

HUNTERDON COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Minutes – September 7, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carol Hoffmann, Andy Borkin, Phil Greiner, Tom Mathews, Page Stiger

ABSENT: Commissioner Director Rich, Commissioner Deputy Director Jeff Kuhl, Commissioner Van Doren, Gabrielle Bolarakis, Dana Desiderio, Richard Dodds, Bill Millette, Frank Bell, Marc Saluk,

STAFF PRESENT: Bob Hornby, Katherine Fullerton, Sue Pena, Rebecca Deakin, Alec Solberg, Natalie Zaman, Aaron Culton- County Counsel

Planning Board Chair Carol Hoffmann read the Open Public Meetings Act notice and called the meeting to order at 8:21 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 JULY 6, 2023 MEETING

Motion to approve minutes Any Borkin, Page Stiger seconded. All in Favor.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER UPDATE

No Commissioners present to give report.

STAFF UPDATES

Farmland: Bob Hornby

Bob reported that there are 22 active preservation applications in 12 municipalities: four in the County Planning Incentive Grant Program, four in the Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program, 12 in the State Direct Easement Program, and two in the Non-Profit program. There is a new State application in Kingwood and two new non-profit applications from The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, one in Union and one in Delaware.

Joe Atchinson is now the Acting New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture as the search for a replacement continues. The State Board of Agriculture is accepting applications and will make a recommendation for appointment by the Governor. Soil Protection Standards for Preserved Farms were released by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for public comment through October 6 and maps by Rowan University were provided to all preserved farm owners to show potential impact. The larger of 12% or 4 acres is allowed per easement with a waiver of up to 15% or 6 acres and an additional 2% or 1 acre if the current disturbance is over the limit at the time of adoption. Exception areas are not included. The County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) has provided comment opposing the retroactive alteration of the deed of easement and requesting a public hearing on the proposed rules. Special Occasion Events on Preserved Farms guidance documents have been prepared by the SADC and the CADB has posted the application form on the CADB website. Preserved farms that can show a minimum of \$10,000 in agricultural income can host up to 26 non-agricultural events annually. The registration process is with the easement holder, enforcement is through the SADC. The CADB will meet September 14 to consider a final cost share resolution for preservation of additional lots to the Amwell Conservancy property in East and West Amwell. There is also a Special Occasion Event application from Schaefer Farms in Readington Township for events in the remainder of 2023.

Open Space: Bob Hornby for Bill Millette

Bob reported that the new pavilion adjacent to the new playground at Deer Path Park has been completed.

The Hunterdon Land Trust and Raritan Township have added a 4-acre lot to the preserved open space area surrounding and protecting Plum Brook. Two Open Space Acquisitions grants have been approved and awarded at the last Commissioner's meeting, one to Hunterdon Land Trust and the other to New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Both applications are smaller acquisitions designed to foster connectivity and protect wetlands and watersheds. Readington Township has closed on the Rockafellows Mills property, a total of 16 acres that includes the house and dam. This purchase took the collaboration of 8 agencies with funding provided by Hunterdon County, Raritan Township, and Readington Township, as well as Green Acres funds from Raritan Headwaters Association, Hunterdon Land Trust, and New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Special Thanks to Richard Dodds for spearheading this project and meeting the landowner's timeline. The next POSAC meeting is coming up on the 25th of September. Board members were curious if the house on Rockafellows Mills Road would be torn down, Bob replied that he had no information on that.

GIS: Rebecca Deakin

Rebecca reported that our new GIS Specialist, Alec Solberg, started in July and was introduced to the Planning Board. Regarding our web mapping applications, no additional farms/businesses were added to the Hunterdon Harvest app in July or August and there were no additional requests to participate. We still have 20 farm/business locations on the map. The sign management solution is ready for the field crew, they will begin to utilize the application in September. GIS attended the kickoff meeting for the Roadway Assessment project and worked with Engineering to provide the road input data the consultant needed to get started on the project. GIS also worked with OEM to create a damage assessment survey for the storm we had in early July and provided surveys that were created for Tropical Storm Ida to Warren County to assist with their damage assessment for that same storm in July. Staff have begun to organize the source material that will be needed for the parcel update project. Staff finished adding the missing address points for Next Generation 911. As the files are being reviewed for the parcel update project, we are checking to see if any additional address points can be added before the data is submitted to the State. GIS and IT have started communication back up with Esri regarding migrating to ArcGIS Enterprise.

