

**OPEN SPACE/RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING AND
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION JOINT MEETING
5 May 2005 HOPATCONG MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

The meeting of the Open Space/Recreation Committee was opened at 8:08 PM in the Municipal Building. by Chairperson Susan Jones. The meeting of the Environmental Commission was opened at 8:10 PM in the Municipal Building. by Chairperson Mary Takacs.

The members and the public were informed that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-1 et seq., annual notice having been forwarded to the New Jersey Herald/New Jersey Sunday Herald, the Daily Record, The Star-Ledger, and posted on the bulletin board maintained in the Municipal Building for Public announcements.

In accordance with NJUFC, it was indicated that there are exits from the meeting room in the rear of the room (the door through which all entered) and in the outside wall to the left of the dais, as the audience faces the dais, that should be utilized in case of emergency. The door immediately to the right of the dais as the audience faces the dais is not an exit door. The meeting was taped for the purpose of constructing minutes.

A roll call showed the following members of the Open Space/Recreation Committee in attendance: Richard Hodson, Susan Jones, Clifford Lundin, Elizabeth Mauro, Sylvia Petillo, Joan Reilly, and Elide Young. No members were absent.

A roll call showed the following members of the Environmental Commission in attendance: Bernice Gleason, Sam Hoagland, Elizabeth Mauro, and Mary Takacs. Absent were: Connie Janowski, Martin Janowski, and Mercedes Walker. A quorum was present.

Appointment of acting secretary for the purpose of this meeting:

On motion of Reilly and Young, and the affirmative votes of all Richard Hodson was appointed acting secretary for the meeting for the purpose of constructing the minutes..

1. MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE were led by Chairperson Jones.

2. TRAILS, PATHS, WALKWAYS- By way of introduction Mayor Hodson indicated that the Borough had been approached by Morris Land Conservancy on behalf of an anonymous donor to construct an Open Space Plan. As the Borough's Open Space Plan was less than two years old, the request was denied. As the Committee had been discussing Trails/Paths/Walkways and had on 5 February 2005 established as a goal for 2005 "the development of a comprehensive plan for paths and walkways in the Borough", Morris Land Conservancy was asked to request the anonymous donor to fund that plan instead. On Wed. 5 May the Mayor and Council approved entering into a contract with Morris Land Conservancy.

EXCERPT FROM 5 FEBRUARY 2005 MINUTES—

"NEW BUSINESS: GOAL: PATHS/WALKWAYS The Committee discussed establishing as a goal for 2005 the development of a comprehensive plan for paths and walkways in the Borough. Development of paths and walkways will benefit all residents of the Borough. Emphasis should be placed on projects near developed areas of the Borough, on projects over which the grades are not too steep, and on initial projects relatively easy to implement. On motion of Petillo and Young, and the affirmative votes of Hodson, Jones, Mauro, Petillo, and Young, the Committee established as a goal for 2005 the development of such a plan Reilly abstained.

When the Open Space tax was being discussed in 1999 prior to its adoption, the emphasis of the discussion was on such needs as lighting of fields, not the acquisition of land for passive use nor environment sensitivity. Much of the Borough is either developed (town center designated), set aside by the Borough in an

Environmental Trust or in the Highlands preserved area. Of the remaining area Green Acres indicated an interest in a 200 acre parcel. Approximately 30 acres along the Musconetcong River will be preserved as wetlands. Should the Senior Citizen-Age Restricted – 662 unit project be approved, about 130 acres of the 300 acre lot will be set aside.”

The focus of the joint meeting on 5 May was to meet with Barbara Heskins Davis, a representative of Morris Land Conservancy, MLC, to discuss the plan. She passed around Open Space Plans as indicative of the work MLC had done, and made reference to others. They also had constructed a trails plan for Roxbury. The principals from MLC assigned to this project are Mike Brennan, the main project contact, and Tonya Nolte. The start of the project is estimated to be 1 July and to take approximately 9 months. She indicated that open forum meetings with the public in a workshop format had proven successful, and suggested one in the Fall, possibly in September. Upon completion of the Trails Plan Ms. Davis indicated the Plan could be treated as a separate element or adopted as part of the Master Plan. (That would require adoption by the Planning Board.). It might contain suggested new ordinances or ordinance changes. It was stressed that the final product must be in a format useable with the other Borough GIS projects.

The “Morris Land Conservancy’s Proposal to Hopatcong Borough For the Development of a Greenway/Trail Plan”, a three page document attached to these minutes, was distributed to those in attendance, and provided the basis for Ms. Davis discussion. Comments from the committee members and the public stressed the need for trails, paths, and walkways in the developed area of the Borough because they would be easier to construct and more frequently used than distant wooded trails. Concern was expressed about environmental destruction along the longer wooded trails if made too wide or if used by motorbikes or other motorized devices. Cliff Lundin explained in detail the Borough’s Greenway Plan established decades ago which stretches from the Mt. Inlet Sanctuary west and then south to the northerly portion of the track

currently proposed for a large age restricted development. An important piece of the greenway plan , a 206 acre parcel, was recently acquired by Peter Kellogg who owns about 1000 acres in Hopatcong including Hudson Guild and 2000 acres in Byram. A significant portion of the Greenway Plan area is owned by the Borough, obtained through hundreds of in rem foreclosures. The Greenway Plan includes area that surrounds the Borough's designated Town Center, and some skirting School property.

