

# Minutes of the Open Space Committee

March 23, 2009

Mayor Weinstein called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

**Present:** Mayor Steven Weinstein, Councilmember Ed Trawinski, Acting Manager Joanne Kwasniewski, Superintendent of Recreation Jim Graff, Michael Hakim, Jack Susser, Crystal Robbins, Heather Blecher, Kurt Peluso, Joan Goldstein, Peter Kortright, Ted King, Peter Weissberg, Benny Salerno, Ira Frankel, Wendy Dabney and Maureen Moriarty.

**Absent:** None

## **Minutes and Attendance:**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

## **Updates:**

Green Acres Grant – Michael Hakim stated that he was pleasantly surprised that Fair Lawn received additional funding from Green Acres. The Borough had a good proposal, a good case and persistence. The Open Space Committee proved that the committee was not dormant and met every month.

Michael Hakim stated that the State legislature has to approve the awards that were announced by the Garden State Preservation Trust. This approval should happen soon. Mayor Weinstein stated that in about four years the Borough raised 1.2 million dollars. Michael Hakim stated that that amount is the most in any community. In five awards, Cresskill has been granted about 1.9 million dollars.

The process is a system where the Borough applies for reimbursement in a matching amount. Green Acres approved appraisers must appraise the property to make sure that the government is getting a fair price. The costs of appraisals and surveys can be submitted to Green Acres.

George Street Firehouse – The Council met with the Fire Company and came to a good arrangement. There is potential for an environmental issue. The Council agreed with the Fire Company, that once the macadam is broken up and a park is established, the Borough would have two years to determine if there are any environmental issues. If from the date of sale, an environmental issue was discovered within two years, the Fire Company would be responsible. The Borough is waiting for the Fire Company membership to approve the contract. The Borough will pay for the removal of the macadam.

The Company meeting is the first week of April. The contract will be sent to Green Acres once it is signed.

Michael Hakim stated that a sample of the letter that was sent to property owners on the Open Space inventory should be sent to Trenton also.

Lackland Property – Mayor Weinstein stated that this is a matter of maintenance on the property and River Road will be taking care of that.

Councilmember Trawinski asked if the reports to Trenton should be sent sequentially. Should the letters be sent, then the contract and then a letter regarding the closing of the George

Street property? Michael Hakim stated that progress should be shown, so the projects should be sent individually.

Communication with TPL – Acting Manager Kwasniewski stated that there has been no additional communications with TPL. Acting Manager Kwasniewski offered several dates for them to come in, but has not heard back from them. Councilmember Trawinski stated that he did speak with TPL and they were going to be in touch with Acting Manager Kwasniewski regarding the dates.

Michael Hakim stated that Rich Haywire is definitely gone. Terrance Nolan is back with TPL.

It was asked if the committee had a vision for the Lackland Property. Mayor Weinstein stated that River Road asked if the Borough was interested in taking the property over a couple of years ago. River Road is coming up with the plan to landscape it. The idea was to make it an entrance to Fair Lawn. Councilmember Trawinski stated that the piece of property is part of the Open Space and Recreation Plan as part of a possible river walk. It was explained that if the Borough acquired the property on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street through FEMA funding, it would have been the end of the river walk with the Lackland property being the beginning.

Wendy Dabney stated that Columbia Heights network did a presentation to the Council for the Wagaraw Road area. River Road Improvement got involved and the project took on a life of its own. Michael Hakim stated that it is one link in the chain.

Michael Hakim stated that in the next master plan in this community, the Borough should make a point of identify the Passaic River corridor as a potential greenway and to recommend that any developments that are placed along there, reserve a corridor along there for public open space.

The question was raised if the other two property owners by the Lackland property were reached out to regarding there property. The Borough did reach out to one of the property owners and they said there was no chance on selling the property. Since the garages are falling into the river, the owner might be more willing to sell the property. Mayor Weinstein stated that it is something to look into.

**New Business:** Michael Hakim stated that there is a grant program called the 2009 Smart Growth Planning Grant for Municipalities. It is administered through ANJEC. It is an Environmental Commission project because the proposal that Wendy Dabney suggested it to bring the Borough's Environmental Resource Inventory up to date. Acting Manager Kwasniewski stated that the Borough received a grant through ANJEC to do this inventory in 1996. Michael Hakim stated that the value of an Environmental Resource Inventory is for the Environmental Commission to have it to review, but for the Planning Board to have it at well. Acting Manager Kwasniewski stated that pieces of the Inventory are in the Master Plan.

Michael Hakim stated that it is not inappropriate for the Open Space Committee to talk about Environmental Resource Inventory, but it should be led by the Environmental Commission.

