

Minutes for the Open Space Committee

September 10, 2019

Call to order – Chairman Cronce called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Open Public Meetings Statement – Notice of this meeting has been provided to the Hunterdon County Democrat and was posted on the bulletin board at Town Hall according to the regulations of the Open Public Meetings Act. A copy of this notice is available to the public and is on file in the office of the Township Clerk.

Roll call: Present - Cronce, Malek, Urbanski, Bergenfeld (TC liaison).
Excused – Fisher, Shute

Approval of minutes: May 14, 2019 – minutes approved.

Opportunity for Public Comment – Bob Birmingham presented himself as a possible member on the committee. Bob has lived in West Amwell for 4 years, previously in Lambertville and Montclair. While in Montclair, he served 10 years on the Open Space Committee. He is currently a member of our Planning Board. John invited him to stay for the meeting.

Hunting Program – Dan reported: all current clubs have renewed for the next season. The 5-year period for automatic renewal will expire next year, and all parcels would go back into an open lottery. The positives with this were that new hunters could then enter into the lottery, though it was noted that there were not many inquiries from new hunters. John suggested that if this is done, that our current good hunters could lose. Currently the program is working very well, the hunters are good stewards of the properties, and there are no problems. Steve recommended a 5-year optional extension to the current leases. The committee will rewrite this section and send to the Township Committee for their approval.

Members then discussed the use of ATV's for hunting. This had previously been sent to the Township Committee for their approval. Steve wished to have clarification on the insurance/liability to the Township and will have it on the next agenda for the TC.

Open Space Map – the conservation and deeds restricted map still has not been hung in the main meeting room. John suggested that the room is to be repainted soon and the map will then be hung,

Farmland Preservation Plan – Expires 10/2020. This update is necessary to comply with the PIG application requirements. The SADC plan to appropriate funds for this purpose in the first half of 2020. We would need to request reimbursement when we have begin updating our plan.

Members discussed contacting Linda Weber, as she was responsible for the plan in 2010. Also discussed was Joanna Slagle, Banisch Associates.

Emerald ash borer – Discussion as to the problems with the emerald ash borer and damaged ash trees. Steve offered that homeowners insurance would cover any damage whether the damage was caused by a tree on the property or from a tree on a neighboring property.

Hunterdon County targeted farms – members reviewed the CADB's targeted farm list for West Amwell and noted that many of the farmers were not interested in preservation.

PIG application due Monday, December 16 – Cathy will work with Hal.

Open to members for further discussion – John noted that Hal, the SADC, and the CADB met with Wayne Hunt to discuss preservation of his farm on Mt. Airy Harbourton Road. John subsequently met with Wayne and Paul. They were not interested in preservation.

Opportunity for Public Comment – Bob Birmingham questioned as to why Toll wasn't developing in the township. It was explained that Toll had previously owned hundreds of acres north and south on 179 and sold/preserved the properties. It was just too costly to develop in WAT, no sewers, no infrastructure. It was decided to get the stats on new construction for the last 3 years.

Also discussed was the possibility of better trails in the future.

Next Meeting Date – November 12, 2019.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Minutes prepared by C. Urbanski, Secretary.