

**WARREN COUNTY  
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179

Oxford, NJ 07863

**May 10, 2022**

**Meeting Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Helbing called the meeting to order at 5:09 PM, read the Open Public Meeting Notice, Pledge of Allegiance

**ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:** John Halmi, Michael Helbing, Charlie Fineran, Ray Tobaygo

**Staff:** Corey Tierney, Elizabeth Roy, Jennifer Kruegel

**Public:** Dave Detrick

**MINUTES:** The April 12, 2022 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Tobaygo motioned, seconded by Mr. Halmi to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Detrick commented that there has been a tremendous progress over the years along the canal and with open space and feels that we need to continue to refocus to the next level. There are two things that he would encourage the board to put on their radar to accomplish: 1. A pedestrian bridge on the the bottom of Plane 9 to help people get across the stream there to help people make the connection from Jim Lee's to Strykers Rd. 2. The loop trail on Stryker Rd that goes back out to 22 and then drops down along the stream because they now have a right to do that. The Board of Rec has a responsibility to make recommendations to the Land Preservation Department and County Commissioners how to move forward so those were his suggestions.

Mr. Helbing inquired if formal action need to take place or would be considered general maintenance under ongoing projects.

Mr. Tierney said that the Plane 9 bridge should be referred to as the Stine Farm Bridge because we would have to do a separate bridge. Mr. Tierney inquired with Ms. Roy if she met with people over there regarding the bridge. Ms. Roy said she had and that while it is far easier than Bilby and they can easily do it but the restrictions are due to the DEP permitting process because at flood stages, the Lopat already goes up to the level of the road bridge so any pedestrian bridge would have to be at least that high. That is considerably higher than either side of the shore so where and how to anchor it is complicated. Mr. Tierney explained the next step would be to retain an engineer so we would have to develop some basic framework and specs and then retain a profession engineer for the design of the permit. He is not sure exactly what the cost of that will be. Possibly 10s of 1000s of dollars at a minimum. From there we would get design permitting from DEP and then source the bridge like we did at Bilby and then identify how we are going to fund that back cost.

Mr. Helbing inquired if we are looking at a multi-use trail for the crossing there. Mr. Tierney said yes he would think so because across the street going up Plane 9 and the improvements we have planned through the TAP grant is all multi-use. So we want to stay consistent with that. Mr. Helbing clarified exactly where they were referring to the same side of the road as the Stine Farm bridge. He suggested creating a crosswalk further down. Mr. Tierney explained that the County Engineers office was opposed to using the existing head walls to maintain the integrity of them. If the engineers had to replace that

bridge then that would be the time that they would entertain putting a sidewalk there on the bridge itself but it may be 20 years from now. There are tentative plans in the 25 year plan that on the Plane 9 property we have the bridge that the county engineer is working on getting the design permitting for the access drive to that bridge to lead up to Plane 9 and also to the Ken Miller house which is still in the works. The vision for that was that it would come out right across the condominium/ townhouse development and there would be a marked pedestrian crossing at that point between those two sections.

Mr. Fineran commented that whether this is going to be an instant fix or it isn't it is a project that is worth having on our radarscope so as we go through time if something pops up we will be ready.

Mr. Tierney said he thinks we need to identify a way to cross the stream there so we can continue that trail into Stine and then up to where we anticipate there will be a pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Fineran made a motion to put it on our ongoing goals because of Plane 9 and because of the work on the other side and safety reasons. He suggests that it be an "active project" in the sense that were aware and our goal is to get a good deal in the interim.

Mr. Tierney said that what his department can do with planning department is develop an RP for the engineering and design permitting services and then be able to get a cost estimate together. Then we'll come back to the board and pursue it further. It's going to take a couple years to get the first stage done. Although we have experience with these projects, they still take a long time.

Mr. Detrick said his perspective is that there is a big pool of people in that development that would access those trails if there was a way to get across the stream and we know its going to take a long time anyway so we mine as well get started.

Mr. Helbing suggested doing a feasibility study that takes into consideration all the historic aspects of this site like the former bridge abutment, where the canal leads and safety measures. Mr. Tierney said that we could expand to include identifying what's the most optimal way to cross the stream and then we can get a professional engineers opinion to look at all the options to see what's best. Mr. Helbing mentioned that eventually we want to highlight the plane itself and make it pedestrian only. Mr. Tierney said that one of the factors is that the Stine Farm driveway across that is not pedestrian only. We would have to look into it further. Mr. Helbing felt it was the most logical place to cross. Mr. Tierney explained that if there is a marked crosswalk, someone decides not to use it, and there is an accident then they assume some level of liability so we should factor in how people will behave so we will have the engineer look into it more.

