

Readington Township Open Space Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

June 3, 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 | X | | | | |
| Mrs. Allen, Vice Chair | X | X | X | | | X | | | | |
| Dr. Hendrickson | | X | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Mr. John | X | X | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Dr. Kelly | | X | X | | X | | | | | |
| Mrs. Madon | X | X | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Mr. Mueller | X | | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Mr. Orlandi | X | | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Mrs. Owen | X | | X | | X | X | | | | |
| Mr. Bola, 1st Alternate | | X | | | | X | | | | |
| Mr. Klotz, 2nd Alternate | X | X | X | | X | X | | | | |

Members of the Public: Al Villani, Karen Villani. Township Mayor Jonathan Heller.

1. The Chairman calls the meeting to order at 7:05 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 video conference: As noted above.
3. Approval of the minutes: Mr. Orlandi made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2020, meeting. It was seconded by Dr. Hendrickson and unanimously approved by voice vote.
4. Community Communications:
 - a. Mr. Huelsebusch highlighted items coming out on the Township website under the OSAB. There is a new link entitled “Open Space Public Hearing/ News. Under this there is a

second link giving an open space update and trails overview. Additionally, there will be links to open space highlights, which currently details the acquisition of the Saums Farm. There is also a link here to the public hearing regarding the Saums Farm. Mr. Huelsebusch requested input from Board members to help improve, add to, or edit the slides.

b. Mr. Klotz pointed out that monthly walks are still on hold. Mr. Huelsebusch suggested perhaps holding a field visit to the Gallo property for the OSAB as a pilot walk.

c. As a result of a recommendation from the trails subcommittee, Mr. Klotz presented a draft Volunteer Opportunities announcement for limited resumption of a group of work sessions. He proposes the announcement be circulated to members and to current volunteers via email. There are 8 sessions listed in June and July as well as a few tasks that individuals or families can do on their own. Due to Covid-19 concerns, group sessions will be limited to a maximum of six individuals or families, and requirements for mandatory pre-registration, masks, social distancing, and using own tools. The Chairman asked for the announcement to be on the website for reference by the members and volunteers. Mr. Klotz recommended that at this time the announcement not be broadcast via the listserv, so was to keep the pilot manageable.

5. Correspondence: Email dated 5/28/2020 from Thomas Davitt, a resident, to various Township officials including Mr. Klotz, questioning why the Township field at the corner of Dreahook Road and Indian Purchase was mowed on May 26, destroying the monarch-friendly milkweed and other native plants. Mr. Klotz explained that Mr. Davitt had complained last fall about the practice on this field and was told we are working on a plan for the management of the Township fields. Mr. Klotz noted the plan has not been completed yet. As a result, the Board has not actually asked DPW not to mow the fields before late fall, and some other fields have also already been mowed. As a result of being alerted by the resident's email, Chairman Huelsebusch and Mayor Heller have directed DPW not to mow any more fields until we can meet and discuss the matter. Mr. Klotz said he will respond to Mr. Davitt.

6. Regular Reports:

Farmland Preservation and Green Acres Developments: Mrs. Allen announced that on Monday, June 1, the Saums property on Rockafellows Mill Road closed. It will include 60 acres for farmland and 50 acres for open space. Mr. Huelsebusch thanked Mrs. Allen, Ron Monaco, and Township Administrator Vita Mekovetz for their efforts in preserving this land.

Hunterdon County Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee Updates: Mr. Huelsebusch stated that there has been little activity of late, with few applications made. We need to look for preservation opportunities.

Environmental Commission Updates: Dr. Hendrickson reported that the EC had a lively virtual meeting, with two major discussions: water and deer management. They will meet with the Raritan Headwaters non-profit in July.

Readington Streams and Groundwater Subcommittee: Mr. Orlandi informed the OSAB that a new Readington Streams and Groundwater Subcommittee has been formed that reports to both the Environmental Commission and the Open Space Advisory Board. The name was selected to recognize the importance of monitoring and supporting clean water both on the surface where the streams are and in the deep water aquifers that run underground. This is consistent with a national movement called One Watershed/ One Water. The Reading Streams and Groundwater Subcommittee has several objectives:

1. To promote clean water restoration and preservation practices and projects in Readington and in areas to which our watershed is connected.
2. To coordinate current and future water-related projects under a single umbrella.
3. To seek out and to foster organizational synergies through partnerships with like-minded organizations such as: Raritan Headwaters, Musconetcong Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited, and Sierra Club, to name a few.
4. To coordinate and collaborate with County and State agencies like the DEP that are involved with similar efforts.
5. To work with and to help coordinate Readington's open space preservation efforts involving land parcels that incorporate or border upon any of our streams or rivers.