Mayor Weinstein asked how much time is necessary for this grant. Michael Hakim stated that if the Borough was to receive the grant and the Borough was to embark on updating the Environmental Resource Inventory, his firm could do that. Michael Hakim asked if the Borough wanted to put forth the effort for the application that has a chance of success. It is a very competitive program. ANJEC will give municipalities matching funds up to \$20,000 just for planning purposes. Half of the Borough's matching funds can be in kind services. The

Borough can put forward 25% of the cost of the entire project and have 25% by volunteer efforts. For the Borough to get the application in by the March 31 deadline will take a considerable amount of effort. Michael Hakim can work with Wendy Dabney and the Environmental Commission to get the application filled out.

Mayor Weinstein stated that March 24 the Council will have a meeting to approve the proposal. If it is possible to get the application filled out the Council will do what they can to make it happen. Acting Manager stated that there needs to be a work plan, a scope of services and letters of support. Michael Hakim's proposal needs to cover the Environmental Resource Inventory work because otherwise the Borough can't tell the ANJEC what it is going to cost and to request a dollar amount. Attached to this proposal, a governing body resolution needs to support and agree to match the funds. Environmental Commission letters of support also need to be attached.

Councilmember Trawinski asked if the Borough's application is not approved and it is completed in a less than a satisfactory manner, does it hurt or help the Borough's chances for next year? Michael Hakim stated that he didn't think it would hurt the Borough is hurting the Borough. Councilmember Trawinski stated that one of the elements of an Environmental Resource Inventory is the Open Space Inventory. Since the Borough just did their Open Space Inventory, can a value be shown for that, being part of the town's match? Michael Hakim stated that he did not know for sure.

Councilmember Trawinski stated that there is a Tree Inventory for the Borough. Walter Neill has a copy of the inventory. Wendy Dabney stated that it has been updated. It was asked if the Open Space Committee should support this effort.

A motion was made, and seconded, for the Open Space Committee to move forward with the effort for the ANJEC grant and for the committee to write a letter of support to the Environmental Commission.

Peter Kortright will write a letter of support from the Planning Board and Maureen Moriarty will write a letter on behalf of the Open Space Committee.

The more information that committee members can give Michael Hakim to embellish the application, the better. There will be four letters of support to the Environmental Commission. All letters should be given to Acting Manager Kwasniewski tomorrow.

Councilmember Trawinski pulled the report of the Bikeways. The Executive Summary was circulated. The State is looking for applicants for bikeways. If it is something that the committee would like to consider, next meeting the committee should look at where they would like to go. There are numerous pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements in that study that were defined improvements. There are bike paths, bike routes and bike lanes. Bike lanes are when lanes are designated on a roadway. Bike paths are actually paths that go around an area. Bike routes are where signs tell bikers the safest way to go.

There was bike way State funding for Radburn pathways as part of this program. This was done in two cycles.

Acting Manager Kwasniewski stated that she received a call from Joe Lapina, who is the owner of the Blue Hill property in response to the letter the was sent from the Open Space Committee. Mr. Lapina is very interested because he has been remanded back to the Zoning Board. This is the piece of property next to the gas station on the other side of Saddle River

Road. Mr. Lapina is going to send a letter to the Council, indicating that he is interested if the price is right.

Councilmember Trawinski stated that there is a significant Federal and State income tax deduction. The State allows income tax deduction for charitable conservation donation in an amount equal to what a person can take on the Federal return.

Peter Kortright mentioned that a property was overlooked in the Open Space and Recreation Inventory. There is a parcel of land by Red Mill that is privately owned. The block and lot number will be given to Michael Hakim.

The Passaic Cliffs are in danger of being developed. Peter Kortright stated that there is a cliff that gives incredible views of New York City. The key is to preserve the cliffs. There is a group called the Coalition to Preserve the Passaic Cliffs. Parts of the cliffs are protected, but on this part that is not protected, the developers want to put a strip mall. Hudson County Planning is against it, but North Bergen Planning Board is for it.

The question was raised if contact was made to the Radburn Association regarding to the open letter that was sent for properties of interest. Councilmember Trawinski stated that there are things going on that the Council are not at liberty to discuss due to pending litigation.

Councilmember Trawinski stated that Judge Harris ruled that the Borough's Ordinance was unconstitutional. The Appellate Court ruled on a very limited basis. They did not take the appeal, but they did give the Borough a stay until the court decides the other case that the Borough has pending before them. There is a chance that the court would send the Borough back to COAH.

Michael Hakim is urging the Borough to spend the \$450,000 match that the Borough has. The Borough needs to make some deals. This is a unique time in real estate history. Receiving this amount of money gives the committee the opportunity to think about things that might not have been possible previously. Michael Hakim has a call into Green Acres, which has not been returned yet.

Joan Goldstein asked if the public comments from last meeting could be clearly identified.

A motion was made and seconded that public comments be distinguished in the minutes with a header.

Michael Hakim stated that he is scheduled to miss the July meeting. If something is significant, the meeting will be held, but Mayor Weinstein stated that the meeting might be cancelled.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2009.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned.