

WARREN COUNTY
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS
500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179
Oxford, NJ 07863
November 9, 2021
Meeting Minutes

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

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Michael Helbing, Charles Fineran, William Hann Jr., Dave Detrick

Staff: Corey Tierney, Elizabeth Roy, Jennifer Kruegel

MINUTES: The September 14, 2021 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CORRESPONDENCE:

REPORT OF COMMITTEES:

Morris Canal Committee/Warren Heritage Scenic Byway

Morris Canal –

Mr. Detrick reported that he went to Port Murray with Ms. Roy, Ms. Kruegel, Ms. Keith, Mr. Lizzi and Mr. Roth to try and compile an agreement of a master plan on how to develop and interpret that site. A lot of ideas got generated but nothing finalized. When there is a list that is agreed upon by everyone, it will be shared with the foundation and committees for review.

The trail race at Plane 10 has been enclosed so the local kids can't go wandering back there and put themselves in harm's way. Additionally the new section of trail has been cleared at Plane 10 so that pedestrians can walk that. The Diaz Property that the county recently closed on. Top of old incline plane to landing section so now there is clear public access to Route 22.

Mr. Helbing inquired about the area by Waterloo, the Allamuchy section and asked if anyone had been there recently to take care of how overgrown it is. Mr. Detrick said that area has been the focus of attention by Judy Keith and parks foundation volunteers. Bilby Road to Saxon Falls is well maintained.

Mr. Detrick mentioned that the Canal Committee and Parks Foundation will be working on the Park Fest together.

Mr. Tierney submitted a nomination back in June for the Waterloo Valley Trail Bridge for the bridge off Bilby Rd. It is an award for the National Coalition for Recreational Trails and is one of 13 projects across the country receiving an award. A link was sent out for an awards ceremony. It is tomorrow at 2 PM online and is the Public Partnership award that used grant money to improve the community. If you are not able to make it, they will record and it will be featured on their website. It is a great honor and it will be interesting to hear about the other projects awarded too.

Trail Committee:

Mr. Helbing reported on adjoining trails and trying to emulate what they are doing for our trails with crushed stone for the public. Mr. Fineran pointed out that the stretch of trail was funded by Green Township.

Mr. Tierney said he would look into it further and he inquired as to who exactly manages the rail trail. Mr. Helbing said it was a combination of State Parks Kittatinny, Jenny Jump, Allamuchy and Spruce Run. Tends to be a complicated jurisdiction process.

Someone has re-decked the other Lehigh and Hudson near Route 31.

Mr. Tierney suggested that a working group be established for the Lehigh and Hudson rail trail like we have for the Warren-Highlands trail, when we get back to in-person meetings.

Mr. Fineran said he would inquire with his contacts in Green Township to see where they acquired the funding for their trail projects and if there could be any collaborations in the future.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Tierney reported that appraisals have been completed for the Janecko property and are under review.

HMUA and Highlands Council discussed removing a water tank in the area. HMUA shared their plans for the deconstruction of the existing water tank and relocation/ construction of the new water tank. The plans are about 90% complete but still need a number of approvals and they are currently in review.

The Singley and True acquisitions needed to have revisions done to the surveys. At the True property, Eikon needs to confirm that the landowner removed debris from the property. After the revisions are complete, the county can close on the properties, hopefully before the end of the year.

The Noel, Pereira, and Pear Tree are farmland preservation applications but each has an open space component. The Board of Agriculture and County Commissioners are moving ahead after some complications with federal Fish and Wildlife funding that was coming through the Highlands Council. The county has elected to move ahead solely with county funds which will expedite the process and we are aiming to close on those properties before year-end.

Mr. Tierney asked to discuss two new properties, both named Miller.

Mr. Tierney inquired with Ken Miller who owns property by Port Warren and Plane 9 to see about the county acquiring it. Mr. Miller is amenable to the idea so Mr. Tierney would like to go ahead and appraise it as an outright sale and with a life estate. There are structures on the property, an old farm house and barn that has collapsed. It would be in the county's best interest to acquire it. The current owner has been a good neighbor, but we don't know who will own it next and this could create difficulties. Mr. Tierney showed the board a map of the area of about 3.5 acres with the residence down towards the river. The old bridge that was the original driveway has been closed due to unsafe conditions and access has been provided to that lot through adjoining county property. In cases of emergency, access can be gained through Thomas Carling.

