

**MINUTES
MORRIS COUNTY
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION TRUST FUND COMMITTEE**

September 6, 2023

Hybrid Meeting held remotely via WebEx:

<https://morriscountynj.webex.com/morriscountynj/j.php?MTID=mf278daa0ab3d0cfd89d9d0c77a717f43>

Phone In: 1-408-418-9388

Access Code: 2348 738 7840

In person: Knox Room, Administration and Records Building, 10 Court Street,
Morristown NJ 07960

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 PM by Chairman Jay Thomson.

Members present:

Patrick Antonetti, Region VI – Lincoln Park
Betty Cass-Schmidt, Morris County Park Commission
Jennifer Cooper, At-Large
Nita Galate, Region III – Mount Arlington
Thomas Galfo, Morris County Agriculture Development Board
Thomas “Ace” Gallagher, Region VII - Hanover
Tom Malinousky, Morris County Trail Program Advisory Committee
Suzanne McCluskey, At-Large
Adam Salberg, Region IV – Rockaway Township
Everton Scott, Morris County Planning Board
Laura Szwak, Region I – Mount Olive
Jay Thomson, Region II - Randolph

Members with excused absence:

Astri Baillie, Region VIII - Madison
Larry Gindoff, Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority
David Kaplan, Region V – Parsippany-Troy Hills

Also attending:

Joe Barilla, Director, Morris County Office of Planning & Preservation
Virginia Michelin, Assistant Director, Morris County Office of Planning & Preservation
Barbara Murray, Open Space Program Coordinator, Morris County Office of Planning & Preservation
Alyssa Ercan, Planning Aide, Morris County Office of Planning & Preservation
William Johnson, Esq., Special Counsel, Morris County Preservation Trust Fund
Robert G. Schwarz, MAI, Review Appraiser, Morris County Preservation Trust

Members of the Public:

Sue Collins, Millington
Lydia Chambers, Harding
Judy Kroll, Madison
Joe Basralian, Chatham
Claire Whitcomb, Madison

Lisa Leone, Denville
Virginia Easley, Mendham
Marijane Lundt, Madison
Barbara Hughes, Madison
Nick Homyak, Lake Hiawatha

FLAG SALUTE

Chairman Thomson led the flag salute for attendees.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

Chairman Thomson stated that, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of the meeting had been provided and filed with the Town of Morristown, the Morris County Clerk, the Daily Record and the Star Ledger.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Jay Thomson noted the public presence and support for Madison's Drew Forest application. He stated tonight's meeting was the committee's introduction to the project by staff and it would occur in closed session. He stated there would be no action taken on the Drew Forest application tonight. Due to time limitations on the use of the building, public comment would be limited to three (3) minutes per person.

Sue Collins, Millington stated there is a great diversity of species and plants in Drew Forest and hoped the committee would see the value in the property and vote to preserve it.

Lydia Chambers, Harding stated the Friends of Drew Forest was formed in May 2021 and became a 501(c)3. The Friends group wholeheartedly supports the grant application. She mentioned the online petition and resolutions of support from surrounding towns and groups.

July Kroll, Madison stated she was the other half of the leadership of the Friends group. She stated the group has advocated for a conservation sale of the forest which would be a win, win scenario. She stated the Buried Valley Aquifer is beneath the forest, and four towns receive all of their water from it, and 31 municipalities receive at least some part of their water from that resource.

Joe Basralian, Chatham stated he is a board member of the Friends group and sits on the Chatham open space committee. He referenced the Giralda Farms project in 2014 and the investment of the county. He stated the Drew Forest can be connected through walking and also Loantaka Brook Reservation. He said there always cars parked along the road. He provided further comments in support of the McDon Fen application requesting a second grant extension.

Claire Whitcomb, Madison stated she was Chair of the Environmental Commission in Madison. She said that over the past two years, she has learned much about the local ecosystem. The Friends group has attended many events to educate the public on the aquifer and Drew Forest. Preserving the forest is saving a public asset.

Lisa Leone, Denville stated she was a lifelong resident of Morris County. She is an

alumnus of the Drew Class of 2016. She utilized the living classroom of the Drew Forest preserve on campus as part of her studies and was a major factor in her decision to attend Drew.

Virginia Easley, Mendham stated she has lived in Morris County her entire life and was there to support the application to preserve the Drew Forest.

Marijane Lundt, Madison stated she has lived in Morris County for 36 years. Her children spent many hours walking and exploring the forest and hopes that other children of the county will likewise be able to do so as well.