Mr. Tobaygo seconded Mr. Fineran's initial motion to put the pedestrian crossing project between the Plane 9 and Stine property on their list of ongoing goals. All in favor. Motion carries.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**REPORT OF COMMITTEES:**

**Morris Canal Committee/Warren Heritage Scenic Byway**

Warren Heritage Scenic Byway –

Morris Canal Committee-

Mr. Detrick said that Ms. Roy has been working with the Morris Canal Committee and the Parks Foundation on ParkFest. Coming up the second Saturday in June. There is a great deal of work being put into that.

Ms. Roy we have a good outline for ParkFest this year but less volunteers which is a countywide issue. She appreciates any help that anyone can offer.

Mr. Detrick said that he and Ms. Roy met with two members of the canal society Tim Roth and Joe M (?) They are willing to allow us to have some panels that interpret the boat that they have up at Waterloo and they are going to let us put them up at Bread Lock Park so the Canal Committee is going to partner with the Canal Society to have that done. Joe is working on getting them fabricated and we are going to work on getting them hung up on the far end of the boat for interpretation. Mr. Detrick passed around examples of the panels being offered for the boards review.

Mr. Detrick also reported on the continued work at Port Colden in getting the site cleaned up and work being done on interpretative signs there as well which are being fabricated and reviewed now. We hope to have them in place by spring or early summer. The canal committee is potentially thinking about getting back into bus tours this Fall.

Mr. Helbing reported that the nails for trail blazes had been hammered into all the trees at Bread Lock and some were missing. He plans to put more up.

Mr. Helbing has had some inquiries about Port Murray Preserve from people who want permission to go back in and see the turbine chamber up close. He inquired if there was anyway on an official capacity for people to go back and see it. He said he knows that it is considered a liability and not an area they want to promote. Ron Rice from the Canal Committee in particular wants to see it. Mr. Tierney said that he can contact our office and then maybe Liz could meet him down there. He would like staff present and in cases for historical research.

Ms. Roy added that we had a meeting with two representatives from the Boy Scouts of America. One is the district meetings and the other is the senior scout leader. She met with them to get a better handle on what was needed for scout projects. We have an opportunity to expand some programming with them and take on some projects in our parks as well as maintenance. We discussed the adopt a trail program and they would adopt it as a troop. We also discussed that we don't really need anymore kiosks, benches or other buildings. There is more of a need for virtual information/ tours and getting some help with that kind of programming. It will be a good relationship with scouts. Mr. Helbing commented that the Eagle Scout projects have evolved over the years and creating trails alone is not enough. It needs to be a sustainable project lasting 15 years or more which is difficult to get people to maintain for that long.

Mr. Helbing said that the Youth Corps and Mike Muckle will be working on the Warren-Highlands trail. He is meeting up with them on Thursday when it comes to projects and he will go over marking the entire trail. Several people are interested in doing volunteer work in the area too. Met with Dennis Hickey with very interested in continuing with this work with the Warren Highlands Trail.

Mr. Helbing had a meeting with Tom Sexton from Rails to Trails Conservancy out of Washington, D.C. and talked to him about what to do about the Warren Railroad, which is mostly public land. We had talked about Oxford Tunnel in the past. He brought up that it was collapsed under route 31. He is interested in coming up and walking our Warren Railroad. He will try to get something set-up soon with him.

Mr. Helbing spoke with Knowlton Twp, Bob McNinch and Renee Matey expressed putting the railroad into their plan (did not specify plan). Does not look like Gary Grey owns as much as he thought. NJGEO has removed landowners because of a new law. Mr. Tierney confirmed that there is a new law that requires governments to omit names although there is still some data out there.

