

HUNTERDON COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Minutes – March 3, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carol Hoffmann, Phil Greiner, Andy Borkin, Gabrielle Bolarakis, Page Stiger, Richard Dodds, Dana Desiderio (called in) Commissioner Deputy Director Jeff Kuhl, Tom Mathews

ABSENT: Marc Saluk, Natalie Zaman, Commissioner Director Rich, Commissioner Van Doren

STAFF PRESENT: Bill Millette, Bob Hornby, Frank Bell, Katherine Fullerton, Sue Pena, Patty Leidner, Rebecca Deakin
Aaron Culton- County Counsel

Planning Board Chair Carol Hoffmann read the Open Public Meetings Act notice and called the meeting to order at 8:16 A.M.

"This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice has been provided by prominently posting and maintaining so posted throughout the year in the Office of the County Clerk, Hall of Records, Main Street, Flemington, New Jersey, a public place reserved for such announcements, and by mailing on or before January 19th, 2023 to The Hunterdon Democrat, The Express Times, Courier News, The Trenton Times, Star Ledger, and TAPinto, newspapers designated by the Hunterdon County Planning Board to receive such notices. Notice has also been posted online in the Hunterdon County News."

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 2, 2023 MEETING

Motion to approve minutes as accepted, Richard Dodds, Page Stiger seconded.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER UPDATE

Commissioner Kuhl reported that the library renovations are complete. The additions allow for more activities for younger people. There will be a grand re-opening on March 25th. All activities and classes for senior services are back up and running like normal. They have gained 210 new members within the past 6 months. The County has applied for additional funding for transporting disabled residents that the LINK cannot handle. The veteran's services division has acquired 39 new members.

STAFF UPDATES

Farmland: Bob Hornby

Bob reported that there are 22 active preservation applications in 10 municipalities: 8 in the County Planning Incentive Grant Program, 4 in the Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program, and 10 in the State Direct Easement Program. The 50-acre Saums Farm in Readington closed at the end February. There are additional applications in preliminary stages. The SADC released the FY22 Monitoring Report and Hunterdon monitored all 318 easements held by the County. Soil Protection Standards for Preserved Farms continues to be debated by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) and interested parties. The County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) and the Land Conservancy of NJ are accepting public comments on the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan through March 7. There will be a public meeting March 9 at 8pm; a digital copy of the plan is available on the County website. First adopted in 2008, the plan is required to be updated every 10 years to qualify for continuing SADC preservation funding.

Open Space: Bill Millette

Bill reported that JCP&L and PSE&G will be trimming and clearing trees along transmission lines, so we have been working with their representatives and the Commissioners to grant them permission to do that work when it touches park property. Certain parks may be closed to the public while the work gets completed depending on the scope of the work and the impact to the park. Likewise, there will be periodic trail closures of the Columbia and Landsdown trails as the resurfacing effort gets underway. We are working on a contract for a potential acquisition in Raritan and Readington Township and working with a landowner in Bethlehem Township on a possible offer to purchase property adjacent to County Park property there. We are pleased to announce that Frenchtown and NJCF have closed on the 45-acre Thompson property in the Borough. This was a key acquisition for Frenchtown and long sought after. The County contributed 50% of the acquisition cost through the Open Space grant program. POSAC will be

meeting this month on March 27th.

GIS: Patty Leidner

Patty reported that the County is ending the COVID-19 Dashboard. The last update on the dashboard was on February 21. At the end of March, the dashboard will be removed from the County website. We have sent out a social media post to solicit new participants for the Hunterdon Harvest website. We sent out an individual email to each of the current participants to review their information and to make sure they update their hours. We also emailed those who requested to participate, but never finished the process, to remind them to do so. We have our first Farmer's Market, Hunterdon Land Trust, now on the map. Currently, we have 16 complete, 13 started, and 10 that have not started their survey. Raritan Township provided updated necessary materials to have their districts updated for the web mapping Elections app. The app was reviewed with the Elections staff yesterday and they requested a few minor updates. We hope to go live by the end of the week. We had a call with NJ Office of GIS. They will be hiring consultants to do the preprocessing and uploading of data to the statewide call routing system for NextGEN 911. There are still several missing address points for the county. This system is only to determine the proper PSAP (Public Safety Answering Points) to route an incoming call to. The dispatching process is handled by each PSAP. Lastly, this will be my last Planning Board Meeting. It has been a pleasure working with all of you over the years. Becky Deakin will be taking over as Division Head when I leave. She is more than capable and has and will continue to be an asset to the County and it's GIS needs.

