

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

**March 12, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Tierney called the reorganization meeting to order at 5:02pm.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL:**

**Members Present:** Mike Helbing, Charles Fineran, John Trontis, Michael Margulies

**Members Not Present:** Bill Hann Jr, Ray Tobaygo

**Staff Present:** Corey Tierney, Kim Barnes

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

Mr. Tierney welcomed new board member, Michael Margulies.

**REORGANIZATION:**

Mr. Tierney opened the floor for nominations for Chair. Mr. Fineran nominated Mike Helbing to remain as chair. Mr. Trontis seconded the nomination. Mr. Fineran, Mr. Trontis, and Mr. Margulies all voted yes. Mr. Helbing abstained as the vote was for him. Motion carried to have Mr. Helbing as Chair of the BORC.

Mr. Helbing opened the floor for Vice-Chair nominations. Mr. Trontis nominated Mr. Fineran to remain as Vice-Chair. Mr. Margulies seconded the nomination. Mr. Helbing, Mr. Trontis, and Mr. Margulies all voted yes. Mr. Fineran abstained as the vote was for him. Motion carried to have Mr. Fineran as Vice-Chair of the BORC.

Mr. Helbing nominated Mr. Hann to remain as Board Secretary. Mr. Fineran seconded the nomination. The vote is tabled until Mr. Hann is present to accept the nomination.

Mr. Trontis made a motion to approve the 2024 BORC meeting dates (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month). Mr. Fineran seconded the motion. All in favor. Meeting dates approved.

**MINUTES:**

The December 12, 2023 general meeting and executive session minutes were reviewed. Mr. Trontis motioned to approve the general meeting minutes. Mr. Fineran seconded. All in favor, except Mr. Margulies who abstained because he was not at that meeting. Minutes approved. Mr. Trontis motioned to approve the executive session minutes. Mr. Fineran seconded. All in favor, except Mr. Margulies who abstained because he was not at that meeting. Executive session minutes approved.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT (related to agenda items):**

Mr. Tierney introduced Jonathan from the New Jersey Youth Corps who was attending the meeting. He has been doing a great job helping at the county's park sites.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

### **REPORT OF COMMITTEES:**

**Morris Canal Committee** – Mr. Fineran shared that it was brought up in the MCC meeting that sign panels need to be completed before paying for them. The importance of getting print ready files or ordering extra prints was also discussed.

Mr. Helbing shared that on Tuesday, March 26, he will be giving a televised presentation on the Morris Canal for the Bloomfield Historical Society at the Civic Center in Bloomfield.

**Warren Heritage Scenic Byway** – The last meeting scheduled for 11/13 was canceled because of a lack of progress in moving the revised plan. It will be rescheduled for later this month or in April. The chair, Alan Hunt, has resigned. Since Mr. Trontis was Vice-Chair, he is now the acting chair of the WH Scenic Byway.

**Warren Highlands Trail** - The March 15 meeting for the Warren Highlands Trail Committee has been rescheduled to Friday, March 22, 10am-12pm at the Central Region State Park office. Mr. Helbing said there is going to be a 3-year partnership with the New Jersey Youth Corps and the State of New Jersey. The NJYC already has a partnership with Warren County to maintain county park properties.

Mr. Helbing said Matt Davis is working with a scout troop in Washington as the scouts need service hours. Mr. Tierney said this is good timing because he is trying to get a small group meeting to focus on the county property on Brass Castle. We will need Fish & Wildlife permission to piggyback on that trail.

Mr. Helbing said Merrill Creek built a better switchback up from their power line property around the galvanized gate and it comes out across the street from the state parking lot. They put signage up and blazed the change of the route.

The bridge Mr. Helbing and Matt Davis built on the farmer's fair/Geiger tract of property the county owns was washed out by flooding and is gone. That area needs to be cut back and improved. The water has been laying on the edge of the fields. Mr. Helbing thinks if we ever got a grant, that it would be a good place for a wetlands restoration project.

The red trail at Marble Hill had branches covering it. Also, the sign at the Fulmer Mine was ripped out again and needs to be resecured. Mr. Tierney said he'd talk to the Parks Foundation.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Administrator's Reports** – Mr. Tierney shared the following reports with the board: Acquisitions, Maintenance & Improvements, and Park Programs.

