

Richland Township Preservation Board Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2021
Submitted by Rich Sadler

Members Present

In attendance were Kathy Fedorocsko, Dale Henninger and Rich Sadler. Staff member present was Rich Brittingham. .

A. Minutes

September's minutes were approved as reported. Kathy motioned, Dale seconded, unanimous approval.

- B. **Financial Report:** As of September 3, 2021, our fund balance stands at \$788,807.76. Assuming the income from the tax & non-easement expenses remain the same thru 2023, we will have approximately \$1,500,000 to spend on preservation thru June 2023. We may get Stonebacks's rental fee for farming preserved land & a portion of the Bouche & James overcharge settlement.

C. Property Reports, Active:

1. **Maderson (36-045-011) 23.75 acres, 210 Axe Handle Rd:** NO CHANGE. We walked the property on June 24, 2020: score 62. The property was appraised at \$8000/acre. Mr Maderson is willing to wait for DCNR funding, which would pay for 50% of the cost. Laura Baird and Kathy walked with the DCNR reps in September 2020. With the help of Heritage, we applied for DCNR funding in April. The DCNR decision on this property is expected after Thanksgiving. Laura Baird went before the BOS in March to ask them for a resolution to guarantee funding for half of this project, which they approved. We project settlement in Spring 2022.
2. **Corn (36-39-79) 55.6 acres on 150 Hickory Lane:** NO CHANGE. We walked the property on Aug 19, 2020: score 63. Laura Baird and Kathy walked with the DCNR reps in September 2020. The property was appraised at \$7500/acre. With the help of Heritage, we applied for DCNR funding in April. The DCNR decision on this property is expected after Thanksgiving. Laura Baird went before the BOS in March to ask them for a resolution to guarantee funding for half of this project, which they approved. We project settlement in Spring 2022.

D. Property Reports: Pending Contact / Action:

1. **New properties:** We did not attempt to reach out to property owners due to the pandemic. Kathy sent a letter Mr. Sames and Mr. Zavitsanos to see if they are interested. We need to keep in mind that our funding is finite and see how much we can stretch what is left.
2. **Small Properties to be contacted:** Malasics, Krikory, Stahler, Paul I Clymer. We will reach out by letter and Dale will contact Rich Malasics by phone. Kathy drafted letters to them, will send in the future.
3. Schemitsh & McGowen, 36-39-77, 13.6 Acres at 133 Hickory Lane
 4. Alan Jesiolowski, 11.4 acres on Beck road. Mr. Jesiolowski is witing on net buildable from Cowen.

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5. **Large parcels to approach for County Ag:** Mr. Sames is beginning the process of joining the ASA

E. Old Business

1. **Property Monitoring by Heritage:** All properties have been walked for 2021 and Dan is preparing his reports. See specific concerns about the monitoring below.
2. **Preserved Property Signs:** All new signs have been installed. We will inventory what we will need for the future and attempt to remove the rest of the old signage. The County needs to be contacted about a new sign for Romano and a few other County signs are missing the property owner's name or are incorrectly identified.
3. **Village signs:** NO CHANGE; Kathy got samples and estimates for four village signs, \$220 each for two sided signs. We chose the blue on white background sample. We plan to wait until later in the year to ask the supervisors for approval. The sign wording was completed.
4. **Reserve at Woodside Creek Housing Development;** The present plans place a walking trail in a sensitive natural area. We request that the developer delete the section of the trail that dead ends at a stream. This was brought up at the August BOS meeting; there was no resolution.

- F. Property Monitoring Progress with Heritage - issues:** Dan Ford called in with updates. Concerns are noted below:

Township Owned Open Space

1. "No ATV" signs are in & will be placed on Shah, Lisbon, Romano, & Keller properties.
2. **Lisbon:** Encroachment from Essex Court properties (located in the Borough of Quakertown), including ATV usage that left ruts, trash scattered, trees and bushes cut. This was noted in the 2019, 2017 reports and has gotten worse. Rich B had a survey done on this area behind the homes and is preparing to send letters to the homeowners showing exactly where the boundary is. We should probably be in touch with the Quakertown Borough Manager to keep him in the loop.
3. **Shah:** Dumping of grass clippings and yard debris from homeowners, dirt dumped from cemetery, remnants of camping found. Dumping had been a problem with this parcel before it was donated to the township.
4. **Milner, Thompson:** 4-wheelers have created a well-worn wide path onto the open space with trails through the open space on both parcels from the adjacent farm field.
5. **Romano:** No issues.
6. **Veteran's Park:** Major erosion on the newly created Highlands Trail through the woods at the junction of the Tohickon Creek. Suggestion to move the trail south in this area for safety and liability reasons.

To help resolve township-owned property issues, the board feels signage needs to be erected stating that it is Open Space with some rules included such as: No Motor Vehicles, No Off-Road vehicles, No Dumping, No Camping, No Hunting, No Fires. The signs have been ordered.

Easements

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1. Keller/Gruver: Extensive 4-wheeler and motorcycle use on 8-foot-wide well-worn paths through the wooded areas that connect these adjacent properties, which has caused extensive damage to the sensitive areas and forested wetlands and coming very close to the Tohickon Creek. There is also a refrigerator, junk car and trailer on the Gruver property in the easement area. These property owners need to be notified that these activities are not permitted in the easement areas and the junk must be removed from the Gruver tract. Rich B is drafting letters to them.
2. Hagar/McCutcheon: Access to monitor was denied from an unknown person living on the property. We will attempt to contact Ms. McCutcheon to remind her that the easement for this farm states that we have the right to monitor the property. Kathy felt that safety may be an issue so Dan suggested monitoring this property this year with satellite photo. Rich B found Lorie's address in Florida & sent her & her tenant letters with our concerns. We have to decide what action needs to be taken so this doesn't happen in the future.
3. It was noted that 4-wheelers seem to be a real problem this year on many preserved properties. We noticed light trails on many of the properties and another much more established trails on the Berger, Keller and Gruver properties. Mrs. Landis also complained that ATVs have been out there late at night behind her house (Bonk property) but not on her property. We could see established trails in the woods, viewing them from the Landis property and it needs to be further investigated. We need to come up with a plan to restrict 4-wheeler usage on all open space as such activity does not protect the conservation value of the property and a lot of it appears to be trespassing.

Dan Ford suggested that since so many of the parcels with easements have changed hands since the original agreement was drafted, the Preservation Board should put together a "welcome packet" that includes the easement information, what part of the property is protected and what uses are permitted and not permitted. With his help, we will determine all the new owners and send such a packet to these property owners. Future easement language will spell things out more specifically.

G. New business

1. Kathy is scheduled to meet with Shannon Fredebaugh-Siller from Heritage Conservancy about a project Heritage would like to approach the QCSD about. It would be an outdoor learning center that would have Heritage partnering with the Middle and Elementary Schools to present educational programs modeled on their program with Keystone Elementary in Croydon. We felt it would be a good way to get the Open Space to work for everyone. The Township would need to give permission for this use; request was forwarded to Rich B & Paul S. Heritage presented its proposal at the October BOS meeting

2. Lehigh Valley Health Network will be applying to demolish (per demolition ordinance is 27-1004-2H) an historic house built in 1776 on Pumping Station Rd. near Wawa. Our board is opposed to this. LVHN will lease the house to Richland township.

Motion to Adjourn: Rich S motioned, Kathy seconded, unanimous approval.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 12 7:00 PM