Planning Issues: Katherine Fullerton

Katherine reported that the subcommittee for the Growth Management Plan met on August 31st to review the latest draft chapters. The Commissioners reviewed a partial draft of chapter 1 through 4. There have been a few comments to address which we are waiting to review with the Commissioners. We hope to have a full draft plan next month to review. The Historic Preservation Plan is moving forward. We have a consultant that is well versed in Historic Preservation Planning. We will be starting a contract with that group shortly. Breakfast talks will hopefully resume with DEP, BPU and JCP&L. We are working out dates with them. Hopefully we can start promoting sessions soon. We hope to have two sessions, Environmental Hazards and Electrical Grid Security by the end of the year. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority grant for FY2023 was completed. The first quarter report for FY2024 is due in the middle of October. Staff have attended all meetings so far, the last one being at Patterson Falls. Staff has submitted another application to The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority for funding to do a Greenway Trail. This came as a recommendation from the Strategic Open Space Plan. Highlands has a total of one hundred thousand dollars allocated to this project. NJTPA also has matching funding for this plan that we could receive. Everyone seems happy that we will be putting in a good effort to do this. Applications for DRC review have been steady during the summer. There were 7 site plan applications, 1 minor subdivision, and 1 preliminary and final major subdivision applications reviewed between July and August. We also had 6 return applications. Applications reviewed received conditional approvals not to construct until further GIS requirements and easements are made. There was also a sketch plan that received appropriate comments. We have three applications today for review. There are no applications so far for the September 21st DRC meeting. Tom asked what a Greenway Trail is. Katherine replied that it is basically a bike path such as the Landsdown Trail or Columbia Trail. We would like it to be a paved trail, not for dirt bikes, but for regular bikes or pedestrians. Natalie stated that she would like to be involved with this committee. Phil asked why the preference to pave this? Katherine replied that we are trying to make it useable and handicapped accessible, although it doesn't have to be paved. The trails are intended to be for more of a connection to communities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee:

Carol reported that the Executive Committee did not meet this summer.

DRC Committee Report:

No one volunteered for the DRC meeting today. Carol and Tom offered to attend, with Ralph Runge attending as County Engineer. The next DRC meeting is on September 21st. If necessary, an email will be sent looking for volunteers.

Transportation: Tom Mathews

Tom reported that over the summer a lot of projects had been completed. The annual line stripping has been done; the north part of the county was done this year.

- B-24 on County Route 635 by Mine Road between 78 and Hampton and Rounseville Road have been completed.
- County Route 635 paving and drainage work, intersection improvements, and resurfacing have been completed.
- D-304A Covered Bridge & D-304B (Rosemont-Ringoes Road) is closed for repairs. The bridge is in worse shape than thought. There is more structural repair work than anticipated. Completion is expected hopefully by late Fall of 2023. The sister bridge next to it will be renovated.
- Bloomsbury Bridge is now closed due to an accident. It's considered an orphan bridge and the state maintains them. It is scheduled to be replaced, once replaced than it's considered a county bridge. Its progressing along, DOT has submitted plans to the railroad, and they are reviewing the plans and updates. It's progressing, but it will be closed for quite a while. A question was asked if it would be a one or two lane, Tom said it will be a higher bridge with 2 lanes.
- EB-262 is being replaced from one to two lane bridge with local bridge funds. This should be completed in December.
- We just finished our preservation program with the chip seal and slurry on the roadways. Routes 518 in South County, 617 out of the Borough of Flemington, 635 and 639 Highbridge to 22 had slurry applications.
- Mill and Replace overlay will start. Portions of 639, 579, 519 and 513 are scheduled to start next week.

Page asked if the county offers shared services on slurry seal. Tom replied that slurry seal is done under the state contract. Carol asked if 519 will be closed, Tom replied no, just delays. Andy asked if there was any update on widening 31 by the hospital, Katherine replied she has not heard anything. Andy asked if we could send a letter to the senator to ask? Carol asked if we could make a request through the Planning Board? Katherine said she would look into it as Commissioner Soloway is on the NJTPA board.

Cultural & Heritage: Natalie Zaman

Natalie reported that a lot has been going on since the last update.