In response to Ms. Davis' request for a contact person from the Committee Cliff Lundin was nominated by Elide Young, seconded by Elizabeth Mauro, and approved by the affirmative votes of all. The Borough has a GIS mapping project underway by the Sussex County GIS department. The Borough also has an NRI project underway. MLC was encouraged to work with these other two firms and to share data. The Borough will inform the County GIS and Passaic River Coalition of its arrangement with MLC and the need to share information.

3. Update on Borough projects:

NRI/ERI : The contract was awarded to the Passaic River Coalition some months ago. A time extension in the grant has been requested by the Borough Administrator. The skateboard park will be installed around 6 June. Some of the materials for the low level lighting project on the hill behind the Civic Center has been ordered.

4. Meeting open to the public: No one chose to speak.

5. ADJOURNMENT: At 9:47 PM on motion of Young and Reilly and the affirmative votes of all, the meeting of the Open Space/Recreation Committee was adjourned. At 9:49 PM on motion of Gleason and Mauro , and affirmative votes of the Environmental Commission, the Commission meeting was adjourned.

Morris Land Conservancy's Proposal to Hopatcong Borough For the Development of a Greenway/Trail Plan

Trail plan to include the following sections:

- Goals and objectives of the trail program
- Inventory of open space and park areas with and appropriate for trails, including an inventory of trails and uses within these areas. The inventory will encompass state and municipal owned lands.
- Trail partners for acquisition, construction and maintenance, including community outreach efforts
- Long-distance/regional trail efforts--description and maps, if available, and strategies to connect these trails. Connections to trails in neighboring communities will be described.
- Trail development, construction standards by use, and description of trail use, including security measures
- Stewardship of trails—maintenance issues
- Description of a potential trail network for Hopatcong and a process to maintain and monitor the progress made to develop the trail network.
- Action plan describing steps to accomplish the trail network, including funding and acquisition.

Mapping

- Generated in Arcview format compatible with existing GIS data
- Will denote type of trail use appropriate for the terrain
- Will identify long-distance and other regional trails, including neighboring municipal trails systems. One map will show a large regional view and one map will focus on the borders of Hopatcong—showing where trails specifically enter the Borough
- Trail corridor mapping to be produced on aerial views as well as on an open space map (useful for identifying a land acquisition agenda to fill in corridor gaps).

- Map deliverables—
 - 3 copies of display maps (36” x 54”) for planning purposes at a 1” to 1000’
 - 3 hardcopies of the Final Plan text
 - 3 cd’s of the Plan’s text & final map
 - 1 copy of 11”x17” color map to be reproduced
 - The maps produced will be for planning purposes only. Morris Land Conservancy will ensure that the mapping will be compatible with and accept future GPS of specific trail corridors to use in trail maps.

Meetings

- Total of 5 as outlined in the RFP
- We recommend that one of these meetings be facilitated like a trail workshop that invites the public to identify trail corridors as well as identify issues about trail development.

Project Schedule

- Month 1 Develop goals
- Month 2 Begin to develop map—match maps with aerials
- Month 3 Develop inventory—review with committee for completeness & accuracy
 - Site visits/tours, if needed
- Month 4 Finish map & inventory; hold public workshop
- Month 5 Develop trail network map
- Month 6 Develop trail partners, funding, regional trails sections
- Month 7 Develop stewardship section
- Month 8 Draft plan completed for committee review
- Month 9 Comments incorporated; Completed plan delivered to Committee

The Open Space Committee will be involved in every step of the process. They will review each section, and the Conservancy will incorporate their changes. We recommend that the Recreation Department of the Borough be involved in the process at some point.

References

Conservancy has produced one county Open Space and Recreation Plan for Sussex County and 28 Open Space and Recreation Plans for the following municipalities:

- Morris County: Chatham Borough, Morristown, Hanover, East Hanover, Florham Park, Pequannock, Madison, Morris, Roxbury, Parsippany-Troy Hills, Mine Hill, Kinnelon
- Sussex County: Hampton, Green, Vernon and Byram
- Somerset County: Peapack-Gladstone
- Gloucester County: East Greenwich and Franklin
- Essex County: West Orange, Bloomfield and Livingston
- Passaic County: Ringwood
- Hunterdon County: Union
- Salem County: Pittsgrove
- Warren County: Pohatcong and Allamuchy

We encourage you talk with anyone in these towns.

Statement of qualifications

The Conservancy has produced 29 municipal Open Space and Recreation Plans, two Farmland Preservation Plans and we are in the process of completing a Trails Plan for Roxbury Township. We are familiar with the format for a trails plan and are confident that the process and plan will result in a useful document for the Borough. The Conservancy typically incorporates trails into the open space plans. The process will energize and empower the Borough, just as it has done for Open Space Committees when working on an open space plan. The state Green Acres program has approved all the Open Space and Recreation Plans that Morris Land Conservancy has produced. We do a thorough, quality job. For the Sussex County open space plan, we included a map of the countywide trails available in the county so that we are familiar with digitizing trails using GIS technology. One of the hallmarks of our open space planning process is the involvement of the local community. We will work very closely with the Borough's Committee. The planning process will ensure that the Committee will work in consensus and thus be very capable of implementing the plan and explaining their goals and efforts to the Borough governing body.