Mr. Tierney received a call from the councilman of Phillipsburg. He and another councilman were going to contact DEP about ownership of the Morris Canal Arch and they would like to work something out. Mr. Helbing said it is considered unassigned DEP land. Mr. Tierney explained that information to the councilman and if they could assign it to the State Parks and then the town can lease it from parks and then town can apply to the county historic preservation board. Mr. Helbing said he plans to meet with them regarding it on Thursday and invited anyone else who would like to join him which is an 8 AM meeting time at Van Nest-Hoff-Vannatta in Harmony Twp.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Administrator's Report:**

Mr. Tierney provided the report for review prior to meeting and was happy to report that they have closed on the Singley Property, which contained another section of the canal adjacent to the old Fancy Farm. We will now have to get the boundaries posted and look at trying to get the canal section cleared. We will have to give some thought into as to how we will provide public access there, either trailheads on either side or if we want to put some limited parking. Singley was about 95 acres and we have another 70 acres, part of which was leased out to the Fancy Farm. Above the canal, there is quite a bit of woodlands, that's about 150 acres, we might want to consider permitting hunting there. We can decide that later and if the board wants any additional information such as maps, he can provide that at the next meeting.

Mr. Helbing inquired about the Rutger's student requesting research project at White Lake on Grass of Parnasus. Mr. Tierney said that with the boards' permission, we will grant him a special permit to do his research and ask that he shares what he finds with us.

Mr. Halmi motioned to accept. Mr. Fineran seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Tierney heard back from the attorney for the Trane corporation and they confirmed that they still want to donate to the county what was bridge development partners track on Lock Street. He also has another parcel, that they own, which he had handed out maps for review, and would like to donate to that as well, Block 13 Lot 1 in Lopatcong between River Road and Delaware Road, its 1.2 acres with steep slopes that is almost entirely wooded. In the North it joins municipal open space block 7 lot 2. It does not adjoin county open space. It joins municipal open space which is connected to county open space. We are unsure of the trail but right now, we have Warren Highlands Trail along River Road. Mr. Helbing had actually looked at going up there and creating a land management review that's been approved already, to allow better access when using the trail. He felt it would be a worthwhile acquisition. He requested a motion to accept that donation. Mr. Halmi motioned to accept the offer. Mr. Fineran seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Roy had additional permit requests that came in that she would like to discuss. She reported OK4WD held a car show last weekend and they said thank you for that. We had a request in from Hunterdon Hiking Club on July 10, no problem with that one either. We will just need to get the paperwork from them. She did want to discuss that we did get a request from a couple who are planning to be married on October 15. They are apparently going to be holding their reception at the Vass House and they were directed to Ms. Roy because they wanted to hold the wedding ceremony on the grounds of White Lake by the white barn, the same place that was approved last year by the board. They would have a maximum of 50 guests. They are not looking to have a tent. They would consider renting benches. Last year they set up folding chairs and the rental company had them setup and broken down shortly before and shortly after the ceremony. They were told they would have to provide insurance which they said they could do. Mr. Helbing said the only reservation he has is that once the word gets

out that we offer this for free that we get inundated with these requests. At what point do we say there should be a fee of some kind. It might be a little different since they are working with the Vass Farmstead. Ms. Roy suggested they could drop people off and then park at the Vass House. They indicated they would simply have the guests park at the Vass House and walk the trail up. Ms. Roy said she tried to ask enough questions but if the board had any further questions regarding the event, she would go back to the bride and report back to the board next month. Mr. Helbing thought she did a very thorough job and asked all the right questions. He still has concerns down the road, as our open spaces become more popular. Ms. Roy said it was a good point that if the Vass House is going to become a venue then the relationship with White Lake will increase. Mr. Helbing suggested coming up with some type of wording it so legally the Vass House still needs to communicate with us but since they are doing it they are probably getting some type of payment that helps the Historical Society and as a county we have supported that historical society so much. He wouldn't want to turn people away because he feels like the two go hand in hand. The county should probably own the property for the amount of money invested in it.

Mr. Tierney suggested holding off on the motion until we have a few more details such as ceremony time and we will let her know we don't see any immediate problems with it.

Ms. Roy communicated to her that we would want a pretty detailed schedule and length of time they will be occupying the site. Mr. Helbing suggested communicating with Aaron if someone has limitations and needs certain gates opened or closed. Ms Roy said that in the past they have used a car service for guests with mobility issues and shuttling guests back and forth. It helped to have extra staff and eyes to assist. Something to consider for future events.

Mr. Helbing inquired if Aaron was able to get the interpretive sign put up at the Marl works at White Lake yet. Mr. Tierney said no but he has been asking us about it so we should follow-up. Ms. Roy said we have been emailing back and forth a bit about signs in general at White Lake that need to be updated as well.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEXT MEETING** - The next meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2022.

**ADJOURNMENT** - There being no further business, Mr. Tobaygo motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Fineran, to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Correa-Kruegel  
Community Service Aide