Mrs. Allen mentioned that the 2009 Readington Township Masterplan includes information on surface water and groundwater quality.

Readington Township Updates: Mr. Huelsebusch announced that there will be an updated Township open space map by the end of June. Mr. Bola will combine the trails and open space map. Mr. Klotz pointed out that on Facebook people ask where they can walk in the Township, and the maps are helpful to them.

7. Old and Ongoing Business:

a. Mayor Heller reminded the Board that one year ago he dropped off trusses at the Cushetunk Nature Preserve to be used as bridges on trails. There are two 30 foot trusses. DEP approval is required.

b. Dr. Hendrickson said that Silver Bit & Spur Farm met with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mr. Orlandi, Laura Masinda, and him regarding environmentally-sound manure practices for the horse farm.

c. Mrs. Allen commented on proposed amendments to the deer management program of the EC's wildlife subcommittee. She suggested open space parcels that should be bow only: Holland Brook Headwaters because of the trail system, Gallo because it's a new trail system, Chambers Brook because of its small size, Taylor's Mill, and Pleasant Run. Suggestions were made to have perhaps a two-week period when shotguns are permitted, or perhaps to share

the property - at certain times of day hunters are allowed. Mrs. Allen also suggested not allowing motorized vehicles, with special permission allowed for those with disabilities. She also suggested having Readington residents only for the time being.

d. Trails Subcommittee updates:

i. The subcommittee discussed what to do to keep vehicles off of trails.

Mrs. Allen suggested that we find out who the offenders are and have the police go to the offender's house. Mayor Heller can put a notice regarding this in Readington News. Mr. Huelsebusch said that we could also include a picture of new trails along with the notice of no vehicles allowed. Dr. Kelly put cameras on the deer enclosure on Cole Road.

ii. Mr. John informed the Board that bridges will be put on the trails at the Lachenmeyer property this year.

iii. Mr. Klotz noted that DPW is mowing all Township trails so far this year and appears not to have used any outside contractors so far for trail mowing. He, Mayor Heller, and Scott Jesseman of the DPW will get together to discuss trails.

e. Stewardship updates:

i. Dr. Kelly mentioned that there are two main categories discussed: deer enclosures and tree plantings.

ii. Mr. Klotz wondered what to do about vandalism to deer enclosures. Shouldn't this be reported to the police? Mayor Heller said that the police chief suggested taking a photo for the police, and they will go to the house of the vandals.

8. New Business: In answer to a question from Mayor Heller as to whether the Readington Trail Association had received a refund check from the State for the tree seedlings purchased, Al Villani stated that they had not.

9. Comments from the Public:

a. Al Villani requested that the Wildlife subcommittee keep trail use by horses and hikers in mind when making decisions regarding hunting. He likes the idea of sharing time with hunters on certain properties.

b. Mr. Villani also pointed out that Susan Masinda often sees hunting stands right by trails. Mr. Mueller said that there is a rampant problem with illegal hunting stands.

c. Karen Villani had two concerns. One was allowing non-residents to hunt on Township properties. Another was that gunshots can scare horses and cause them to run.

10. Comments from the Board:

a. Mrs. Allen reiterated her concern about opening up properties that are hunted to motorized vehicles.

b. Mr. John mentioned that anyone from the Board can go to the tree nursery to water. It's greatly needed.

c. Mr. Bola said that social media comments regarding the trails have been positive.

d. Mr. Klotz suggested highlighting a trail and putting it on the Readington-Whitehouse Community Board once in a while. Mayor Heller thought this would also be good for Readington News.

e. Dr. Hendrickson thanked Mayor Heller and Mr. Huelsebusch for the opportunity to go on the South Branch with them. It was a great experience.

f. Mr. John suggested putting a list of day hikes and day paddles on the Township website.

g. Mr. Klotz reported receiving an email from The Coalition for Recreational Trails, a not-for-profit, in which that organization requested letters of support to congressional leaders on behalf of re-funding the Federal Recreational Trails Program in the Transportation funding legislation this year. He noted that we have successfully obtained grants from this program in past years to fund our trails system growth. Mr. Klotz has drafted a letter from the Board to be signed by the Chairman. Mr. Huelsebusch will sign the letter after Mr. Klotz submits it to Township administration to be put on Township letterhead.

11. Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Klotz, seconded by Dr. Hendrickson, and passed unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Sandra Madon.