

Franklin Township
(Virtual)
Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund
Advisory Committee Minutes
 May 18, 2021

Bob Puskas	<i>Chair/Ag</i>	P	Melba Battin	<i>Citizen</i>	A
Arnold Schmidt-	<i>V-Chair/Env.</i>	P	Robert LaCorte-	<i>Historic</i>	P
Bill Connell-	<i>Secretary/Citizen</i>	P	John Moon-	<i>Recreation</i>	P
Tara Kenyon	<i>Consultant</i>	P	David Triggs-	<i>Citizen</i>	P
Bob Vornlocker-	<i>Town Manager</i>	P	Cecile Mciver	<i>Planning</i>	P
Mark Healy-	<i>Town Planner</i>		Deana Luchs-	<i>Citizen</i>	P
Phillip Kramer	<i>Mayor</i>	P	John Herrling –	<i>Citizen</i>	A
Ted Chase	<i>Council Liaison</i>	P	Chris Williams-	<i>Shade Tree</i>	P
William Byrtus	<i>Rec Department</i>	P	Mike Smith	<i>BOE</i>	P

1. Call to Order in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Puskas at 7:05 PM.

2. Public Comment

Schmidt moved, LaCorte seconded, a motion to open to the public. Motion passes
 Zack Lichtmann, from the Franklin Astronomy Club introduced himself and explained the Club to the Committee. The club organized in 2018 and has over 600 followers on social media. Prior to Covid restrictions, the Club hosted observation events that could attract as many as 150 people. He requested use of Open Space land for events they hope to host in the future. The Committee asked him to submit his proposal for review. Mr. Lichtmann agreed to submit the proposal and added that the most likely property proposed for use would be John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve because of its ambient light. The Committee felt this was a positive use of property.

Seeing no other members of the public, LaCorte moved, Connell seconded, a motion to close to public. Motion passes

3. Old Business

a. **Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study** - Tara Kenyon presented data and recommendations from the first two documents of the Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study. The final document, which will contain much more detailed information, site-specific sketches, and stormwater volume data, will be completed by the end of June.

b. **National Trails Day** – being held on June 5, 2021, at 9:30am at the Bunker Hill Natural Area. Tara and Beau Byrtus are working together to facilitate the event. Recreation will be hiding decorated rocks on the trail for the kids, and to kickoff the “Franklin Rocks” program.

c. **Completion of Boy Scout Project – Little Libraries** - Andrew Terhune installed three Little Libraries – 1 at Inman Park, 1 at Middlebush Park and 1 at Williams Park. The Committee applauded his work and appreciated his efforts. Bob LaCorte mentioned that these Little Libraries can be registered online to become part of a worldwide registry. He will send Tara the information.

d. **Grasslands Management at Negri-Nepote** – Chairman Puskas stated that the grasslands at Negri-Nepote are very overgrown and needs to be mowed. Tara updated the Committee that the area is on the calendar for mowing on August 1st (just after nesting season ends on July 30th). Tara also mentioned that performing a Prescribed Burn is an option on two large sections at Negri-Nepote for this winter. She will discuss this potential project at the next OSAC meeting.

4. New Business

a. **Bike Lane Expansion** - Bob Vornlocker reported that there is funding available through a previous developer's agreement to extend the bike path at Van Cleef Road. This extension is comprised of approximately 3,600 feet will connect two existing bike paths (between Grouser Lane and Blackwells Mills Road) and has been a priority for the Trails Advisory Committee for some time. The engineering work will be performed in-house and will begin soon.

b. **Quote for Nature Walks** – At the last meeting, Chris Williams asked Tara to work with New Jersey Audubon Society to host 2 Butterfly Walks at the Grasslands Preserves in July/August. Tara presented the quote she received in the amount of \$450, which includes a Naturalist from NJAS leading the walk, advertising, and registration. LaCorte made a motion to approve the quote and move forward with scheduling the events, which was seconded by Puskas. All agreed and the motion carried.

c. **Hunting Program - Results from 2020-2021**

Tara presented the summary data from the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 hunting seasons. The information is posted to the Township's website at:

<https://www.franklintwpnj.org/government/boards-committees/open-space/hunting-information/hunting-summary>

c. **Green Acres – Application for Municipal Planning Incentive Grant**

Tara Kenyon updated the Committee on a solicitation for applications to the Municipal Planning Incentive Grant through Green Acres. This application requires submitting a list of targeted open space properties, as well as information related to the Open Space Trust Fund and the Committee. The deadline is June 30th. Tara will submit the required information to the State prior to the deadline.

d. **New Legislation/Policies for Review:** Tara provided an overview of legislation that is pertinent to the work of this Committee:

i. Soil Disturbance Standards – the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) has submitted draft Standards to its partners for informal comment. Once the informal comment is reviewed, the SADC plans to post the draft Soil Protection Standards in the New Jersey Register

for formal comment. These Standards describe the amount of soil disturbance permitted on all preserved farms based on the type of activity. Normal agricultural practices such as tilling are not restricted at all. Construction and use of semi-permanent (overflow parking, temporary greenhouses) and permanent structures (agricultural buildings with permanent footings, paved travel lanes) are regulated in terms of how many acres or the percentage of the total preserved land is affected. The Agricultural Advisory Committee has been made aware of this regulation and will prepare formal comments for review by the OSAC and Township Council.

ii. **Amendment to NJ Right-to-Farm Act** – the Right-to-Farm Act now protects agricultural labor housing on equine operations only. The location and dimensions of the allowable agricultural labor units are very specific and require these units to be inside a structure used for the equine operation. CADBs are permitted to begin hearing these requests immediately.

iii. **Forest Management/Stewardship Bills**- there are currently 3 bills in the legislature that propose specific requirements for municipal forestry management and stewardship. The bill that would affect municipalities the most requires any municipal open space over 25 acres acquired to prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan. These Plans must be prepared by a New Jersey-certified Forester and can be costly. The preparation of these Plans can take a good deal of time, thereby delaying the preservation process and/or use of the preserved land.

5. Consultant's Monthly Activity Report – included in the meeting materials

6. Updates from other Committees

Recreation - Beau reported that the Recreation Department is holding a training on how to use a measurement tool for park usage on May 19th at 6PM at Middlebush Park. This tool will enable Recreation to collect data about park usage across Franklin Township, which will provide guidance on how to plan for parks moving forward.

7. Public Comment

Williams moved, Triggs seconded a motion to open to public. Motion passes.

Seeing no public present, Triggs moved, Williams seconded a motion to close to public, motion passes.

8. Executive Session- No items for Executive Session

9. Adjournment - Williams moved to adjourn the May meeting, which was seconded by Connell. All agreed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted

Bill Connell

Secretary