



**Minutes of the  
Franklin Township Trails Advisory Committee  
October 9, 2024  
7:00pm**

**Franklin Township Municipal Building – Large Conference Room  
475 DeMott Lane, Somerset**

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Vanessa Jones, Chair	Christopher Gonda, Secretary
Anne-Marie Orlusky, Vice-Chair	Jignasha Patel
Jim Kuligowski	
Robert Kovacs	
Pravesh Lal	
Councilman Alex Kharazi	
Tara Kenyon, AICP/PP, Land Preservation and Management Consultant	

**CALL TO ORDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6)**

Vanessa Jones called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

**APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2024, TAC MINUTES**

With a minor edit from Anne-Marie Orlusky, a motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Robert Kovacs. The motion was seconded by Anne-Marie Orlusky, and all agreed. The motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

As there were no members of the public present, a Public Comment session was not held.

**SITE PLAN REVIEW**

No site plans were presented for review at this meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

***Improvements at Negri-Nepote Native Grasslands Preserve – Replacement of Bird Blind and Restoration of Pond***

Tara Kenyon reached out to T&M Associates, a civil and environmental engineering firm on the Township's List of Approved Contractors, to obtain a quote for the work needed to replace the Bird Blind at Negri-Nepote Native Grasslands Preserve, as well as to restore the pond. Tara discussed the project at length with one of the Environmental Engineers and one of the Civil Engineers last week.

T&M Associates will prepare a quote that includes multiple options for these improvements, with detailed information about the scope of work, permitting requirements, costs, and timeframes. Tara will present this quote to the TAC at the November meeting.

### *Sample of Updated Trails Maps*

Tara presented a draft of the updated Trails Map for the John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve, prepared by the Township's IT Department. These updated maps will be produced in black-and-white, using the updated trails layers with different symbology (rather than the use of color), to reduce printing costs.

Tara will continue to work with IT to get these maps updated and will present them to the Committee as they are produced.

### *Conceptualizing New Trail at County Route 518 Property*

The Committee planned a site visit of the County Route 518 Property for February 23, 2025, at 11:30am (with a rain date of March 1<sup>st</sup>) to begin conceptualizing a trail, beginning at the recently constructed parking area off Route 518. The Committee chose February 23<sup>rd</sup> so that hunting season is over for the site inspection.

The Committee reviewed a map of the property and looked at a small area to start, with a potential one-mile trail serving as a starting point. This potential trail can be further conceptualized after the February 23<sup>rd</sup> site visit.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### *Franklin Day (Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 12pm – 5pm at Colonial Park)*

Vanessa Jones reported that there was a great turnout for Franklin Day, despite the rainy weather. There was a lot of participation from the TAC members, which was greatly appreciated. Visitors to the table were very interested in Franklin's trails, open spaces, and the Committee.

Councilman Kharazi discussed his ideas for promoting Franklin's trails and the Committee overall:

1. "Trail of the Month" – this could be an article in the *Franklin Times*, *Franklin Reporter and Advocate*, and/or *TAP Into Franklin* which highlights one of the Township's trails. This article would provide information about where the trail is located, what you might see along the trail, how long the trail is and what the terrain is like, and more. The article could be written by TAC members on a rotating basis. After some discussion, it was decided that these longer articles could be produced on a quarterly basis to follow the schedule of the *Franklin Times*.
2. Social Media Postings – these postings would convey the same information in a shorter format and be posted on the Township's website and social media monthly. Pictures can be included, with the text being drafted by TAC members on a rotating basis.

The Committee agreed with these suggestions and will discuss it further at the November meeting.

### *Therapeutic Recreation Nature Walks*

The nature walk with Therapeutic Recreation will be held on October 27<sup>th</sup>. So far, there are 12 registrants. Anne-Marie Orlusky and Chuck Martin (former TAC member) are working with Therapeutic Recreation staff to prepare for the event.

### *Pathways and Trails Plan*

Tara presented the edits requested by Mark Healey, Township Planner, to the Committee:

1. Removal of request for site plans to be forwarded to the Committee regularly: The Municipal Land Use Law only recognizes this request as a requirement for the Environmental Commission. Tara can still bring relevant site plans to the TAC for review, and comments can be forwarded to Mark Healey (instead of the Planning Board) for inclusion in his Staff report.
2. Showing preserved open space on mapping: Mark recommended that the preserved open spaces be added to the mapping. Tara agreed immediately and began editing the mapping.

With these edits, the *Pathways and Trails Plan* is ready to be presented to the Planning Board for adoption into the *Franklin Township Master Plan*. Mark will let Tara know once the Planning Board has decided on a meeting for the presentation, as well as the scheduling of the required Public Hearing.

### *Trail Walks and Events*

Jignasha Patel held a nature walk at the John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve with the Thomas Edison Energy Smart School. Anne-Marie reported that the walk was a success, and that there were a lot of people in attendance.

Vanessa requested that Tara reach out to the Franklin Township Astronomy Club to see if we can partner with them for one of their Friday night astronomy observations at John Clyde Memorial Native Grasslands Preserve.

### *Updates on Trails Conditions from TAC Members*

Robert Kovacs reported that there is a tree blocking the creek at Inman Park.

Vanessa Jones reported that the boards in the fence near the parking lot at Bunker Hill Natural Area need to be replaced due to graffiti. Additionally, there has been illegal dumping on the other side of the fence that needs to be removed. She also stated that the bench has been fixed.

### *Other Business from TAC Members*

Pravesh Lal is a member of the Native Plants Society, including a subcommittee that catalogues native plants for municipalities. This catalogue includes the names of the plants, locations, and other detailed information that is very useful for municipalities. Their work can be incorporated into a public event and/or nature hike, which also serves as an educational opportunity.

The Committee was very interested in working with the Native Plants Society on this project. Pravesh will coordinate the logistics between the TAC and the Native Plants Society.

## ADJOURNMENT

Anne-Marie Orlusky made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Pravesh Lal. All agreed, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:02pm.

***The next TAC meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.***