

**WARREN COUNTY  
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

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

**November 18, 2014  
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

**Absent:** David Detrick

**Guests:** Allen Barlow, Gregg Hudis

**Staff:** Corey Tierney, Christina Cortis

**MINUTES:** The October 14, 2014 were reviewed. It was noted that, under the "Trails" section of the minutes, Mr. Hann spoke, not Mr. Halmi. Mr. Hann made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tobaygo to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion carried with Michael Helbing abstaining.

**PRESENTATION:**

Allen Barlow, The Nature Conservancy - White Lake Natural Resource Area Update.

Mr. Barlow reported on some of the vandalism that has been occurring at White Lake. A wireless security camera has been installed and preventive measures have been taken to hinder future problems. State police have also become more present around the area.

The new White Lake Parkland sign, another smaller sign near the stewardship barn, and a kiosk with trail maps and information have all been installed. In the past year, they've also held several public events at the lake, such as the Wildflower Walk, Preservation Day, Dragonfly Walk, Butterfly and Pollinator Walk, and Moth Night. All have been very successful.

The Nature Conservancy has also been working diligently on the eradication of many invasive and poisonous plant species such as Tree of Heaven, Wild Parsnip, Sickle Weed, Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, and Mile-a-Minute Weed, to allow the growth and restoration of wildflowers and other native plant species.

Another very successful project was the habitat restoration of the Northern Metalmark Butterfly, which was at risk of becoming endangered. During the first year of the project, they were only seeing three to four butterflies a day; now the sightings are up to seventy a day.

Mr. Barlow reported on several rare animal species observed at the lake, such as Bobcats, Barred Owls, Long Tail Salamanders, Northern Copperheads, and Timber Rattlesnakes. It was suggested that a general statement be posted in the kiosks, reminding hikers to stay on trails and raise awareness because of the venomous snakes in the area.

The Shandor bench area has been completely cleared and the path to it has been rerouted to avoid walking through the marshy areas. Flowers may be planted in the spring to make the area look nicer.

There was a discussion about overflow parking for the lake. Mr. Barlow will contact Ms. Dunn from State Fish and Wildlife to coordinate better signage and possible identification of State parking areas on county maps. Mr. Tierney suggested that we get a larger trail map for the kiosk, as well.

Mr. Davis inquired about floating boardwalks at the lake. He said that Ducks Unlimited had donated one at a park he visited. Mr. Tierney said it can be looked into and donations can be accepted. Mr. Barlow has tried to contact the owner of the adjacent property to acquire a trail easement, but has been unsuccessful so far.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** Correspondence was reviewed. Mr. Hann suggested that the Board of Recreation Commissioners and the Department send a letter of support to the Planning Department regarding the creation of a sponsorship committee so the Warren Heritage Scenic Byway designation can continue. Mr. Hann made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fineran for Mr. Tierney to prepare and send the above-mentioned letter to the Planning Department. Motion carried.

## **REPORT OF COMMITTEES**

### Morris Canal Committee/Trails

Mr. Helbing stated that he is having some issues regarding the establishment of a trail through a piece of property that is owned by the Shandors. Mr. Hann offered to meet with Ms. Shandor to discuss this. Mr. Tierney will send Mr. Hann maps of the lot for reference.

Mr. Helbing has also met with Jane from Merrill Creek and plans on going out soon to mark the trails there. Then, hopefully soon, some of these trails can be pieced together. Mr. Helbing introduced Gregg Hudis who was in attendance at the meeting; he helped establish some of these trails. Mr. Helbing also reported the Musconetcong River trail that parallels the entire river. He recently cleared the entire trail and plans on blazing it soon. The next project he and Mr. Davis plan on working on is the Morris Canal trail connection that will come down from the towpath at the Port Murray preserve and will run to the section that is already clear at Harts Lane. He has the first hike planned for December 6<sup>th</sup>.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **ACQUISITION UPDATES**

Lock Street Associates (behind Phillipsburg Mall) - The property is being appraised.

Mann/Barringer, Lopatcong Twp. - Closing is scheduled for November 21<sup>st</sup>.

### O'Dowd, Franklin & Greenwich Twp.

We just received the SADC's CMV. Mr. Tierney will discuss the property with the CADB on Thursday night and plans to make an offer to the owners, including two lots of approximately 60 acres for open space and a trail easement over the western portion of the farm.

