Hertzog
	Absent	-D'Costa, Kralovich

Correspondence

N/A

Reports

Farmland Preservation - Liz Schmid (Report for October, 2012)

Liz Schmid was present and reviewed the following report for October:

Agriculture Advisory Committee Report October 2, 2012

1. Maplewood Farm - Both the CADB and SADC gave the farm final approval in September. It is now waiting for the Freeholders to approve funding. It just depends on when it gets put on the agenda. After that, the County gets a contract signed and title work done. Then we can do a survey.
2. The Mulligan Farm (Bl 33Lot 24) was accepted by CADB. Now the landowner is still weighing his options.
3. Helmer and Zander - Appraisals are expected back soon.
4. Decker - (Bl 24 -Lot 8) - This will be a fee purchase through the State Green Acres program.
5. Goeckeler (Bl 30, Lot 6) - The application is still under review at the State.
6. Gross - This is still in limbo. A certified value came back from the State which the landowner is questioning. The two appraisals that went in to the State were very divergent and the certified value came in closer to the low number. The State appraiser said that he understood the reasoning of both appraisers, but was most swayed by the more conservative amount. The County has asked if a third appraisal can be submitted if it is paid for by the landowner. There has been no response. The application for leftover FFRP money is in.

4.

7. Marramore Inc. ((Bl 20 Lot 5) 59.38 acres - This is one of two pieces in an estate with many heirs. They wish to sell the properties. HLT is wondering if there is any Township interest in this piece which is near the Township park and abuts the Melnyk, school and former Kent properties and has Lockatong frontage.
8. Maritan (Bl 33 Lot 25), 104.71 acres - Sharon Gonen, the lead heir in the estate situation, has submitted an application to Green Acres for direct purchase of this property. It adjoins the Clark property and has Lockatong frontage. They had approached SADC, but the property did not rank high enough to qualify for the farmland fee simple program.
9. The Wydner family signed a 120 day option with SADC which allows the State to order appraisals. Hopefully, this is on the road for preservation.
10. Clark - (Bl 33 Lot 25) 2 acres. Mr. Clark called the week after his wife died wanting to know about preserving this two acre lot which was one of two subdivided from the piece that was preserved. They sold one of the lots for \$60,000, and he did not like paying roll back taxes. I referred him to HLT due to our financial situation. Kate is hoping to get an appraisal for \$120,000 for the lot and then buy it with for \$60,000 with Township Green Acres money if the Township is interested. She is going to send him an option agreement. He has pulled the lot off the market until probate gets underway.
11. Chaitman - HLT may apply for a County non-profit grant for this, or maybe want to do a mixture of farmland and open space. There is FFRP money for this farm. It is still up in the air for the rest.
12. Are there any farms that we want and that are interested in preservation for which HLT can apply for Federal money?
13. Coveleskey and "The Farm" church property - The Township application for cooperative funding from the County is still being evaluated. Expect an answer by the end of the year.

Liz Schmid asked the Committees to think about which properties would be a possibility for Farm and Ranchland, as far as, how they are ranked.

5.

Phil Lubitz suggested that this be directed to the Ag Committee. William Pandy noted and suggested to consider properties that come in and owners that are interested in preserving their properties, that these properties should be rated first.

Liz Schmid noted that the application for cooperative funding for the church farm and the Covalesky property will take a while, and that the County will not have their part completed until the end of the year.

Everyone thanked Liz Schmid for her report.

Old Business

Hunterdon Land Trust - Activity update

Chairwoman Sandra McNicol noted that this was already discussed.

Horseshoe Bend Park Steering Committee

Richard Dodds started by stating that it was a very busy weekend with two days of dog coursing clubs with approximately about 60 people who attended and approximately 55 riders who attended the trail ride. He stated that this was put together by a resident of Kingwood Township named Meg Sleeper. He explained that one of the trail rides was a four and a half mile ride, and the other ride, which was a nine mile ride. He explained that it was on several preserved properties joined up to Horseshoe Bend Park. He stated that it was a really good weekend and that there was nothing negative to report. Richard Dodds stated that the horseback riders suggested that there be more bathroom facilities near the south side of the park. He stated that one of the organizations that often rents the park for their dog exercises and competition, offered to donate a port a potty at the park. He wanted to thank David Augustine, Meg Sleeper's husband, who brush hogged the trails so they would be clean for the riders. He stated that there were no reports of any complaints from the dog organizations regarding the horses or the riders. He reviewed the hunting program that is going on at the park. He stated that there are about 20 hunters that will be hunting during the season and that they met and posted signs all around the property and also near the homes for safety reasons. He noted that the township has obtained approximately \$1,500 for the hunting program so far and that the hunters are doing fine.

6.

He explained the process the hunters need to follow regarding the rules and regulations in order to hunt on the grounds. He noted that they seem to be a very responsible group. Phil Lubitz explained that if they have not done so already, the Fire Department and Rescue Squad should be contacting Richard Dodds regarding a training exercise, which would be at the Horseshoe Bend Park. Richard Dodds stated that he was in contact with the Fire Chief and the Captain of the Rescue Squad this past weekend, and they will be making an initial date to get together to take a hike around the park. He noted that the park and all the events that are currently going on are going very well. Sandra McNicol suggested that the hunters keep track of how many deer they actually see on the property. The Committees had a lengthy discussion regarding the over population of the deer and the damage they have done to all the crops and land in the township.

