

Readington Township Open Space Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

May 6, 2020

Attendance:

Member	JAN 8	FEB 5	MAR 4	APR 1	MAY 6	JUN 3	AUG 5	SEP 2	OCT 7	NOV 4
Mr. Huelsebusch, Chair	X		X		X					
Mrs. Allen, Vice Chair	X	X	X							
Dr. Hendrickson		X	X		X					
Mr. John	X	X	X		X					
Dr. Kelly		X	X		X					
Mrs. Madon	X	X	X		X					
Mr. Mueller	X		X		X					
Mr. Orlandi	X		X		X					
Mrs. Owen	X		X		X					
Mr. Bola, 1st Alternate		X								
Mr. Klotz, 2nd Alternate	X	X	X		X					

Members of the Public: Kim Broten. Township Committeeman Jonathan Heller.

1. The Chairman calls the meeting to order via phone conference at 7:15 p.m., announcing that all laws governing the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting has been duly advertised.
2. Attendance, via phone conference: As noted above.
3. Approval of the Minutes: Mr. Mueller made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded and approved unanimously by voice vote.
4. Community Communications:

a. Mr. Huelsebusch is working on a power point regarding the Township trails, and he suggested that it be put on the the main menu of the Township website so more people can see it.

b. Mr. Klotz indicated that all events are on hold currently because of State restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He is contemplating sending an email to volunteers saying that they can work on trails by themselves. No walks are scheduled, and the tree giveaway has been canceled. Tree seedlings are being refrigerated, perhaps for pick-up at a later date. Dr. Hendrickson mentioned that they are being watered.

c. According to Mr. Huelsebusch, June 7 is the latest date for the statewide shutdown and is when Governor Murphy will make further announcements, per executive order 138.

5. Correspondence: Mr. Huelsebusch received a notice from JCP&L regarding vegetative management from the South Branch to Pleasant Run. As there are some nesting bald eagles, Municipal Clerk Vita Mekovetz will inform JCP&L. There is also a red hawk on one tower. Dr. Kelly pointed out that eagles nest in January, so they should be finished soon. The nest is at Higgins Road by the South Branch of the Raritan River. Mr. Mueller, as chair of the Environmental Commission's Wildlife Advisory subcommittee, requested that he be kept informed of any developments regarding this. Dr. Hendrickson and Mr. Mueller will be the contacts in the Environmental Commission.

6. Regular Reports:

Farmland Preservation and Green Acres Developments: Nothing to report.

Hunterdon County Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee Updates: Mr. Huelsebusch mentioned that the next meeting is at the end of May, but there is no agenda yet. He has continued to work with Bill Millette.

Environmental Commission: Dr. Hendrickson said that the May meeting has been canceled. He has gotten calls regarding the boxes for collection of plastics that are located in the Municipal Building. Valerie, the librarian who organized this will get in touch with the company and get back to the EC. Grants regarding the wildflower garden have been delayed. Mr. Heller will send Dr. Kelly an email regarding the grant.

Readington Township Updates: The updated map of open space and farmland is nearing completion.

7. Old and Ongoing Business:

a. Trails subcommittee updates:

i. Mr. John reported that there were two minor trail sessions. At present other sessions are postponed. Mr. Klotz stated that recently many volunteers have been working on trails. Now it is all stopped. Should we encourage people to go out on their own to do things such as cutting back branches and shrubs, working on wildflower meadow, etc.? Mr. Huelsebusch suggested picking a Saturday to do work at Holland Brook Headwaters and have people doing different things to maintain distances. Mr. Klotz suggested planning in advance and assigning tasks to keep people separate.

ii. Mrs. Owen mentioned that Readington Trail Association has done 64 hours of trail work so far this year, and the Open Space Advisory Committee has completed 215 hours so far. She pointed out that it is easy to maintain distancing with a couple of people working on a trail. Mr. Huelsebusch suggested that perhaps we could try this with the OSAB. We could use three members to mark the trail at the Gallo property.

iii. Mr. Huelsebusch asked Mr. John to think of possible sessions, such as tree plantings, where individuals could have their own materials and maintain distancing. Mr. Klotz pointed out that there are many trails that will close up if they aren't cut back. Perhaps each person who volunteers could be assigned an area. Mr. John mentioned that families could volunteer also. Dr. Hendrickson suggested that multiple people could work on an area at different times. Mr. John indicated that we have many trees ready to be planted. He and Mr. Klotz can plan what can be done regarding the trees. Mr. Klotz said that we can try trail work and meadow sessions with OSAB members first and then inform volunteers via email with a list of what they can do on their own.

