

Minutes of the Open Space Committee

April 28, 2008

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

Present: Mayor Weinstein, Councilmember Trawinski, Manager Metzler, Superintendent of Recreation Graff, Crystal Robbins, Sharon Rendfrey, Joan Goldstein, Heather Blecher, Michael Hakim, Jack Susser, Benny Salerno and Maureen Moriarty.

Absent: Peter Weissberg, Ted King, Peter Kortright, Ira Frankel and Wendy Dabney.

Minutes and Attendance:

The minutes from the last meeting were discussed and revised.

Correspondence:

Route 208 Corridor Study: The Planning Board is completing the list of items to give to the Council and it will be on their Work Session for next Tuesday. Copies of the report can be obtained by contacting Cathy Hochkeppel or Municipal Clerk Joanne Kwasniewski.

Status of Potential Properties for Purchase:

Naugle House – This is still before the Planning Board. Manager Metzler stated that he has received phone calls because some trees were taken down and others that were marked to be taken down. The trees that were already taken down were on the Trans Con gas right of way, which we have no jurisdiction over. The Shade Tree department went out to the site and those trees that are marked to be removed are diseased trees.

The Historic Preservation Commission has received grant funds. The process is three stages. The first stage is where the architect is going to complete a preservation plan and then we need to apply for another grant that will cover that.

Michael Hakim stated that believes that the approach to the Naugle House has changed from when the Open Space Plan was first completed. He would like more detail about how much acreage the Borough is purchasing and what is on the property with a price. The Naugle House was a first priority on the Open Space Plan.

If the \$90,000 that was grant funds from the County cannot be used for what the committee needs it for which is restoration. The funds were for acquisition. Freeholder Ganz is trying to find other funds within the County. We are looking to receive \$90,000 from the County, which we will match to stabilize and repair the property.

The Committee wondered if it is possible to secure more property around the Naugle House using some of the \$450,000 from Green Acres. The Planning Board must approve the settlement. Then it would go before the Council would have to approve or reject the settlement.

Manager Metzler asked what the committee wanted to accomplish going before the Planning Board. When he spoke with the County, they stated they will not commit funds to that building if the Borough of Fair Lawn is going to make it another museum. It was the County that said they should historically preserve it and put it back on the tax roles and sell it as it. The Council is committed to saving the Naugle House. The house has been saved with a decent piece of property. The reality is that they can fight all the development in Fair Lawn, but they are not going to win all of those fights.

2nd Street –Manager Metzler reported that FEMA denied the request because the ratio of loss on the property to the cost of acquisition did not warrant acquisition. His recommendation is not to use Green Acres funds and create a pocket park as discussed before. If it is not feasible for FEMA to do it, it certainly is not financially feasible for the Borough to do it. The Governor is creating a Blue Acres fund, which is State funding specifically for the acquisition of property.

George Street – Manager Metzler copied the e-mail to everyone that we were supposed to get the appraisal this week. Once we have the appraisal we are in a position to forward it to Green Acres. The Preliminary Environmental Assessment is underway for the property.

Michael Hakim has stated many times that you need to spend money or you might lose it. They have rescinded grants many times. Not only may you lose a grant, but you may not be considered for additional funding. They have to spend some money. A portion of the 2007 Green Acres acquisition application was read. The question was raised that if we are waiting for their appraisers to do their job, how could they pull funding? The list of Green Acres approved appraiser is limited and they are busy with other towns.

This will be put on the Council Work Session. The Fire Department is waiting on the Council. The Borough is communicating with the State on the property. Michael Hakim offered to call Lisa Stern to make sure she is comfortable with the progress. If she is starting to get pressured to release funds, maybe we should submit another progress report. Manager Metzler stated that he will call the appraiser tomorrow.

Councilmember Trawinski stated that their might be money left over from the initial grant. We should just keep that in the back of our minds as to what we might want to pursue on the Open Space inventory.

Michael Hakim stated that in the application to Green Acres for this property, they pointed out that the property adjacent to the one we are going to acquire has been discussed as a park, but is not on our Recreational/Open Space Inventory. We submitted a revised inventory based on the authorization of the Council.

Lackland Property-Manager Metzler stated that the property has been surveyed. We can report to Open Space that we made an acquisition, just at a really good price. It has to have the environmental study conducted.

