

**WARREN COUNTY  
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179  
Oxford, NJ 07863

**January 13, 2015  
MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Helbing opened the meeting at 5:04 p.m., read the Open Public Meeting Notice, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:** Matthew Davis, John Halmi, Raymond Tobaygo, William Hann, Michael Helbing, Charles Fineran, David Detrick

**Staff:** Corey Tierney, Christina Cortis

**NOMINATIONS:** Mr. Tierney asked for nominations for Board Chairperson. Charles Fineran made a motion, seconded by Bill Hann to nominate Michael Helbing as Chairperson. Motion carried. Bill Hann made a motion, seconded by Dave Detrick to close the nominations for Chairperson. Motion carried.

Mr. Helbing asked for nominations for Vice Chairperson. Dave Detrick made a motion, seconded by Bill Hann to nominate Matthew Davis as Vice Chairperson. Motion carried.

Mr. Helbing asked for nominations for Board Secretary. Bill Hann made a motion, seconded by Raymond Tobaygo to nominate David Detrick as Board Secretary. Motion carried.

Mr. Tierney asked if the Board members approve the 2015 meeting schedule that was sent to them. Bill Hann made a motion, seconded by Charles Fineran to approve the 2015 meeting schedule. Motion carried.

**MINUTES:** The December 9, 2014 were reviewed. There was a brief discussion as to what warrants Executive Session, for future reference. It was noted that the meeting date was incorrect. Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion carried.

**REPORT OF COMMITTEES**

Morris Canal Committee

Mr. Detrick reported that the Morris Canal signs are being reprinted. He also noted that the kiosk is up at Bread Lock Park and they have shutters to install.

Trails

Mr. Davis and Mr. Helbing have the footpath section cleared and complete from Hart's Lane to Brick Yard Road and have identified where they could put in three footbridges. They put up Morris Canal trail markers for volunteers. Mr. Davis inquired about putting wood chips down (that Mr. Helbing will supply) on muddy parts of the trail to give it more stability. Mr. Tierney advised the Board that this is acceptable, provided the chips are clean and locally sourced to avoid introducing invasive species. There was discussion regarding watering that portion of the canal, but it is a very complicated and involved process.

Mr. Helbing suggested that anyone interested in doing volunteer work on the trails, where their vehicle will be parked in an area other than a parking lot, should get a parking permit from the Department to identify them. Any other unusual activity should be reported to police.

Mr. Tierney noted the likely timeframes for projects are: Florence Kuipers in spring, Preservation Day in May, and then Port Murray possibly in the summer or fall.

Shandor Property - Mr. Hann, Mr. Davis, and Mr. Helbing met with the Shandors to discuss the trail they would like to go through their property. Mr. Tierney will contact representatives from the Highlands and Green Acres to find out why there is such a discrepancy between the two purported values. Provided the landowners are amenable to donating a trail easement, Mr. Tierney will prepare the easement for that parcel of land which will grant the County trail access. This could later be assigned to the State should the property be purchased under Highlands or Green Acres. Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis to support Mr. Tierney preparing the trail easement, as stated. Motion carried.

Mr. Helbing provided some history on the Shandor property and his intention to call the trail the Shandor Memorial Loop. Mr. Tierney said the Board can support it, but we don't have the authority to designate it since this section of the Warren Highlands Trail is on state property.

Mr. Helbing noted that until they have a through-connection on both sides, he is unable to proceed with the Merrill Creek trail.

The next property they will seek to connect with is Harker's Hollow. Mr. Hann suggested that Mr. Helbing contact the son.

Oxford Township - Mr. Tierney and Mr. Helbing will meet with Oxford Township officials in February to discuss future intentions for the property.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

There was an article in the Express-Times about Mr. Helbing hiking the entire perimeter of the State of NJ (approximately 500 miles), with only 17 more hikes to go.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Helbing and Mr. Davis led a First Day Hike along the Warren Highlands Trail that included some new sections that were not previously open to the public. Mr. Davis wrote an article on the hike for the Warren Reporter.

Mr. Fineran suggested the County apply for state grant funds to provide guided bus trips, tours, or hikes from one county parkland site to another, with a bus ride back to their cars, with the intention of increasing tourism to Warren County Parkland. This is something the Department is interested in doing and Mr. Tierney will work with Mr. Fineran about looking into this further.

The Warren Heritage Scenic Byway meeting is scheduled for February 24<sup>th</sup> to establish a steering committee. Hopefully grants funds will become available for events to promote areas along the Scenic Byway.

Mr. Davis is planning on providing bike shops in Easton and Phillipsburg with maps of the Warren Highlands Trail so they can use it for mountain bike tours. Mr. Davis inquired about formal trail rules and regulations. Mr. Tierney noted that he would like to revisit the Open Space Rules and Regulations and update them. He explained that he previously provided the Board with proposed revisions and asked that the Board designate a working group to review the proposals and update the rules.

Mr. Tierney would like to establish working groups to streamline the efforts of the Board. The working groups can then present actions to the full Board at the monthly meetings, as necessary, in order to make the meetings more efficient.

## OLD BUSINESS

### ACQUISITION UPDATES

Lock Street Associates, Lopatcong & Pohatcong Twps. - The appraisal values came back lower than the landowners were expecting. If the landowner decides not to sell, the county could seek a trail easement along the canal section.

Mann/Barringer, Lopatcong Twp. - The closing is scheduled for January 14<sup>th</sup>.