Planning Issues: Katherine Fullerton

Katherine reported that the Planning Department sent the press release from the DEP offering \$19 million in grant funding to assist municipalities with the new stormwater permitting requirements to all County municipalities. Staff and the Growth Management Plan consultant met with a few commissioners on February 2nd to hear their thoughts on the proposed recommendations for the Growth Management Plan. On February 15th the Growth Management Plan subcommittee reviewed the draft recommendations and the Commissioner comments. We are meeting again next week with the consultant to review the zoning build out analysis. We are moving forward with the Historic Preservation Plan this year. We have the scope of work ready to submit to the Highlands Council. We are also looking at contracting out our GIS parcel layer updates to have them completed sooner. Highlands Council staff have recommended that we submit a scope of work for funding this project. Later this summer, we anticipate beginning the County Water Use and Conservation Management Plan. This is a plan that the Highlands would like to see done, since it analyzes water usage and capacity. CADB will be having a public meeting for the Farmland Preservation Plan on March 9th at 8 pm. We had a few comments come in, hopefully we will get a few more. If it is approved next week, it will come to the Planning Board in April for a public hearing to be adopted, then to the Commissioners for acceptance. Staff attended the NJTPA At-Grade Freight Crossing Study meeting on February 2nd. The findings are being finalized regarding 65 at grade crossings within the NJTPA Region. There are about 10 crossings that the report recommends modifying. Staff also attended the NJTPA RTAC meeting on February 14th and the Planning and Economic Development and Project Prioritization Committee and the Freight Initiatives Committee Meetings on February 21st. There is an application to amend the Wastewater Management plan. Development application reviews have been quiet. We had two returns and three site plan applications in February. The site plan applications were all granted conditional approval not to construct status so that we could obtain GIS mapping.

Board members confirmed that the public hearing to adopt the Farmland Preservation Plan would be for the entire plan, and Board members should read the entire plan prior to the next meeting.

There was a question about the parcel updating and whether it would eliminate the need for applicants to submit GIS files. Staff replied that we will be using the new information from the applicants to continue to update the files that are already there.

Administration Projects: Frank Bell

Frank reported that the GIS consultant will be helping our staffing shortages. Rebecca will be taking over from Patty when she retires. We will be looking at hiring a GIS Specialist II at some point. GIS has other projects that they have been working on throughout the county. Having Highlands pay for the consultant helps our budget so that GIS can continue with the other projects. There are plans for upgrades with the buildings for Parks.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee:

Carol reported that the Executive Committee met. The Committee discussed future Breakfast Talks about Hazard Mitigation, which is part of the Growth Management Plan, and how the municipalities could prepare. Katherine added that she has started to work with Brayden in OEM to do a kickoff with a presentation on emergency preparedness. There will be at least four sessions starting in the spring and continuing in the fall.

DRC Committee Report:

Katherine said that we have no new applications to review at this time. An email will be sent if we need volunteers for the next meeting.

Transportation: Tom Mathews

Tom reported that he has been getting a lot of questions regarding the stormwater, especially from newly elected officials. They are very confused and wanted to know if the county could help in anyway. This could be a possible breakfast talk. It was noted that a notice from the DEP was forwarded along to all the municipalities for that kind of grant to help them.

- Bridge U19 on Baptist Church Road; Anticipated opening by St. Patrick's Day barring no issues.
- Bridge W115 in West Amwell; a stone arch bridge that got completely washed away during Ida. Work has begun.
- Bridge U37 on County Route 650: being back filled and should be done by the end of the month.

If we get all these done this month, we are left with only two from Tropical Storm Ida to repair or replace. The culvert that goes under Wescott Drive and W120 on Hamp Road where the abutment completely washed away. The Columbia and Landsdown Trails will be closed. Construction will start on March 6th. They are going to start at the Morris County line and work their way south. Notifications are at the park, on the county web site, parks website, and social media to get the word out. The resurfacing should be done by April 1st, weather dependent.

- The Prescott Bridge has been delivered. The bridge connects Echo Hill Park to the Arboretum. County will create the concrete abutments that the bridge will sit on.

Tom said that one of our shared services is line striping and chip seal. The county does these services and annual maintenance services. The County offers this to the municipalities for a price. The letters have gone out to the DPW's and the clerks, mayors. Page asked about shared services for street sweepers. The county is required by state regulations to sweep all County roads. We only have one sweeper and one on order. If a municipality requests to have a special sweep, it does require our county staff to be paid overtime to do so. It's cheaper to have an outside source do it for municipalities currently then to pay the overtime rate.

Old Business/New Business:

Katherine reported that a site-specific amendment to the Wastewater Management Plan was submitted for the South Hunterdon Regional School District. The school district is building a middle school on the same property as the High school and the site needs to upgrade to larger septic system. Its large enough that it triggers a new DEP permit, therefore it is an amendment to the wastewater plan.

Motion to approve the recommended site-specific amendment for South Hunterdon Regional High School District as in being in conformance with our Growth Management Plan. Richard Dodds moved, Andy Borkin seconded; All in Favor. Motion carried.

Richard reported that the Federal Highlands Conservation Act Grants are available. The Federal Highlands are in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. New Jersey municipalities near the highlands can now opt in without New Jersey regulations attached and give themselves access to Federal dollars for land preservation grants.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau (Raritan Township); comment topics included:

- Concerned that we continue to not preserve our nature.
- The NJ Forest Task Force is not in our best interest.
- Expressed that all logging leads to deforestation and needs to stop.
- There are only a few real environmental groups, and the rest are corporate money grabbers. We need to distinguish them.

There was no further business to be brought before the Board. Page made a motion to adjourn the Planning Board meeting, Richard seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:20AM.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday April 6, 2023, at 8:15 AM

Susan Pena for Secretary, Phil Greiner