Barbara Hughes, Madison stated her property borders the Drew Forest. She referenced an article that recently appeared in the New York Times.

Nick Homyak, Lake Hiawatha discussed carbon sequestration and the importance of forest vegetation upon climate and ecosystems.

Ms. Murray stated she received 24 emailed public comments, all in support of the Drew Forest application: Karen Mazzocchi, Madison; Nick Homyak; Lake Hiawatha; Sarah-Lee Terrat, Waterbury VT; Jayme Klein, Neptune; Vincent Occhipinti, Chatham; Laurie Reynolds, Madison; Lisa Pomerantz, Madison; Ken Dolsky, Parsippany; Catherine Keim, former Drew student; Sue Schmidt, Denville; Ann Huber; Madison; Brian and Kathleen Underwood, Florham Park; C. Dennis, Lewiston ME; Desiree Castillejos, Chatham; Dr. Wendy Matt, Maryland; Dr. Sheila Brodhead, Denville; Emily Kaufman, Morristown; Christine Hepburn, Hardwick; Peter Fried, Madison; Molly Polevoy, Madison; Claire Whitcomb, Madison; Joanne Oliva-Purdy, Denver CO; and Jennifer Nielsen, Morristown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Regular Minutes of March 9, 2023 meeting – Ms. Laura Szwak noted a correction to the next meeting date on the last page. On a motion by Laura Szwak, second by Betty Cass-Schmidt, the committee approved the regular session minutes of the March 9, 2023 meeting as corrected. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Antonetti, Cass-Schmidt, Cooper, Galate, Galfo, McCluskey, Szwak, Thomson Nay: None Abstain: Gallagher, Malinousky, Salberg, Scott
2. Closed Session Minutes of March 9, 2023 meeting – On a motion by Laura Szwak, second by Jennifer Cooper, the committee approved the closed session minutes of the March 9, 2023 meeting. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Antonetti, Cass-Schmidt, Cooper, Galate, Galfo, McCluskey, Szwak, Thomson Nay: None Abstain: Gallagher, Malinousky, Salberg, Scott

NEW BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, pursuant to P.L. 1975 Ch. 231, the Open Public Meetings Act, the Open Space Trust Fund Committee may exclude the public to discuss matters as are provided under the Act; and

WHEREAS, said Act provided that this Committee may exclude the public from the discussion of such matters,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Open Space Trust Fund Committee hereby excludes the public in order to discuss such matters. The general nature of the subject to be discussed is as follows: Purchase, lease or acquisition of real property. On a motion by Betty Cass-Schmidt, seconded by Suzanne McCluskey, the committee closed the open portion of the meeting and voted to conduct a closed session at 6:36 PM.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The meeting reopened to the public at 8:23 PM

1. Action as a Result of Closed Session- Second Grant extensions:

- a) Trust for Public Land / “McDon Fen” – on a motion by Laura Szwak, seconded by Thomas Gallagher, the committee recommended a second grant extension for the McDon Fen project. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Antonetti, Cass-Schmidt, Cooper, Galate, Galfo, Gallagher, Malinousky, McCluskey, Salberg, Scott, Szwak, Thomson Nay: None Abstain: None
- b) Township of Montville / “Jean Drive Preserve” – on a motion by Betty Cass-Schmidt, seconded by Everton Scott, the committee recommended a second grant extension for the Jean Drive Preserve project. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Antonetti, Cass-Schmidt, Cooper, Galate, Galfo, Gallagher, Malinousky, McCluskey, Salberg, Scott, Szwak, Thomson Nay: None Abstain: None
- c) Township of Parsippany-Troy Hills / “Kosut Property” – on a motion by Suzanne McCluskey, seconded by Thomas Gallagher, the committee recommended a second grant extension for the Kosut Property project. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Antonetti, Cass-Schmidt, Cooper, Galate, Galfo, Gallagher, Malinousky, McCluskey, Salberg, Szwak, Thomson Nay: None Abstain: Scott

2. Site visit – WebEx

Ms. Murray stated a closed session WebEx site visit with Madison officials will occur on Saturday, September 30. Meeting information will follow.

3. Applicant Final Presentations and Deliberations

Ms. Murray stated that the final presentation and deliberations will occur in closed session at another hybrid meeting in the Knox Room on Thursday, October 12 starting at 6 PM.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Saturday, September 30, 2023 at 8:30 AM for the closed session WebEx site visit for the 2023 application.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Suzanne McCluskey, seconded by Everton Scott, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara J. Murray