



Franklin Township Trails Committee **VIRTUAL** Meeting

September 8, 2021

7:00PM

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

Roll Call James Kuligowski, (JK), Chair, Vanessa Jones (VJ) Vice Chair, Charles Martin, (CM) (Secretary) Anne-Marie Orlusky (AMO), Tom Lewis (TL), Tara Kenyon (TK) Mark Fortin (MF), Mayor Philip Kramer Open Space Consultant, Absent, John Herrling (JH):

Public attendee: Bill Bowman, Editor Franklin Reporter Advocate.

2. **Approval of August 2021 Minutes** TL moved AMO second, unanimous w/ MF abstention (Absent, August meeting)

3. **Public Comment**

The meeting will be opened to the Public to provide time for comments and/or questions related to the agenda.

No public comment

4. **Pathways and Trails Plan (45-minute work session)** – start 7:12 PM. Appendix 2 was approved as is. TK will edit and consolidate into a final copy. Appendix 3 will refer to the recent Somerset County Walk Hike and Bike Plan plan with specific references to plans involving Franklin Township. Important connections with county and state.

Appendix 4 will refer to recent plans developed in 2018 *state comprehensive open space and recreation plan* and county developed trails in 6-mile run.

Appendix 5 will refer to Millstone - New Brunswick railroad right of way. Research and public outcry since the previous plan have indicated that the Smith Road section of the railway is inviable as a connection to the North / South Road. That proposal has been abandoned in the current plan. A proposal has been submitted to connect to Blackwell Mills Road via a trail along Van Cleef Road, Consideration should be given to making a connection through State Park property to the Jacques Lane parking lot.

5. **New Business**

- a. **Update – Meeting and mowing at Grasslands.** TK, AMO, B. Puskas (Chair, Franklin Open Space Committee), C. Williams (Chair Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission), C. Hauk, and DPW (Dept Public Works) staff met at Negri Nepote to plan mowing of the Township grasslands. DPW was asked to mow extensive areas of both grasslands after nesting season in preparation for prescribed burning to occur later in the year. Mowing was considered to necessary to remove/reduce extensive overgrowth of hardwood invasives and to promote more complete burning of herbaceous invasives and grasses. At this time N. Nepote was only partially mowed. Most areas of the John Clyde Memorial Griggstown

Grasslands have been mowed using flail mowers. TK did receive some complaints from concerned about early mowing and the effect that it might have on native bird and insect populations.

TK, CM, Paula Williams (citizen resident), and Dr. Joanna Burger (citizen resident and Rutgers Ecology and Evolution Professor) participated in a conference call on August 16 with Michael Hansen, Land Restoration Manager of the Curtis Prairie. The University of Wisconsin Curtis Prairie was the world's first tall grass prairie to ever be restored (from pasture in 1936) and has been maintained in that native state since that time. It is generally regarded as the premier research facility for high diversity prairieland restoration. The Franklin Township grasslands restoration in 2005 was based on their ground-breaking research and employing the same grassland seed mixes used at Curtis. Mr. Hansen noted that our proposed management practices now match their adaptive and integrated management methods. At Curtis these include the use of frequent mowing, prescribed burns (averaging 2 out of every 3 years), highly selective and adaptive herbicide applications, and volunteer-based invasive removals. Mr. Hansen emphasized that successful grassland maintenance requires the integrated use of multiple methods in an adaptive approach that can respond to the emergence and spread of invasives identified by continuing research and monitoring. Information about Curtis Prairie can be found at <https://www.ser-rrc.org/project/usa-wisconsin-curtis-prairie-restoration/>, and https://arboretum.wisc.edu/content/uploads/2015/04/16_ArbLeaflet.pdf.

- b. **Update – Maintenance Call with Carl Hauck – no call this month**
 - c. **NJDEP Trails Summit – trails and Greenway Summit** virtual meetings announced on Wed & Thursday September 22 and 23.
6. **Old Business**
- a. **Possibilities/Discussion for Prescribed Burn at Negri-Nepote Grasslands (Winter 2021/2022)** previously discussed.
 - b. **2021/2022 Hunting Season** – TK noted Opening Day is September 11th - the hunting lottery closed last week. Permits all sent out. County Rt 518 (south) properties now included. Should discuss potential trail network in that area for next meeting. Hunting same rules as last year. Hunting signs will be taken down at end of February. VJ asked if old signs have been removed, suggesting that they should be removed after the season going forward.
 - c. **Updates – Previous Grant Work and Status for North-South Trail.** TK – unable to contact relevant individuals.
 - d. **Applications for committee membership** – TK has not heard from individuals who requested a position. VJ - Person of interest indicated that she had submitted a request, TK indicated that township clerk was not aware of the application.
 - e. **Trail updates** - none discussed.
7. **Adjournment** – Motion by CM, TL second with unanimous consent