

**WARREN COUNTY
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

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

**December 8, 2015
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Helbing opened the meeting at 5:03 p.m., read the Open Public Meeting Notice, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: William Hann, Jr.

Guests: Elizabeth Roy, Chris Mitchell, Mike Merunka, Jr.

Staff: Corey Tierney, Christina Roberts

MINUTES: The November 10, 2015 minutes were reviewed. Charlie Fineran made a motion, seconded by John Halmi to approve the minutes as presented, with Raymond Tobaygo abstaining. Motion carried.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

Morris Canal Committee

- There was a meeting this morning at Place 9 with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding the work being done on the turbine chamber and grading of the tailrace. They appreciate the efforts that Warren County goes through to complete projects according to their guidelines.
- The erosion problem in the weir at Strykers Road has been completed. The Bridge Department did a commendable job.
- A meeting was held November 20th with Caskey Coding, Nick Cosimano, Elizabeth Roy, Dave Dech, and Corey Tierney to discuss the website and QR codes for Morris Canal sites. The initial start-up costs may be split between the Planning Department and Land Preservation Department, but the yearly maintenance fees could be assumed by the Canal Committee.
- Mr. Detrick, Mr. Halmi, and Mr. Davis did a lot of work clearing debris at Plane 6 (Handlos property). The part of the canal where the boats went over the brow has been cleared and only needs to be scraped off for better interpretation. This is the only Morris Canal site that has a particular turbine attribute still intact.
- NY/NJ Trails Conference will be clearing out the entire canal towpath from Saxton Falls, down past the house. Jacob Franke is heading this project. Mr. Franke said he is almost out of prints of the Morris Canal Guidebook and inquired about updates. Mr. Helbing has a list of revisions/additions to send prior to reprinting; he will find out the deadline for updates. Ms. Roy will also check with the Canal Committee regarding any changes they may suggest.

Trails

Warren Highlands Trail - Mr. Helbing cleared and marked trails from Harkers Hollow to Merrill Creek. He noted that he still needs to install several posts to mark the trail across the field. Mr. Helbing submitted maps and detailed descriptions for the entire rest of the trail to Steve Ellis and John Trontis for Land Management Review (Mr. Ellis retired 11/30/15). He has received permission to mark down to Hoff-Vannatta.

Port Murray - The location of the post with the "End of Public Access" sign being installed at the end of Hart's Lane was discussed. There has not been any updates on the status of the parking lot, but Ms. Roy will try to meet with the municipal engineer for approval. There was discussion regarding the location of a kiosk, even if it is a temporary location, until the parking lot gets finished.

Geiger Tract - Mr. Helbing and Mr. Davis walked the other side of the field that they intended to relocate the trail to, but realized it backs up to people's backyards. The section of the water course that is mowed, disappears after a stretch, so the trail will most likely stay where it is. They can work with the farmer to try to keep the edge of the field further back. Mr. Helbing and Mr. Davis saw people bringing in a trailer of ATVs off the Highlands Way/Belview Road area. They were driving directly across Raub's farm field and onto the Geiger Tract.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Mr. Helbing will be doing the entire Morris Canal series hikes again, in conjunction with the 9-1-1 Trail. The first hike will be in March 2016. Ms. Roy requested he provide information on the hikes to be posted on the Canal website.

The Jersey Highlands Map Series is in the process of being updated. Mr. Helbing is on the review Committee and will be proposing the inclusion of the Warren Highlands Trail; he also suggested the new trail in Allamuchy be included. Mr. Helbing will send Mr. Tierney the information for review, prior to submission.

PRESENTATION

Warren Highlands Trail - Mr. Helbing and Mr. Davis delivered a presentation about the Warren Highlands Trail and recommended to the Board that "main route" be realigned. The existing route with the road walk will not be lost, but it will be utilized as an alternate route instead. Their intention is for the trail to hit all of the County Parkland and major historic sites. Focusing on just the Warren County section, Mr. Helbing touched on the main sections/highlights of the trail, along with the justification for moving the main trail down to Hoff-Vannatta. Mr. Tierney expressed concern about whether the realignment would require additional acquisitions. Mr. Helbing explained that no additional acquisitions would be needed with these changes. Mr. Tierney expressed concern about having a lengthy Warren Highlands Trail, but not enough volunteers to help keep it maintained. Mr. Helbing and Mr. Davis said that a lot of the trails are already maintained by State Parks and as the trail becomes more well-known, more people will take interest in volunteering to maintain it. They will also be utilizing some of Merrill Creek's existing trails. Most of the new route goes through State Parkland and New Jersey Conservation Foundation property. Mr. Helbing has already submitted the proposed trail to Land Management Review through his employment with NJ State Parks. Mr. Tierney stated that the realignment would add new vistas and sites of interest, that this is consistent with the meandering nature of the Warren Highlands Trail, and that the presentation helped to alleviate his concerns about additional acquisitions and maintenance burdens. Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Detrick to approve the new proposed main route, down to Hoff-Vannatta/Ragged Ridge, as presented. Motion carried.

