

Ronald G. Rios
Freeholder Director

Charles E. Tomaro
Deputy Director

Kenneth Armwood
Charles Kenny
Leslie Koppel
Shanti Narra
Blanquita B. Valenti
Freeholders



Charles E. Tomaro
Freeholder Liaison

Richard Lear
Chairman

BOARD MEMBERS
Antonio Abano
Joe Pruiti
James L. Campbell

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Open Space and Recreation
Public Advisory Committee

MINUTES OF THE
MIDDLESEX COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION
PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING OF MAY 24, 2018

Attendance:

Committee Members

Richard Lear, Chairman (present)
Freeholder Charles Tomaro (present)
Jim Campbell (present)
Joe Pruiti (present)
Antonio Abano (absent)

Other

Cara Pfundston, Office of Parks and Recreation
Eric Gehring, Office of Parks and Recreation
Mark Nonestied, Office of Arts and History
Beth McPaul, Office of Parks and Recreation
Don Sears, Township of South Brunswick
Brian Bidlack, Township of South Brunswick
Bernard P. HvozdoVIC, Jr., Township of South Brunswick Manager
Louis Greenwell, Office of Planning
Zeeshan Siddiqi

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Richard Lear at 3:10 p.m. Mr. Lear stated that the notice of the special meeting was distributed in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.



II. Roll Call

Cara Pfundston called attendance. A quorum was present.

III. Minutes of January 12, 2017

A motion was made by Jim Campbell to accept the minutes of the January 12, 2017 meeting. Motion was seconded by Joe Pruiti. Motion was approved and accepted. Minutes were adopted.

IV. Old Business

Rick Lear distributed a current summary of Open Space and Farmland Acquisition Projects prepared by Paul Clark and Beth McPaul. This Memorandum is part of these minutes. He summarized the Memorandum stating 232 acres were either purchased or placed under contract in East Brunswick, Monroe, Perth Amboy and South Brunswick. Further, by the end of the summer of 2018 the County anticipates closings on the Cook Property in South Brunswick and the Blumig Property in East Brunswick.

Rick Lear also updated the Committee on a change in due diligence activities. In the Spring of 2017 due diligence was moved from the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (MCIA) to the Office of Parks and Recreation.

V. New Business

1. South Brunswick Township

Ridge Road Properties

Block 79, Lots 4.02, 4.032, 4.04, 6.01 & 6.03
849, 827-847, 851-859 Ridge Road
76-84, 86-94 Perrine Road
Total – 133.74 acres

Providence Corporation Property

Block 79, Lot 7
60-74 Perrine Road
Total – 44.5 acres (actively farmed)

South Ridge Realty Associates, LLC

Block 79, Lot 1.06
893 Ridge Road
Total – 46 acres

West Perrine Associates, LLC

Block 79, Lots 11 & 12
2-8 Perrine Road
Total – 17.79 acres



Don Sears from the Township of South Brunswick presented a proposed acquisition consisting of approximately 242 acres to create a continuous greenbelt in South Brunswick currently threatened by residential development. Freeholder Tomaro questioned the present zoning. Mr. Sears explained it was zoned O/R and a variance would be needed for any residential development. The owners are ready to sell. The land is actively farmed presently and the Township would like to continue to lease to farmers. Rick Lear inquired about who will manage the land and Mr. Sears said it would be the County's decision. Jim Campbell inquired about Green Acres funding and possible Farmland Preservation. Mr. Sears said the township had applied for funding but Green Acres was not interested. Likewise, the Farmland Preservation Program would not be feasible because the current owners have no interest in retaining the property for farming. The township plans to reapply for Green Acres funding in the future. The Township noted they will partner financially. South Brunswick noted Ridge Road Properties, LLC and South Ridge Realty Associates, LLC are the priorities from the four properties.

Rick Lear proposed a motion to forward these properties to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for their consideration, with the recommendation they be made part of the acquisition process, subject to Freeholder Board review of acquisition costs and budgetary constraints. Jim Campbell motioned and Freeholder Tomaro seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion was approved.

2. South Brunswick Township

Shallow Brook / Cerami

Block 1, Lots 7 & 10.01
79.34 acres

Schwartz Property

Block 1, Lot 17.041
62 acres

Orac Properties

Block 1, Lots 3.01, 4.01 & 5
47.78 acres

Eric Gehring presented these 188.78 acres as potential open space properties to extend a greenbelt eastward along Broadway Road in South Brunswick. These properties are nestled in between Municipal Open Space with Rowland Park and County Open Space with Shallow Brook Natural Area. These properties are majority of intact forest with much of the land having road frontage. Jim Campbell questioned the ownership of the land in between lots 7 and 10.01 and Eric advised the property was privately owned by four different residents. Eric noted that the properties would help protect natural water resources in the head waters of the Shallow Brook. Furthermore, they would protect the roosting and nesting of the great blue heron.

Rick Lear proposed a motion to forward these properties to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for their consideration, with the recommendation they be made part of the acquisition process. Freeholder Tomaro motioned and Jim Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion was approved.



3. Borough of Metuchen

Greenway Extension

Block 1, Lots 1 & 2

Total – 4.2 acres

Block 594.A, Lot 24

Total – 1.85 acres

Eric Gehring presented three properties along the proposed Middlesex Greenway Extension potentially in need of purchase to extend the Middlesex Greenway beyond the Port Reading Secondary Rail Line to connect to the Dismal Swamp Open Space land. The three lots total approximately 6.11 acres and are likely wetlands. Jim Campbell asked if the owners have been approached about selling their properties. Eric replied we have not contacted the land owners and that acquisition of these properties may only be necessary if Conrail does not agree to extend the Middlesex Greenway all the way to the Dismal Swamp Open Space land.

Rick Lear proposed a motion to forward these properties to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for their consideration, with the recommendation they be made part of the acquisition process, if necessary for the extension of the Middlesex Greenway. Freeholder Tomaro motioned and Joe Pruiti seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion was approved.

4. Borough of Middlesex

G&P Properties / Stone Bridge

Block 357, Lots 1 & 2

Mark Nonestied presented the G&P Property as a property with historical significance. The property contains half of the “Old Stone Bridge” which was built in 1731 and is one of the oldest surviving three arch stone bridges in New Jersey. The stone arch bridge straddles Middlesex and Somerset counties and Somerset County has expressed interest in acquiring the Somerset County portion. He further explained the arch stone bridge was listed on the State and Historical National Register and is tied to the Battle of Bound Brook fought during the Revolutionary War. Somerset County has started due diligence and the property was appraised for approximately \$1,000,000. Somerset County sent a letter to Middlesex County to gauge our interest in moving due diligence forward. Jim Campbell asked if there were environmental concerns with the property and if the seller has been approached. Rick Lear advised the seller had been approached by Somerset County, but there has not been any surveys or research done regarding environmental. This would-be information that would be necessary before the County could further commit to purchase of this property. Potential acquisition of this historic site does fall in line with the goals and mission of the Middlesex County Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. The County has acquired other historic properties such as the Van Dyke Farm in South Brunswick.



Rick Lear proposed a motion to forward this property to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for their consideration, with the recommendation they be made part of the acquisition process, subject to further review of environmental information and negotiation with Somerset County. Joe Pruiti motioned and Jim Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion was approved.

VI. New Committee Member

Rick Lear introduced Zeeshan Sidiqi as the newest member of the Open Space Advisory Committee. Zeeshan was happy to accept this appointment and will be approved at the June 7, 2018 Board of Chosen Freeholders meeting.

VII. Public Comment

No Public Comment.

VIII. Next Meeting

To be determined

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Cara Pfundston
Recording Secretary