### **Proposed Open Space Acquisitions –**

- **444 Route 94 (B5 L16 Knowlton Twp, 180 ac.), potential donation from TLCNJ** – We previously were looking to purchase this property as farmland, but ran into an issue. The Nature Conservancy recently purchased another property by the same owner. They are looking at purchasing this property and then possibly donating it to the county. They want to know if the county would be interested in accepting the donation which means then owning and managing it. Most of it is currently cultivated as hay. Mr. Tierney shared slides of the property and a conservation blueprint. There are a lot of environmental resources and ecological reason to preserve this property. The county's open space plan says the Board of Recreation Commissioners can recommend properties with significant ecological value, which this has. Mr. Trontis made a motion to recommend to the County Commissioners that we accept the donation of this parcel if it is offered. Mr. Margulies seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.
- **287 Route 46 (B37 L3, White Twp, 0.52 ac.), asking \$248,000 (Lehigh & Hudson RR) & 285 Route 46 (B37 L4, White Twp, 0.2 ac.), asking \$46,000 (Lehigh & Hudson RR)** – Mr. Tierney referred these to Green Acres to see if they are interested. They contain property along the Lehigh & Hudson Railroad. Years ago, the planning department had a plan that targeted acquisitions going from Belvidere to Allamuchy through the Pequest Wildlife Management area and into Sussex County. Mr. Tierney would like to ask the Planning Dept., with the board's permission, to update that plan when they have time. There is a house on the 287 Route 46 property that the county wouldn't need. If the county were to purchase the property, Mr. Tierney would propose splitting off what we need and then selling the house at auction. Mr. Helbing made a motion for the BORC to explore the possibilities of purchasing these properties as a connection to the Lehigh & Hudson Railway Greenway and for Mr. Tierney to ask the planning department to revisit the Lehigh & Hudson trail plan. Mr. Trontis seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Tierney said the Cheema property is moving ahead with their site plan. This is where the gas station sits at Route 46 & Route 31. They will be donating a trail easement to the county along the old rail behind the gas station.

### **Special Permit Requests –**

- **Sunrise Service at White Lake on 3/31** – The First United Methodist Church of Blairstown submitted an application requesting permission to hold a sunrise service on Easter at White Lake. They have provided a certificate of insurance. The land steward would be there to unlock the gate. Mr. Margulies made a motion

to approve this permit. Mr. Fineran seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

- **OK 4WD Spring Trucks & Coffee, Sat 4/6, 8:30am-12:00pm at Bread Lock Park** – They hold this in the spring and fall. Mr. Margulies made a motion to approve this permit. Mr. Fineran seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.
- **Common Sense for Animals Dog Walk Event weekend of 9/21-9/22** – We have not received a formal request yet, but they were inquiring if this type of event would be considered. Mr. Helbing said he has co-hosted this event in the past. It has previously been held at Meadowbreeze Park and at Lebanon Twp. Memorial Park. They bring adoptable dogs out to walk them and turn it into a fundraising event. In the past, it has been a walk, run, bike, or hike event. Mr. Helbing said it could draw a couple hundred people. It would be good exposure for Bread Lock Park. We would have to see if the BLP facilities are adequate for the size of the event (i.e. port-a-johns, parking, etc). The board is supportive of the idea, but they will need to submit a formal application before the board can vote on it. In the meantime, Mr. Margulies made a motion to give preliminary approval, with Mr. Fineran seconding the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

**WCPF Memorial Bench Request at Port Murray** – The Warren County Parks Foundation would like to donate and install a memorial bench for Stan Cohen, longtime volunteer and Port Murray Preserve neighbor. Mr. Tierney displayed a map showing how Stan's property borders the county property. He showed a potential location for the bench; however, there is a tree & bench policy in place. The board can choose the location, limit what is on any commemorative plaque, and can specify maintenance. Mr. Helbing said with this being the Morris Canal, we should try to maintain as much historic ambience as possible without detracting from it, so location is key. Location recommendations for the WCPF are near the water if installing it on private property (Stan's property) or the loop/circle area on county property. Mr. Margulies made a motion to approve this permit. Mr. Fineran seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Prescribed Burn Plan for White Lake** – A prescribed burn is being considered for areas of White Lake for the spring of 2025. Mr. Helbing recommended Mr. Trontis be the board liaison for this since he was in the fire-fighting service for thirty years. Mr. Trontis has experience burning hundreds of acres over the years for the state and his former county. Mr. Trontis made a motion to work with county staff to put together a committee to develop a multi-year prescribed burn plan for certain field areas within White Lake with the plan addressing specific habitat needs. Mr. Fineran seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Additional NEW BUSINESS:** Mr. Tierney invited the board members to the Volunteer Appreciation Brunch on Saturday, 4/20 from 10am-12pm at the Richard D. Gardner Branch of the Warren County Library.

The Bicentennial Summer Concert will be held at Bread Lock Park on Saturday, 7/13.

Mr. Tierney said Mr. John Halmi's resignation from the BORC has been accepted by the County Commissioners. Mr. Helbing suggested sending a letter of appreciation for his years of service to the board, appreciating his input over the years, and that he will be missed. Mr. Fineran made the motion. Mr. Trontis seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEXT MEETING:** The next Board of Recreation Commissioners meeting will be on Tuesday, April 9, 2024.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, Mr. Margulies motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Fineran. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:12pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Barnes, Clerk  
Warren County Land Preservation Dept.