Mr. Helbing discussed the Panther Valley section of the Warren Highlands Trail. Mr. Tierney suggested that preferably a trail easement (and if not an easement, then a trail license) be granted to the township or the state for this section, since the county doesn't own any land in the area. Mr. Fineran will set up a meeting with the Panther Valley Board in Allamuchy Township to discuss a formal agreement regarding the Warren Highlands Trail.

OLD BUSINESS

Acquisition Updates

O'Dowd - The environmental assessment has been completed. The landowner has some debris to clean up, but there were no underground tanks. The survey will also be done soon. Mr. Tierney said that unfortunately the SADC may be looking to revise the CMV for the south farm. The CADB approved the purchase based on the SADCs CMV, so reducing the CMV would be problematic and could potentially jeopardize the entire project.

Crouse - Mr. Tierney explained the Planning Board and Freeholder Director support the condition that the landowners agree to except two acres out around the Morris Canal from their farmland preservation application.

Woo - We received the signed contract from the landowner and it is on the agenda for the December 9th Freeholder meeting.

Logothesis - Appraisals came back almost identical for the two lots, but the county is primarily interested in the property with the canal.

Svenningsen - The landowner verbally indicated it would accept a joint offer between the county, Ridge & Valley Conservancy, a private donor, and Hardwick Township. The county will not be contributing more than the appraisal value. The survey and environmental assessment have been ordered.

Independence Land Holdings - Recently closed on the property adjoining Mount Rascal Preserve, in conjunction with Natural Lands Trust to make it a combined 400 acres. The county obtained 46.5 acres, including the canal.

Maintenance

Florence Kuipers - The remaining outbuildings will be torn down within the next week, so the gate will be left open until demolition is complete. The gate will be fixed and a new lock will be put on the gate once they are done.

Stine Barn - There was a fire in the western section of the barn that damaged the rotted section. There is a portion of the barn that can be saved; and the entire structure still has a good foundation. Mr. Tierney is seeking the Board's recommendation on whether to have the barn is demolished completely or to salvage half of the barn and restore it - either option, according to architectural estimates, would cost approximately \$30,000. If salvaged and restored, however, it will need a new roof which will cost an additional \$15,000. Mr. Tierney noted that they are also looking to make improvements to interior and exterior of the Stine House to make it suitable for an SCA intern to work with the NJ Youth Corps, beginning next year.

The Board favored restoration of the salvageable half of the barn to use for storage and if the building could be secured, possibly artifact exhibits. In the future, there could be room for a pavilion next to the barn after the debris is cleared. Mr. Detrick made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis to salvage and restore the more stable half of the barn, as long as the cost of saving it is within the same ballpark as demolition. Motion carried.

2016 Meeting Dates - Mr. Tobaygo made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fineran to approve the meeting dates as presented. Motion carried.

Hunting Policy - Mr. Tierney would like to submit the proposed 2016-2017 hunting policy to the Freeholders along with the proposed park rules. He has spoken with the Sherriff's Office regarding the hunting permits. They said there have been approximately 100 hunting permits issued this year. Mr. Tierney said he doesn't have concerns with the number of permits because warren county has over 1,000 acres open for hunting and he has read that one hunter per every 100 acres is generally suitable. Hunting is currently permissible at White Lake, Marble Hill, and Oxford Mountain. Permits are issued for county property and are not location-specific, which helps self-regulate the number of hunters in each area. Mr. Tierney would like to look at designating additional parking areas at each site to avoid any potential parking problems. The Board discussed the various provisions in the proposed hunting policy. For instance, there is no Sunday hunting, trail cameras and tree stands are to be removed at the end of the permit/season and cannot be permanent. Next year, some aspects of the hunting permit application process may be done by the Land Preservation Department while some will remain under the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Detrick made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tobaygo to approve the hunting policy as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT - This section may be moved up on the agenda if there is anyone from the public present at the meeting.

NEXT MEETING - The next meeting will be held on January 12, 2016.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business, Mr. Fineran made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tobaygo to adjourn the meeting at 6:54 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,


Christina Roberts
Administrative Clerk