

**Franklin Township
Open Space Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes of the April 18, 2023**

Bob Puskas	<i>Chair/AAAC</i>	P	Sami Shaban	<i>Board of Education</i>	A
Arnold Schmidt-	<i>Vice Chair/Environmental Commission</i>	P	Robert LaCorte	<i>Historic Commission</i>	P
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	Ted Chase	<i>Planning Board</i>	A
Mark Healy	<i>Town Planner</i>	A	Stephanie Sprague-Chodl	<i>Citizen Member</i>	P
Phillip Kramer	<i>Mayor</i>	A	John Herrling	<i>Citizen Member/Trails Advisory Committee</i>	P
Ed Potasnak	<i>Council Liaison</i>	A	Mary Lauko	<i>Shade Tree Commission</i>	A
William Byrtus	<i>Director - Recreation Department</i>	P			P

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

Chairman Puskas called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

2. Public Comment

Bob Lacorte moved to open the meeting to the public, which was seconded by David Triggs. All agreed and the meeting was opened for public comment.

Seeing no members of the public present, David Triggs made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting. The motion was seconded by Bob LaCorte. All agreed, and the public comment session was closed.

3. Approval of March 2023 Meeting Minutes

David Triggs made a motion to approve the March OSAC meeting minutes, which was seconded by John Herrling. All agreed and the motion carried.

4. Financial Report

A Financial Report was not provided this month.

5. New Business

a. *NJDEP's Model Tree Ordinance (comments due May 12th)*

Tara Kenyon reported that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has created a new Model Tree Ordinance that increases requirements for tree plantings and mitigates stormwater runoff. The Shade Tree Commission and Environmental Commission have reviewed the Model Ordinance and determined that Franklin Township's Trees Ordinance already exceeds the minimum requirements established by the new Model Ordinance. Because of this, no comments will be submitted to NJDEP, however the Shade Tree Commission and

Environmental Commission will continue to review the municipal Trees Ordinance and propose recommendations to the Township Council to strengthen the requirements for replacement, increase the tree canopy, and mitigate stormwater runoff generated from new development.

b. *Update to Franklin Township Open Space and Recreation Plan*

The current Open Space and Recreation Plan is now 10 years old and needs to be updated to qualify for funding under the Green Acres Program. Tara Kenyon informed the Committee that the new Plan will update the preserved open space inventory, develop a methodology for targeting and prioritizing parcels for targeted open space, discuss stewardship policies and projects, incorporate environmental equity, and discuss energy and natural resources conservation. The Plan also has a concentration on Recreation, which will include an update of programming, projects, and policies, inventory parks and facilities, discuss amenities, and focus on inclusive recreation.

Tara recommends handling the Update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan by starting with establishing a subcommittee of OSAC. The first step will be to develop the methodology for targeting and prioritizing open space preservation, which will be carried out with the assistance of the Township's GIS Department.

Tara will speak in detail with the Township's Planner, Mark Healey, to confirm his endorsement of this methodology and to understand the role the Planning Board wishes to take throughout the process. Following this, Tara will reach to interested members to form a subcommittee.

c. *Memorial Forest – Proposed Improvements*

Tara Kenyon described current state of property. A 2.25-acre section on the west side of property is proposed to be the site for future Memorial Forest tree plantings. This area is wide open, and very serene, and is located adjacent to the recently preserved open space at 613 Elizabeth Avenue (providing an opportunity for a future trail that will provide access from Elizabeth Avenue through Memorial Forest to Cedar Grove Lane).

Tara presented a conceptual design she prepared, which shows a proposed parking area closer to the recommended area for tree plantings, as well as amenities such as a pull-over area for those with mobility issues, bike racks, a kiosk, and benches. The trail is proposed to be improved through grading the use of crushed red stone, which is an ADA-compliant material.

A conversation ensued about what the tree would be cost, purchased, and maintained. Mr Triggs as a founding member of the committee expressed dismay that the entire Memorial Forest property is not proposed for use of tree plantings.

Township Manager Robert Vornlocker pointed out that the property is currently leased to a farmer for at least the next 5 years, and that working with the farmer to change the lease on just 2.25 acres would be easier to begin with.

Tara Kenyon reiterated that this is a starting point. A program for memorial tree plantings will need to be designed, and the recommended improvements will need to be made before even

one memorial tree can be planted. As more space is needed, and the lease comes to an end, the entirety of the property can be considered in phases.

Bill Connell made a motion to approve the conceptual design for improvements at Memorial Forest to allow for a memorial tree planting program. The motion was seconded by Bob LaCorte. All agreed, and the motion carried.

6. **New Business**

a. *Close of 2022-2023 Hunting Season*

Tara Kenyon reported that many of the Hunter Summary Reports, required for submittal by permitted hunters, are still missing. She sent out a reminder email, and will send another, to increase the response rate. Once the response rate has improved, Tara will present the Annual Summary to OSAC.

b. *Meetings at Meadows Property*

The Committee discussed holding its September or October meeting at one of the historic sites owned by the Meadows Foundation. Tara will reach out to the Meadows Foundation to request access to the Suydam site and report back.

c. *Local Health Assessment and Action Plan Technical Assistance Grant*

Tara reported that she is continuing to work on the Plan and hopes to have it finalized by the end of May.

d. *Parking lot on 518 - Update*

Tara reported that DPW has marked off the area and is planning to construct the parking lot over the coming weeks. The parking area is designed for permitted hunters at this point and will have capacity for 4-5 cars.

e. *Leasing of Consolata Property*

At the last meeting, a neighboring resident expressed concerns about chemicals used on the site if it was to be leased for farming.

Chairman Bob Puskas stated that bidding the property for organic farming may not be successful because of the strict limitations for use of the land.

The Committee discussed the need to lease the Consolata Property, with the majority agreeing that there is no need to expedite a leasing right now, and that the property should be studied more for potential benefits and impacts of leasing.

Bob Lacorte made a motion to not lease the property right now, which was seconded by Bill Connell. All agreed, except for Chairman Bob Puskas who voted in the negative. The motion carries.

7. **Consultant's Monthly Activity Report**

Tara submitted the Monthly Consultant's Report with the meeting materials.

8. **Updates from other Committees**

The Environmental Commission had a very successful stream clean up on April 15th.

The Trails Advisory Committee will be hosting the annual National Trails Day on Saturday, June 3rd at the trails at the Bunker Hill Environmental Center.

9. **Public Comment**

As there was no public present, the meeting was not opened to the public.

10. **Adjournment**

David Triggs made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Bill Connell. All agreed, and the meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Connell
Secretary- Franklin Township Open Space Advisory Committee