

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND  
PRESERVATION PLAN  
MORRIS COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**

30 Schuyler Place  
November 2, 2022

Morristown  
New Jersey

Meeting Held Via WebEx

Chairman Rattner called the Public Hearing on the Draft Comprehensive Farmland Plan Element of the Morris County Master Plan to order at 6:30 p.m.

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETING LAW**

Chairman Rattner stated that the Secretary of the Board provided public notice of this meeting in a legal notice in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

**STATEMENT REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETING LAW**

Ms. Ercan read the Virtual Meeting Statement.

**FLAG SALUTE**

Chairman Rattner invited members and the public to join in for the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

**ROLL CALL**

Those present were:

Steve Rattner, Chairman	Virginia Michelin, Assistant Director, Planning and Preservation
Stephen Shaw, Commissioner	Anthony Soriano, Supervising Planner
Isobel Olcott, Vice Chair	Greg Perry, Supervising Planner
Everton Scott	Katherine Coyle, Director, Agricultural Development Board
Nita Galate	Staci L. Santucci, Esq., County Counsel
Mohamed Seyam, Alt. 2	Elena Gable, Heyer & Gruel Associates
Chris Vitz, County Engineer	Alyssa Ercan, Recording Secretary
Joe Barilla, Director, Planning and Preservation	

Chairman Rattner stated that the last Morris County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Element was adopted in 2008. In accordance with the requirements of the State Agricultural Development Board (SADC), the County has developed a new Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan to address current conditions, issues and targets for continued farmland preservation and agricultural activity in Morris County. Mr. Rattner turned the meeting over to Ms. Katherine Coyle.

Ms. Coyle explained that the County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) has administered the Morris County Preservation Program since its inception in 1983 and that since then, 142 farms totaling over 8,200 acres have been preserved. Ms. Coyle noted that funding for the program comes from the Morris County Preservation Trust and the SADC and that preservation efforts are guided by the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. She reported that the CADB adopted a new Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan with help from the staff of the Office of Planning and Preservation and consultant Elena Gable from Heyer & Gruel Associates. Ms. Coyle turned the meeting over to Ms. Gable.

Ms. Gable gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining the contents of the new Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan (Plan), addressing the County's agricultural land base, agricultural industry, land use, the farmland preservation program, agricultural economic development, natural resource conservation, agricultural industry sustainability, retention, and promotion. Ms. Gable stated that the Plan was prepared based on SADC criteria and is a requirement for participation in the County Planning Incentive Grant program for farmland preservation. She noted that this program requires the update of the Farmland Preservation Plan every 10 years. Ms. Gable provided various statistics from the Plan, stating that there are over 30,000 acres of farmland in Morris County. She stated that Washington Township has about 10,800 acres, followed by Chester Township with about 3,200 acres. She reported that the southern portion of Morris County contains over 60,000 acres of prime farmland soil. She reported that there were 430 farms in 1987, 383 farms in 1997, and 418 farms in 2017. She provided further statistics regarding the type and value of agricultural products sold, and described the preservation goals of the Plan, information on agricultural economic development and retention of the agricultural industry. Mr. Rattner thanked Ms. Gable for her presentation.

Mr. Rattner then opened the public comment portion of the meeting, and explained that after the public hearing, the Board will review all comments received, along with any submitted online, via email or regular mail. He turned the meeting over to Ms. Michelin to facilitate the public comment portion of the meeting.

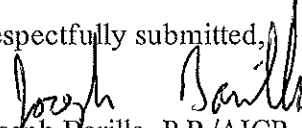
There were two members of the public present but neither chose to make a statement.

Commissioner Shaw asked about procedures following the public hearing and Mr. Soriano explained that, barring any amendments to the Plan based on review of comments, there would be a vote on adoption of the Plan at the regular Planning Board meeting on December 8, 2022. He reported that after adoption, copies of the Plan will be sent out to every Morris County municipality, the SADC, the Morris County Board of County Commissioners, and members of the Planning Board.

While waiting for comments from the public, Commissioner Shaw shared updates concerning the Morris County capital and operating budget, the use of federal funding, the retirement of County Administrator John Bonanni, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Historic Preservation Program, new early voting procedures, the Morris County small business grant program, the merger of park police with the sheriff's department, and the completion of repairs to Columbia Turnpike. Mr. Barilla noted that February will be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morris County Farmland Preservation Program and that the Office of Planning and Preservation will create a Story Map to showcase the program.

Ms. Santucci asked how a member of the public could obtain a copy of the meeting recording and Mr. Barilla explained that submission of a written request would be required.

With no other members of the public present, at 7:30 p.m., Mr. Rattner moved to adjourn the public hearing. The motion was moved by Mr. Vitz and seconded by Mr. Olcott. All approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,  
  
Joseph Barilla, P.P./AICP  
Planning Director

*Original was signed and is on file at the office of the Morris County Planning Board.*