Mr. Tierney asked for the board's input and authorization to have the property appraised. Mr. Fineran motioned to proceed with the appraisal process and Mr. Hann seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Hann inquired about the project area as it goes out to Route 519 and if that the new bridge the county engineer proposed. Mr. Tierney needs to do research as this was the tax map. Ms. Roy questioned it because she did some deed work there. She said that what shows a hard property line may be a right of way. What is now the Miller property is landlocked. Mr. Hann suggested getting a copy of the proposal by the engineer as he was designing it for buses to park near Jim Lee III property. Ms. Roy said the current design is at the DEP for approval is for the bridge only, the current plans did not address the need for a road. Mr. Tierney stated that we have flexibility to route interior lanes without DEP approval as we have done in the past to ensure access.

The second property is the Bill Miller property. Mr. Miller spoke with Mr. Resker 20 years ago when considering selling it to the state. The state wanted access to the property through the driveway that goes past his house where he wants to stay though, so he did not pursue it any further. Mr. Miller reached out to Mr. Tierney to see if the county would be interested without the access provision. The property is over 200 acres (Block 21 Lot 35 in Independence Township) and located in Great Meadows off Alphano Road. It is across the street from the Lehigh and Hudson railroad and has frontage along the Pequest River. However, it is not adjacent to an existing Warren County property. To the east of the Miller property is the Audubon Old Farm Sanctuary. Mr. Tierney reached out to NJ Audubon to see if they would be interested in acquiring the property or partnering in an acquisition. They replied that they are no longer doing that type of work. Mr. Tierney further inquired with the state and they were non-committal, but if land owner wants he could submit an application through Green Acres they would check with State Parks and Fish and Wildlife to see if there is interest in either of those agencies. Mr. Tierney wanted to bring it to the attention of the board. He plans to visit the property and take a closer look as to what it entails. A couple of lots appear to be owned by the township (Block 21, Lot 13 and Block 21, Lot 33) with the potential to connect over to the Old Farm Sanctuary property to preserve the bulk of the mountain. The property is in the Highlands Planning Area, not the Preservation Area, so there is the potential for development. Mr. Tierney inquired if the board had any questions or information they would like him to gather regarding the property. Mr. Helbing proposed some other access routes for a potential greenway connecting to sanctuary and beyond towards Mount Rascal and Allamuchy Mountain State Park. Mr. Tierney will pull the deeds, look further into it and return to it next month.

Mr. Helbing inquired if Mr. Tierney had a chance to tour the Janecko property and preserving the house. Mr. Tierney did but there was a lot of overgrowth at the time and noted the old barn and house. They will discuss at another time.

Mr. Hann inquired about Bridge Development Partners under new projects on the report and the proposal for improving the stream. Mr. Tierney said Trout Unlimited did get the DEP permits to continue with stream restoration near Striker Road and Lock Street. They began to make in-stream improvements to that area over the summer but he was not sure if it was all completed. He noted the county is still waiting for the Bridge Development Partners to convey a small triangular piece of property on Lock Street they said they would donate.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Detrick commented that there is a lot of multiflora rose in the Janecko area that will need to be taken out when the property is acquired. It will require some heavy machinery. Mr. Detrick also pointed out that Ken Miller bought the property at auction from the county as the only bidder years ago. Additionally, Mr. Detrick was excited to see the Warren County Group Program brochure developed by Ms. Kruegel.

Mr. Tierney said that Ms. Kruegel has been busy putting together programs and having tables set-up at Shippen Manor and White Lake that has been well-received. This is part of the next steps for Warren

County and to try and bring back some of the programs at White Lake that RVC offered previously which visitors appreciated.

Ms. Kruegel reviewed the ideas for conducting group programs in Warren County Parks. The ideas behind the brochure were programs that she could accommodate to scout groups or home-schoolers. The plan is to work with Mike Muckle and the Youth Corps and train them in conducting the programs to assist with larger groups. She is creating lesson plans that can be broken up into stations and easily taken over by the Youth Corps. The goal is for the Fall of 2022 and offer throughout the county.

Mr. Hann inquired about the agreement with the Youth Corps and whether the White Lake contract would go out to bid. Mr. Tierney explained that there's special legislation for the Youth Corps which allows the counties and municipalities to into contracts with them without having to go through formal bidding process. Mr. Tierney also noted that the county, working with NJ Audubon, received a grant through the US Fish and Wildlife. So we are working with Mike VanClef, the Audubon, and the Youth Corps at White Lake to develop a forest stewardship plan that we will begin working on soon which will introduce additional educational opportunities. The county is also exploring additional ways to add yoga and other recreation programs to the area.

Mr. Helbing will be doing his Annual First Day Hike on the Warren Highlands Trail and try to feature new sections of trail. Great additions that add diversity to the trail.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

NEXT MEETING - The next meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business, Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran, to adjourn the meeting at 6:05 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Correa-Kruegel
Community Service Aide