- Local Arts Program (LAP) and County History Partnership Program (CHPP) FY24 grant applications are due on September 15th. The LAP Grant is funded by the NJ State Council of the Arts and the County History Partnership is funded by the NJ Historical Commission. We have \$40,000 from the NJ Historical Commission program to re-grant to County nonprofits and municipalities for history programming; this amount is pre-determined by the Historical Commission. A subcommittee of the Cultural & Heritage commission will determine the portion of the \$200,000 award from the State Arts Council to be re-granted to County nonprofits and municipalities for arts programming.
- The Cultural & Heritage Commission partnered with the Library and Senior Center to apply for the NJ State Council on the Arts' Creative Aging Initiative grant. This is a \$10,000 grant to support teaching artists to execute workshop series for older adults. We proposed to bring in Roxey Ballet to present two 8-week sessions of Creative Movement programs at the library. Awards will be announced in December.
- Cultural & Heritage is assisting Planning with the County's Historic Preservation grant program. A subcommittee will meet this month to discuss the 8 applications that were received earlier this year.
- Cultural & Heritage is working on two websites to bring more attention to our Arts and History assets. HuntArt.org will be our online art trail. It is its own website, but it will also be hosted on The Explore Hunterdon site. Once launched, visitors will be able to add our various arts assets to their travel itineraries. Many people have asked about CreativeHuntedon.org; once HuntArt is launched we will clean up and relaunch CreativeHunterdon; it's focus will be community building. Our second website

is HuntHistory.org. This is our online history trail that we are planning to re-launch in 2026 for the 250th anniversary. Earlier this year we successfully applied to the New Jersey Council for the Humanities for an action grant to hire a consultant to research and create extended content for 30 County historic sites and markers. This information will be featured on the relaunched site.

- Cultural & Heritage has presented several free technical assistance workshops for our nonprofits and municipalities over the course of the year. Workshops have been held at the library due to ongoing construction at the Historic Courthouse. We are offering a Marketing and Digital Media workshop on September 20th, and due to demand from our nonprofit organizations, an additional fund-raising workshop will be held on September 27th.
- Revival of the Hunterdon County Teen Arts Festival is underway. The 2024 Festival will take place on April 17th at the main branch of the library and here in the Rt. 12 Auditorium. Participation forms have been sent to schools and are due back November 3rd.
- We are initiating a new program, “Dancing on The Green” which represents a partnership between the Hunterdon County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Economic Development and Tourism, local businesses (Old York Cellars) and nonprofits (Roxey Ballet Company and the Hunterdon Art Museum). The program is a Creative Placemaking effort that will showcase the arts in nontraditional venues; Roxey Ballet will have a company of 20 dancers that will be dancing in the vines of the vineyard. The initiative will also establish long term partnerships between nonprofit arts organizations and local businesses. The performance will take place on October 7th at Old York Cellars and is free and open to the public (rain date is October 14th). October 6th is the dress rehearsal from 2-5:30pm. In addition to the dancers, there will also be visual artists on site on the day of the performance: Lauren Rosenbaum from Hunterdon Art Museum and Marc Schreiber who will be painting on site. Marc is known for painting with wine and will be creating a painting that will be auctioned off to benefit the Roxey Ballet Company. Old York Cellars will also be naming one of their bottles “Roxey Red” as a fund raiser.

Old Business/New Business:

No report given.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau commented that the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife has scheduled a bear hunt. She believes that that council is mainly Hunterdon farmers that keep the voices of animal protectors completely shut down. A lot of anti-bear hunt comments were submitted to Fish and Wildlife on the proposal. Many species are being hunted globally. Hunters are a minority and there are non-lethal ways to deal with sentient wildlife.

Carol Staten commented about protocol about notification of projects and board minutes posted. Tom replied that we use social media, emails, and such to notify residents about road projects. Carol asked about the notification of the Route 173 project. Tom replied that that road is a state road, and they send out notifications to the municipalities. She inquired about Daniel’s law and how it relates to the posting of meeting minutes. Her municipality has stated that they can’t provide meeting minutes due to Daniel’s Law. Phil replied we publish names in our minutes, but not addresses. Carol Hoffmann stated that no personal information is provided, which was corroborated by County Counsel. She also replied that minutes are not posted until they are approved, and we cannot make them post.

There was no further business to be brought before the Board. Page made a motion to adjourn the Planning Board meeting, Tom Matthews seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 AM.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday October 5, 2023, at 8:15 AM

Susan Pena for Secretary, Phil Greiner