

**Franklin Township
(Virtual)
Open Space Advisory Committee
Minutes of the July 20, 2021, Meeting**

Bob Puskas	<i>Chair/AAAC</i>	P	Melba Battin	<i>Citizen</i>	P
Arnold Schmidt-	<i>Vice Chair/Environmental Commission</i>	P	Robert LaCorte	<i>Historic Commission</i>	
Bill Connell-	<i>Secretary/Citizen Member</i>	P	John Moon	<i>Recreation Commission</i>	
Tara Kenyon	<i>Consultant</i>	P	David Triggs	<i>Citizen Member</i>	P
Bob Vornlocker	<i>Town Manager</i>	P	Vacant	<i>Planning Board</i>	
Mark Healy	<i>Town Planner</i>		Deana Luchs	<i>Citizen Member</i>	P
Phillip Kramer	<i>Mayor</i>		John Herrling	<i>Citizen Member/Trails Advisory Committee</i>	P
Ted Chase	<i>Council Liaison</i>	P	Chris Williams	<i>Shade Tree Commission</i>	P
William Byrtus	<i>Director - Recreation Department</i>		Mike Smith	<i>Board of Education</i>	P

- 1. Call to Order** in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6)
Chairman Puskas called meeting to order 7:03

- 2. Roll Call**
See above

- 3. Public Comment**
Triggs moved, Williams Seconded, a motion to open to public, motion passes
Charles Martin – member of Trails Advisory Committee – stated that he was listening into the meeting and reported that the agenda was not posted. Tara Kenyon stated that the agenda was posted on the Township’s website under the Open Space Advisory Committee and will make sure it’s posted in multiple places for easy finding for the next meeting.

Triggs moved, Williams Seconded, a motion to close to public, motion passes

- 4. Old Business**

- Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study- “strategic plan”

Kenyon gave an overview of the final planning document prepared under the Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study funded through a grant received by Sustainable Jersey. The final document in the series is the Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan, which focus on 17 potential projects across the Township on a variety of land uses. Each project contains information regarding total impervious coverage, type of green infrastructure recommended, reduction in stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution, cost and more. She presented a spreadsheet that drilled the data down from the overall Plan and will share her recommendations at the next meeting.

- Prescribed Burn Program (2021/2022)

Tara reported that the applications for the Prescribed Burn at John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve and Negri-Nepote Grasslands Preserve have been submitted to the New Jersey Fire Safety Service for approval. If approved, prescribed burning will take place between January and April 2022.

c. Firefly Walk at John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve (evening of July 10th)

26 people attended the Firefly Walk, which was a great turnout.

d. Hunting Program – 2021/2022 Season

Applications went live on the Township's website on July 13th and are open until August 10th. The first day of hunting season is Saturday, September 11th.

Chairman Bob Puskas asked about the status of work performed by the two full time employees in Public Works paid by the Open Space Trust fund. Township Manager Bob Vornlocker responded that these employees perform maintenance at all open space and parks on a full-time basis for 10 months out of the year and are indeed paid by the Open Space Trust Fund. Chairman Puskas would like to see an accounting of hours worked.

5. New Business

a. Replacement of Skate Park at Middlebush Park

The Skate Park at Middlebush Park has been closed for some time because it was deemed unsafe by our insurance provider. Repair is not a feasible option, so total replacement has been proposed. Bob Vornlocker received a plan for an updated, modern Skate Park which would replace the existing infrastructure in the same area. The total cost is approximately \$308,000. A discussion ensued regarding the usage of the Skate Park and the cost of replacement.

Triggs stated his opinion that the Skate Park was underutilized, prior to the Township closing it.

Bob LaCorte suggested that the area would be better suited for a Spray Park, particularly because the Somerset County Sprayground at Colonial Park has not been operating consistently over the last few years. He added that the conversion of the existing Skate Park area to a sprayground could be a viable project for the County's Recreation Grant Program. Bob Vornlocker replied that besides the County's Sprayground, there is also a sprayground at the Naaman Williams Park. Additionally, the costs associated with development and maintenance of a sprayground at the site would be much higher than replacing the Skate Park, of which the next closest skate park is in Hillsborough Township.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the need for a Skate Park versus a sprayground, the feasibility and process for installing a sprayground, the use of a Skate Park, and the total costs. The Committee decided to vote on the options:

Chris Williams made a motion to recommend replacing the Skate Park based on the proposal and plans presented by Bob Vornlocker. The motion was seconded by Arnold Schmidt. Individual votes were cast as follows:

Affirmative (Replace Skate Park):

Arnold Schmidt
Bill Connell
Chris Williams
John Herrling

Against (Do Not Replace Skate Park)

Bob Puskas
Bob LaCorte
David Triggs
Deana Luchs
Melba Battin

The motion to recommend replacement of the Skate Park failed.

Arnold Schmidt made a motion to review the opportunities and options for a sprayground in the area of the Skate Park at Middlebush Park. The motion was seconded by David Triggs. Individual votes were cast as follows:

Affirmative (Review Options for Sprayground):

Bob Puskas
Arnold Schmidt
Bob LaCorte
David Triggs
Deana Luchs
Melba Battin

Against (Do Not Review Options for Sprayground)

Bill Connell
Chris Williams
John Herrling

The motion to recommend reviewing opportunities and options for a sprayground in the area of the existing Skate Park at Middlebush Park passed.

b. Recognition for Girl Scout Gold Award

Franklin Township High School Sophomore and Girl Scout, Megan Hauss, prepared a presentation and accompanying educational materials about the Spotted Lanternfly for her Gold Award. Tara reported that the presentation was excellent and very informative, and that the flyers she made were very impressive. The information has been posted on the Township's website. Kenyon suggested that Council could give her a commendation for her efforts. It was agreed that once her Gold Award was received, the Township will present her with a commendation.

c. Land Stewardship Roundtable – October 12th at JCMNGP

Eric Gerling of Middlesex County Parks Department requested to hold the October 2021 meeting of the Land Stewardship Roundtable at the John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve. The Committee agreed to grant permission for the onsite meeting. Chris Williams and Chuck Martin (Trails Advisory Committee) will speak to the group about the stewardship and biota of the grasslands.

d. Return to In-Person Meetings

The Township Council agreed to return to in-person meetings for all Township Committees, Councils, and Commissions, due to the relaxing of many Covid-19 restrictions. A resolution approving the return to in-person meetings is required and must be submitted to the Clerk prior to hosting an in-person meeting.

Williams moved, Luchs seconded, motion to return to in person meetings, with the allowance for Council to return to virtual meetings, if necessary, based on changing Covid-19 conditions.

7 yes votes, 1 nay. Motion passes

6. Consultant's Monthly Activity Report

Included for review.

7. Updates from other Committees

The Shade Tree Commission will be planting trees at Memorial Forest.

8. Public Comment.

Williams moved; Connell seconded a motion for second opening to public. Motion passes

Bill Bowman of the *Franklin Reporter and Advocate* requested a confirmation and clarification On the Skate Park motion.

Schmidt Moved, Williams seconded a motion to close opening to public. Motion passes

9. Executive Session

The Committee did not enter Executive Session during the July meeting.

10. Adjournment

Williams moved; Connell seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion passes, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Connell
Secretary