Farm Programs - NRCS, Farm Service, Hunterdon County Soil Conservation - No Update

Chairwoman Sandra McNicol stated that she and Richard Dodds both received an e-mail from the NRCS, requesting that the township place them for assistance for a variety of areas of Horseshoe Bend Park in grassland management, endangered species and wildlife management. She stated that they would like to meet with Kingwood Township representatives in the near future. Sandra McNicol stated that she will set something up to meet with their representatives and have more information for next month's Open Space and Ag meeting.

New Business

Community Day - Review

Chairwoman Sandra McNicol noted that Ed Kralovich helped out at the Open Space and Ag booth. Cynthia Niciecki, Phil Lubitz, Richard Dodds and Elaine Niemann all helped out. She noted that Cindy Niciecki and her husband gave hayrides all day long and stated that it was a big hit for all ages. She explained that several people were grabbing maps of the trails for the Horseshoe Bend Park. Sandra McNicol explained that there were several people who asked questions regarding the hunting at the park.

Green Acres 2012 Grants P106

7.

Sandy stated that the township did not make it into the grant this year. She read the news notice from the NJDEP that explained where the funds went this year, which she explained went to intercity projects. She noted that the state is preserving properties without the township even being involved and that residents are going directly to the state themselves to have their properties preserved, which does not cost the township any funds at all.

Revised Open Space Bond Budget

Sandra reviewed the list of figures from last month's meeting that explained how the township is spending their open space funds.

Bull's Island Update

Chairwoman Sandra McNicol noted that no application has been filed as of yet with the Delaware River Canal Commission to do anything at Bull's Island. She stated that it seems to appear that there are no plans for tree cutting or leveling of any ground planned for a while. Elaine Niemann noted that when she attended the last meeting that they informed everyone that the DRCC has changed their meeting date to be on Monday Oct 15th at 10:00am, in place of Wednesday, October 17th. She stated that at that meeting there may be some discussion regarding Bull's Island. They will be reevaluating the idea of what they want to do on the island. She noted that Governor Christy has recommended to the DRCC to nominate Phil Lubitz to be a member on their board. The Committee Members stated that is great.

Fish and Game Policy on Land Maintenance

William Pandy noted that New Jersey Fish and Game are putting out some new rules and policies for farmers. He explained that the State is doing this to create larger herds of deer. Farmer, Wesley Pandy who is a resident of Kingwood Township was present and explained what he knew about the restrictions for the farmers. He stated that Fish and Game are telling the farmers what they can farm and what they cannot farm and what years they will be able to farm certain areas of their farmland. He stated that the State of New Jersey bought property on Thatcher Road and will not allow him to farm the land, and that it would have to go up for bid.

8.

Farmer Frank Kocsis, also a resident and farmer of Kingwood Township explained that he is a member of what is called (FFEAD) Farmer's Feeding Excessive Amounts of Deer. He stated that he went to the Fish and Wildlife meeting approximately 8 years ago along with the backing from the Hunterdon County Agricultural Board and Assemblywoman named Connie Myers. He explained that with her help and several other individuals they went to go against Fish and Wildlife, which took a lot of time and work. He stated that Rutgers was there and helped the farmers, by backing them up with information and proving the amount the farmers lost and the problem with the deer. He stated that they got environmental groups and airport owners involved. His farm is 2500 acres and grows mulch hay and it cannot be used for anything else. He explained that it is mainly brought on by the deer population. He noted the amounts of corn and wheat that could be grown, but that they no longer survive. He stated that we need to keep this land open and running. He feels that the east coast has a great crop growing ability and our job is to keep the land open. He feels that the farmers need Committees like this to encourage the Fish and Wildlife to use the land to produce food. Mr. Kocsis feels that there is so much wasted land. He stated that the farmers have battled with Fish and Wildlife regarding the regulations the state is enforcing. He feels that the Open Space and Ag Committees need to back up the farmers to save the food and the land. He noted that the farmers are at the meeting this evening to let the Open Space and Ag Committees know about what Fish and Wildlife are doing. William Pandy explained that the Fish and Wildlife have taken over the state lands. The farmers stated that they are here to encourage the committees to speak to someone from the State Fish and Wildlife about the lands that are being allowed to be over grown. They stated that deer forestation is one of the greatest damage that an animal can do. Liz Schmid asked if they went to the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Kocsis noted that Kingwood Township has the highest population of deer in the county. Richard Dodds feels that a person to person communication is the best thing to do. He feels that they should start by talking to Larry Herrighty, who works for the State of New Jersey's Fish and Wildlife for assistance. Everyone on the Committees thanked the farmers for coming. Richard Dodds will make arrangements for the farmers to meet and speak with Larry Herrighty from the NJ State Fish and Wild life.

9.

D&R Canal Commission Appointment Announced

Mayor Niemann noted during the meeting that Phil Lubitz has been considered by Governor Christy, to be a member of the Delaware River Canal Commission in the coming year.

Public Comment - Privilege of the Floor

N/A

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Lubitz, seconded by Mr. Dodds and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:32pm. **All voted Aye on Roll Call Vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. Keller,
Secretary