### North Central Realco, Franklin Twp. & Greenwich Twp.

Appraisals were done, but we are awaiting for Green Acres to certify the appraisals. If the proposed solar project falls through, the county will make the property owners an offer to buy it outright. If the solar facility moves forward, the developer has agreed to grant the county a conservation and trail easement.

### Carl Crouse, Washington Twp.

Mr. Tierney met with the landowners again. He is hoping to get the owners to agree to the trail easement now and it will be recorded in the deed, but wouldn't take effect until property is sold.



White/Woo, Washington Twp.

Property owners agreed to a verbal offer. Ms. Roy from Planning is working with the owners on a professional vegetative buffer plan. A wooden privacy fence will most likely be installed where the vegetative buffer would interfere with the septic system.

Handlos, Mansfield Twp.

Mr. Tierney said that the property is under contract. The small boot-shaped portion at the bottom of property (Lot 71) does not have clear title and may be omitted at closing if they can't determine who currently owns it. An old deed showed that section belonging to the railroad.

Reed, Mansfield Twp.

There is no indication of the County owning the bridge on the property like the property owner believed. Mr. Tierney will reach out to the property owner to see if they are still interested.

Pool, Mansfield Twp.

This property has a vacant home and the county freeholders have indicated in the past that they would like to avoid buying more properties with structures. Mr. Tierney is only interested in acquiring six acres of the property with the canal. Mr. Tierney spoke with Mr. Lavery about whether Mansfield Township might be interested in using COAH funds to acquire the house; the township does not appear interested in such a project at this time. Mr. Tierney stated that the landowners are the estate and would like to sell the property outright, but he will propose access rights to the canal or an easement over the property.

The Hills at Independence, Independence Twp.

Mr. Tierney will be setting up a conference call with a new representative at the Hills at Independence to see if we can acquire a trail easement and see if they had any objection with a trail head near the playground on the property.

Independence Land Holdings, Independence Twp.

The land owners signed the contract and it was sent down to Green Acres. The Commissioner signed off on it, and it is under contract and moving forward. Mr. Tierney met with the representative from NJ Natural Lands Trust, which owns several hundred acres adjacent to this property and there should be lots of future trails connections and access.

Jonestown Road, Oxford Twp.

Mr. Tierney stated that the revised appraisal reports were sent to Green Acres for CMV. Mr. Tierney is meeting with the mayor and a councilman to discuss the project and trail easement.

Terhune, Washington Twp.

Mr. Tierney made a verbal offer to the property owner, but is still waiting for a response.

Janecko, Franklin Twp.

Mr. Tierney sent a letter to the property owner, but has not heard back.

**MAINTENANCE**

Stryker's Road

The Department is working with Ms. Roy from the Planning Department to develop an RFP for installation of a fence.

#### Plane 9

The Youth Corps mulched the hillside. Ms. Roy is working with a professional to install a vegetative buffer plan. Mr. Tierney would like to order a new sign next year and perimeter trails will be established around the fields.

Port Murray/Brickyard - The Nature Conservancy will be working on the ecological restoration for the quarry. Mr. Tierney and Mr. Barlow met with a contractor to order gates to secure the property and keep ATVs out. New signs will be ordered next year.

Mr. Helbing requested the Board's support for the creation of the trail down part of the canal slope. He will look into the best way to do this without disturbing the historical portion of the canal. Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fineran to support his intention with the trail. Motion carried.

#### Florence Kuipers

The Department of Public Works is working on the parking area and some trees were removed for better visibility. Ms. Dunn from NJ Fish & Wildlife is working on the Rockport WMA Trail loop. A kiosk has been installed by the Highlands Project, Inc. A gate will also be installed. New signs will also be ordered for this site next year. Mr. Tierney plans on having a grand re-opening in the spring.

#### Oxford Mountain

Mr. Helbing and Mr. Tierney will meet with Oxford Town officials in the spring to discuss improvements to the Oxford Mountain and the Warren Highlands Trail.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Mr. Hann attended a Phillipsburg Riverfront Heritage Trail meeting in October. He suggested to Phillipsburg Town officials that they submit a letter to the County Planning Department or the Board of Recreation Commissioners to request inclusion of the trail plan in the County's Open Space Plan. Mr. Hann would like Mr. Helbing to attend the Phillipsburg Riverfront Heritage Trail meetings to share his ideas on connecting NJ trails to PA trails. He would eventually like to see the Warren Highlands trail connect to the main Highlands trail. He would also like to see Mount Parnassus included in some kind of plan.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Tobaygo made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Christina Cortis  
Administrative Clerk