iv. Mr. Klotz pointed out that we need to show those who are helping us with the trails (mowing, etc.) appreciation while at the same time informing them of the new standards that we established.

v. Mr. Klotz is working on a mowing plan for trails that the Department of Public Works will contract out.

vi. Mr. Klotz mentioned that some neighbors of open space use it to put branches, old Christmas trees, yard waste, etc. He asked which ordinance deals with this, and can small signs be put up to inform neighbors? Mr. Huelsebusch and Mr. Heller will check into the ordinances.

b. Stewardship updates:

i. Dr. Kelly is working on a grant from Sustainable Jersey regarding pollinator gardens. Focus will be on three areas: Summer Road Park near the Lazy Brook Greenway, the Lazy Brook trailhead near Summer Road, and the Doboziński Farm Park. Installation of seeds will be done this spring, which will involve drilling of plugs among other work. There are many mugworts by the Lazy Brook trailhead. They are highly invasive, so some seeds should be set aside for later. The seeds will not be put near the mugworts. The mugworts will be mown down and plastic sheeting put down to kill it.

ii. The deer enclosure on the Reno property has again been damaged by vandals. Mr. Klotz and Dr. Kelly fixed it. Dr. Kelly will check on the other two deer enclosures.

iii. A member of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey found a very rare yellow variety of spring beauty on open space. Previously only three other areas in the world were known.

iv. Mr. Huelsebusch pointed out that we need to check the blue tubes on Holland Brook Headwaters and Pleasant Run Greenways to see what needs repair.

v. Dr. Kelly and his family planted hickory nuts and acorns by Holland Brook Headwaters near trees already planted.

vi. Dr. Kelly submitted a grant to do botanical inventory and meadow management. This will enable us to see what we have and help support meadow diversity.

8. New Business:

a. Mr. Huelsebusch announced that Prescott Brook, which is partially in Readington Township and the South Branch near Three Bridges to the Neshanic River have been upgraded to C-1 classification. Lazy Brook is also a C-1 stream.

b. Mr. Mueller mentioned that the Wildlife subcommittee of the Environmental Commission met to discuss how the hunting season went and how to improve it. Based on this, he handed out proposed amendments to the Readington Township deer management program and club leases and highlighted the nine points to OSAB members. Mr. Mueller requested feedback from Board members. He sees increasing numbers going forward. In response to a query from Mr. Huelsebusch regarding what size is good for parcels where hunting is allowed, Mr. Mueller stated that it does not matter as long as there is a proper safety zone and permission. But at least 10 acres is what they are looking for.

c. Mrs. Owen opined, regarding item number 5, that neither she nor the RTA are happy with the proposal to allow firearms, even with stringent safety zones. Hunting is already allowed for seven months, and adding firearms would scare horses and people using the trails. She suggested a safe time, for example between 10 am and 3 pm, when shooting should not be permitted. The president of the RTA, Lisa Hall, has stated that the Township needs to balance the needs of the hunters with the safety and wellbeing of other park users.

d. Regarding item number 9, which proposes adding five new properties, Mrs. Owen mentioned that the Bouman-Stickney Farmstead had previously been proposed for hunting, and it was denied. It is a small area of open mowed fields for hikers and equestrians and the only safe haven in the hunting season. It is also used during the season for school tours. These open spaces are shared by everyone. Hunters need to clean up garbage and animal remains and repair land damaged by their vehicles.

e. Mr. John advised that if RV's are allowed to be used to retrieve game and equipment, it's important to be very specific about where and under what circumstances to allow this so as to prevent overuse and degradation of land. Mr. Mueller stated that maps would be used to delineate where they can go. Mr. Klotz suggested that this be agreed upon by hunt clubs to try to prevent violations.

9. Comments from the Public: None.

10. Comments from the Board:

a. Mr. Klotz asked that he be informed of any work that needs to be done on trails, meadows, etc.

b. Mr. Mueller mentioned that the owls that he has been seeing at the Whitehouse Greenway include two juveniles and a mature owl.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Sandra Madon.