Old Business:

Turf Field - There are a number of issues regarding turf fields. There is \$300,000 available from the County and \$500,000 in our budget to do this. The key to doing this project for \$800,000 is having it done in November or December. We need to get through the specifications, environmental and engineering issues. Manager Metzler stated that he did a considerable amount of research regarding the lead findings in turf fields. Twelve sites were tested and two fields were found to contain lead in Bergen County and one in Trenton. AstroTurf is the supplier of the three fields identified in NJ. It appears that the rubber that they used contained nylon. There are three reputable companies operating in the northeast and we will reach out to each of them to submit a bid. In speaking with the company, some of the fields were built on contaminated sites. Therefore, we will put specifications that they do sample tests at Vander Plaats field so that we know that the site is not contaminated.

They are looking to make the football field 100 yards so the High School could play their games there, if necessary. The top soil that would come off the Vander Plaats field could be used to restore the soccer field at Memorial Middle School.

Michael Hakim stated that he needs to submit a letter for additional funding. When the previous letter was submitted in 2007, there were a list of priorities and priorities change over the course of a year. Therefore, he would like the feedback of the committee of the priorities for 2008. The highest priorities in 2007, which was after the Open Space Plan in 2006, were the Naugle House, Vander Plaats, Archery Plaza, Hayward Tract, Daly Field and Topps Cleaners, in which we requested \$900,000. The amount that should be requested this time is \$450,000. We need to decide which properties from the Open Space Plan you want to ask them for. There are some additional properties that were not available then.

Daly Field and Hayward Tract are in litigation and will probably be in litigation for two to four years. They would like to have a willing seller. We need a list of parcels that we are targeting for this year. They understand that priorities do change. We should put properties on this list that we have a viable chance on gaining within the next 12 to 18 months.

Manager Metzler stated that the strategy should be to put properties on the list, such as George Street, 2nd Street, the Naugle House and Lackland property, which we know we could acquire because the State is driven to give money to communities that have successes. We have willing sellers on all of them.

Michael Hakim stated that those properties that were a priority before totaled 2.4 million dollars, which is an unreasonable request. If we had five or six properties on the list and by the end of the year we acquired four of them, it would look better than if we had 20 properties on the list. Manager Metzler stated that as a strategy, if spending money creates more money then in purchasing the 2nd Street property we could have a very successful year. Both George Street and 2nd Street are willing sellers. So we will add George Street, 2nd Street and the Lackland property. We do not want to take Naugle, Topps or Vander Plaats off the list. Archery was taken off. Michael Hakim recommended that the full purchase price be listed for the Naugle House and the Lackland property.

After discussion, Daly Field remains as a first priority property which Michael Hakim confirmed with the Committee.

Public Comments:

Felice Koplick went to a Planning Board meeting and came to the Open Space meeting with a map that showed the Naugle property. Councilmember Trawinski stated that they have tried numerous times to get the County interested in the Naugle property, without any success. Manager Metzler clarified that when he stated that the County had interest in Vander Plaat, it would be for historic preservation not into a museum. The County has no interest in investing County grant money for the historic preservation of the Naugle House if it was to become a museum. There is interest in people to live there after it is restored. There are many things that the buildings could be used for besides residences.

Councilmember Trawinski stated that the Whispering Woods hearing is for the public to voice their opinions on the settlement. If there is interest in the property by the County and if the developer is willing to work with the Borough and if it is feasible, we can bring it back to the Open Space committee to see if they want to use open space money to acquire some property. Both the Planning Board and the Council has tentatively agreed to the settlement. The whole reason for the hearing is that the settlement can be amended, revised or modified or it could even die if the Planning Board says they are not going to approve the settlement after hearing the public.

Benny Salerno noted that if he were reading Fair Lawn's letter of priorities for 2008, he would question why properties are on the list that are in litigation and cost millions of dollars, like Daly Field. Mayor Weinstein stated that they should leave it there but add the new properties. Michael Hakim stated that anything can happen with properties that are in litigation. You could get a call one day that the develop wants to settle and the next day the property could be on the market, so it should remain on the list. Councilmember Trawinski stated that at the beginning developers do not want to talk, but there comes a time that the reality of the market suddenly changes their tune. This list just reemphasizes our focus on those properties. The report won't lose creditability. There are a number of people that if they don't see Daly Field on the list, would start to wonder why there is an Open Space Committee.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was scheduled for Memorial Day; therefore the next meeting will be Monday, June 9 at 7:30 pm in Room 201 at Borough Hall.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.