O'Dowd, Franklin & Greenwich Twp. - An offer was made; the Department is still awaiting a response. Mr. Tierney provided press releases regarding the preliminary approval of a \$1.1 million settlement. \$1 million would cover 100% of the acquisition costs of the 60-acre O'Dowd property and \$150,000 would be used for trail improvements. He also gave a brief overview of the Pohatcong Valley Groundwater Contamination Superfund site.

Carl Crouse, Washington Twp. - Landowners are not interested at this time. Mr. Tierney will reach out to the landowners again. The CADB elected not to decline the application and proceed with the farmland preservation application. If the landowner is willing, the County may still buy the entire farm or a portion of the farm depending on the appraisal values.

Mr. Tierney has considered working with local legislators on passing a law which would allow public trail easements over a preserved farm, but this has not yet been identified as a priority by either the CADB, BORC, or the Freeholders. And Mr. Tierney is not sure how successful such an endeavor would be.

White/Woo, Washington Twp. - Ms. Cortis will contact a professional landscaper to design a vegetative buffer plan for this site, along with Plane 9.

Handlos, Mansfield Twp. - Mr. Tierney said that the property is under contract, but there have not been any updates regarding the title issue.

Independence Land Holdings, Independence Twp. - Looking at closing in the spring. Mr. Tierney just received preliminary approval from NJCF that they may contribute \$200,000-\$250,000 toward the purchase of the property.

Terhune, Washington Twp. - The landowner has decided that if he sells, he would like to keep an additional five acres of the property. The Department will seek letters from appraisers to determine if this will affect the per-acre value of the property.

M&M Proposal - Mr. Roy was going to respond to their proposal, but Mr. Tierney has not received an update; he will follow-up with her.

### MAINTENANCE

#### Stryker's Road/Port Warren

Mr. Tierney is working with ERF Contractors (the contractor that installed the gates at Port Murray) regarding the installation of the fence, bollards, and safety fence. Mr. Tierney will also be meeting with the township to discuss the parking area so the Roads Division can begin working on it. Perimeter trails will also be established around the agricultural fields. Mr. Tierney would also like to order signs. He suggested the signs read: "Port Warren, Warren County Parkland".

He would also like to order additional, smaller signs for the Jim and Mary Lee Museum and Bread Lock Park Museum. Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis to approve the purchase of and names on the signs. Motion carried. Signs would also have a second add-on sign identifying Natural Resource areas and Morris Canal Greenway areas.

Port Murray (Brick Yard) - The contractor installed gates and new boundary signs are in. The Nature Conservancy will be submitting a plan for ecological restoration. Mr. Tierney would also like to order a sign for this location; he suggested the signs read "Port Murray, Warren County Parkland". Mr. Hann made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fineran to approve the sign. Motion carried. Metal road signs directing visitors from Main Street to the Hoffman Road parking area were also discussed. A kiosk will be installed in the parking area off Hoffman Road.

Florence Kuipers - The Grand Ave. parking lot is complete, large trees were removed for better visibility, and underbrush is being cleared and chipped by Youth Corps. An individual was caught dumping tree trimmings at the site and was identified and fined by park police. Mr. Tierney will begin working on a trail map and brochure for the kiosk. The State specified that the loop trail will be called the Rockport WMA Trail. Mr. Tierney would like to order two signs for this location; a double sided sign for the Grand Ave. entrance and another the Harvey Street entrance. Mr. Tierney explained that the State has requested that the Rockport Wildlife Management Area be included on the Grand Ave sign. Mr. Tierney provided a mockup and suggested that the signs read: "Florence Kuipers, Warren County Parkland" and "Rockport Wildlife Management Area". Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hann to approve the signs. Motion carried.

Bread Lock Park - The rehabilitation plans for the Bread Lock Barn were much more extensive than anticipated, so the plan will be broken down based on priority and necessity. Mr. Tierney will review the priorities with Mr. Detrick.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

MCCT Grant Applications - Mr. Tierney discussed with the Board his idea to have the Board review and comment on any MCCT open space applications in order to ensure that they are consistent with the County's Open Space Plan and efforts. They would serve as advisory opinions only. Mr. Tierney also noted that he would like the Cultural and Heritage Commission to do the same for MCCT historic preservation applications. He will propose this idea to the Freeholders to see whether same is acceptable.

Volunteer of the Year Award - Mr. Tierney would like the Board to consider doing a Volunteer of the Year award in order to show appreciation for all of the volunteers who help maintain county parkland. They would be nominated by a Board member, and once chosen by the Board, a Freeholder proclamation would be prepared.

NJ Conservation Day - Information on the event in March will be forwarded to members. Mr. Tierney will check with the Treasurer that anyone interested in going can either be reimbursed for their registration.

Mr. Helbing inquired about a conservation easement along Pohatcong Creek because a friend of his was confronted by another individual and told to keep out. Mr. Tierney explained that just because the county has a conservation easement, assuming this to be the case, such an easement does not necessarily give public access unless that is specified.

Open Space Tax - Mr. Detrick inquired about the status of County Open Space funding. Mr. Tierney has a budget meeting with the Freeholders next Wednesday. There is a proposed reduction of 5 cents per \$100 assessed value. The tax is currently 4.5 cents per \$100 assessed value. This

reduction would likely translate to a loss of approximately \$500,000 in open space trust funds and the reduction would likely be shared proportionately among the three preservation programs. Fortunately, Mr. Tierney explained, Warren County is nearing the end of a \$5 million Green Acres loan which is being reduced in stages over the next three years. Once that concludes, it will free up nearly \$1 million yearly in the open space budget.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on February 10, 2015.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tobaygo to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christina Cortis', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Christina Cortis  
Administrative Clerk