

**WARREN COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**  
500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179  
Oxford, NJ 07863

**December 12, 2023**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Helbing opened the meeting at 5:00 pm.

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:** Mr. Helbing read the Open Public Meeting Notice.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL:**

**Members Present:** Mike Helbing, Charles Fineran, John Trontis, Bill Hann Jr.

**Members Not Present:** John Halmi, Ray Tobaygo

**Staff Present:** Corey Tierney, Kim Barnes, Elizabeth Roy, Jennifer Correa-Kruegel

**MINUTES:**

The October 10, 2023 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Trontis asked that the last sentence in the Trail Committee section be corrected to state the Support Roaring Rock Park group have pledged to help with the maintenance of the Warren Highlands Trail section that runs through Roaring Rock Park. Mr. Fineran motioned to approve the minutes with the correction. Mr. Trontis seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

The **Report of Committees** will be moved to the end of the meeting in order to address action items first.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Mr. Fineran made a motion to move to Executive Session at 5:02 pm for the purpose of discussion to purchase property. Mr. Hann seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Minutes of the executive session will not be disclosed until the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

The meeting was reopened to public session at 5:15 pm.

Mr. Hann made a motion with Mr. Fineran seconding the motion to follow Mr. Tierney's recommendation to purchase the property at Block 1204, Lots 2 and 2.02, in Mansfield Township and to direct Mr. Tierney and staff to explore all land swapping opportunities with other entities that are contiguous to that property as it pertains to recreation and benefit to the Morris Canal. All in favor, motion passed.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Additional Hunting Areas** – Mr. Tierney had two areas for the board to discuss recommending to the Board of County Commissioners the allowance of hunting on. He distributed maps of properties the county purchased. The first map shows two sections in red on Jonestown Rd: Block 2, Lot 12 Q0034, Lot 14 Q0034, Lot 18.03 Q0034; and Block 4, Lot 4 Q0135 in Oxford Township (known as the “True” property) and Block 5, Lot 32.01 in Washington Township (known as the “Blazek” property). It also shows a property in yellow that is under contract and will be a future discussion for permitting hunting. These properties were purchased as additions to the Oxford Mountain Resource Area. Hunters would have to abide by state hunting rules. Mr. Helbing stated the property in red has always allowed a hunting club to hunt on it. Currently, Warren County only allows hunting in three areas - White Lake, Oxford Mountain, and Marble Hill Natural Resource Areas. Hunting permits are available through the sheriff’s office. Mr. Helbing thinks not allowing hunting on the property would cause problems. Mr. Trontis made a motion to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to allow hunting on the True property (Block 2, Lot 12 Q0034, Lot 14 Q0034, Lot 18.03 Q0034 and Block 4, Lot 4 Q0135 in Oxford Township) and the Blazek property (Block 5, Lot 32.01 in Washington Township). Mr. Fineran seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed.

The second map shows property in Franklin Township in the Millbrook Road Area, purchased in 2022 from the Singley estate: Block 18, Lots 29 & 35; and Block 11, Lot 23. It includes 175 acres between Millbrook Road and Halfway House Road. There are some fields within the area that we lease to an adjoining equestrian operation (Block 18, Lot 27) and to a crop farm (Block 18, Lot 29). Mr. Helbing mentioned there are complaints at Marble Hill about one hunter having about six deer stands at a time in addition to a deer blind. He asked about leasing this property to a hunting club so the same thing would not happen at this property. Mr. Tierney said it would have to go out to a bid. The sheriff’s office does provide the hunters with a map and our guidelines when they obtain a permit. We do not have park rangers to patrol. It is not a natural resource area, but it is a part of the Morris Canal Greenway. We do not currently allow hunting on any other parkland along the Greenway or outside of our natural resource areas. Mr. Helbing said there is potential for leasing to a hunting club being a revenue source and/or stewardship. Mr. Trontis said maintaining the trails on the property could be incorporated into a bid document. Mr. Tierney reported there have been a few calls in the past year asking if hunting was permitted on this property. Mr. Trontis brought up how the farmers currently leasing the fields can already apply for depredation permits from the state. Mr. Helbing suggested only allowing hunting on Block 11, Lots 1 and 23.

The canal separates those lots from the others. Mr. Tierney said there is no designated parking access for the hunters. Mr. Trontis asked for a staff recommendation for this property as well. Mr. Tierney recommends allowing hunting above the canal, note there is no designated parking area, and give hunters specific instruction on how to access the property. Mr. Trontis stated the hunters would have to keep weapons cased while they go through the no hunting zones to get to the hunting permitted area. Mr. Trontis made a motion to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to allow hunting on Block 11, Lots 1 and 23 with instruction to the hunter that there is no designated parking area and they must keep weapons cased in the no hunting zones. Mr. Hann seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed.

**Administrator's Report** – Mr. Tierney provided his report and there were no questions.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT (related to agenda items):** Beth Hehn suggested that in the future the public be provided copies of the maps so they could follow along.

**REPORT OF COMMITTEES:**

**Morris Canal Committee** – Mr. Helbing shared that on Tuesday, March 26, he will be giving a presentation on the Morris Canal in Bloomfield at their Civic Center.

**Warren Heritage Scenic Byway** – Mr. Trontis stated the 11/13 Scenic Byway Committee meeting was cancelled due to a lack of progress on projects. He said the county did a comprehensive study on existing signage along the original Byway (the Route 57 portion of the Scenic Byway). They checked for posting of the Byway logo with arrows. Just the words "Warren Heritage Scenic Byway" is not sufficient and there is a need for additional signage. After funding is obtained for additional signage and for clarification to be added to the existing signs along the Scenic Byway, a similar format will be used for signs along the entire Byway. Mr. Trontis said the county did an amazing job with the study.

**Trail Committee** – The last meeting was on 10/27 where obstacles to development, like vandalism to signs and trail blazes and potentially needed acquisition of private properties or trail easements on properties, were discussed. The next meeting for the Warren Highlands Trail Committee is 3/15. Mr. Helbing said the state is very interested in what is known as Bobcat Alley and they are pushing to preserve a 150-acre piece of property that would connect us to Buckhorn Creek Wildlife Management Area. Mr. Trontis commended Mr. Helbing on his work on the Warren Highlands Trail. Mr. Helbing said regional trail planning is essential.

**Additional NEW BUSINESS:**

Mr. Helbing has been reading up on the national park designation. He said there isn't supposed to be entrance fees, but he is concerned with one thing in the information –

there is transition of forest to pasture. Mr. Trontis said that means logging and that is advocating for a limited number of species at the detriment of the greater habitat.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Mr. Trontis asked about the resolution submitted to the Board of County Commissioners asking them to request a meeting with Merrill Creek owners. Mr. Tierney said the resolution was submitted, however, he did not get a response.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEXT MEETING:** The next Board of Recreation Commissioners meeting will be a reorganization meeting on January 9, 2024.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Fineran motioned, seconded by Mr. Hann, to adjourn the meeting at 5:56p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Barnes, Clerk  
Warren County Land  
Preservation Dept.