

**WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING – ZOOM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2021 AT 7:00 PM**

The Whitemarsh Township Open Space Committee Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 28, 2021 at 7:00 PM. The meeting was held virtually, via Zoom, due to COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joan Biddle, Steve Kaufman, Chris Lane, James Mahoney, Hugh Moulton, Ed Shinn

BOS LIAISON PRESENT:

Laura Boyle Nester

TWP. STAFF PRESENT:

Tom Blomstrom (*P&R*), Mike Lannutti (*P&R – Minutes*)

ALSO PRESENT:

Bob Dambman (Public), Linda Doll (Public), Richard Eden (Public), Pat Gross (Public), Steve Malloy (Public), Gary Seitz (Public), Pam (Public)

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. The Whitemarsh Township Open Space Committee Meeting was called to order on Wednesday, April 28th, 2021, at 7:05pm, by Steve Kaufman.

2. APPROVAL OF THE WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27th, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

- a. Hugh Moulton made a motion to approve the minutes, Chris Lane seconded. The January 27, 2021 minutes were approved, unanimously.

3. UPDATED 2021 OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE CONTACT LIST

- a. Welcome James Mahoney
 - i. Steve Kaufman welcomed James (Jim) Mahoney as a member of the Open Space Committee. Jim shared a general overview of his personal & professional background with the committee, including his experience as an accountant.
- b. Chris Lane asked Laura Boyle Nester if there were any candidates currently being considered for the remaining vacant position on the Open Space Committee. Laura shared that she was not aware of any new applicants at this time. She noted that Ed Shinn had mentioned an individual that he knew who might be interested, and asked him for any update on that recommendation. Ed Shinn introduced Steve Malloy, a neighbor of his that has expressed interest in becoming a member of the Open Space Committee.
 - i. Steve Malloy introduced himself to the Open Space Committee and gave a brief overview of his personal & professional background, including his experience in construction & development.

4. REPORT ON MIQUON AREA PRESERVATION SOCIETY (MAPS) – Steve Kaufman

- a. Chris Lane recommended that the Committee move the *Report on Miquon Area Preservation Society (MAPS) – Steve Kaufman* topic, to the top of the evening's agenda. Chris noted that he was aware of several members of the public in attendance that were concerned about this specific agenda item and he wanted the Committee to be respectful of their time.

- b. Steve Kaufman gave an introduction to the agenda item, beginning with an apology that he specifically directed towards the neighboring landowners, the Open Space Committee and the Township. Steve apologized for failing to communicate in a recent letter to the landowners MAPS' intention to transfer its restrictive covenant to Natural Lands and to ask Whitemarsh Township to provide matching funds to cover the costs. His apology to all involved parties came without qualifications.
 - i. Following his apology, Steve Kaufman briefly shared his opinion on some of the concerns raised by the effected neighboring landowners. He then went on to share a story of MAPS' history, including the organization's origination.
 - ii. At the conclusion of his statements, Steve Kaufman recused himself from the remainder of the discussion and temporarily turned the meeting over to the Open Space Committee Vice-Chair, Chris Lane.
- c. Chris Lane shared that the Open Space Committee received correspondence from several of the property owners in the referenced area. He noted that these correspondences would be attached to the meeting's minutes and be of public record.
- d. In order to give this business further consideration, Chris Lane made a motion to form a Manor Road Sub-Committee that will meet with the neighboring property owners, explore what options might be available, and carefully consider all possibilities for moving forward. The sub-committee would then report their findings back to the Open Space Committee during the July meeting. Hugh Moulton seconded the motion and the Manor Road Sub-Committee, consisting of Ed Shinn & Chris Lane, was approved, unanimously.
- e. An attending member of the public, Linda Doll, requested that the Open Space Committee share some background on the MAPS topic, for those who were not already familiar. Linda also had follow-up questions regarding easements and the ownership of easements, which Chris Lane, Ed Shinn, & Hugh Moulton all cooperatively addressed in response. Following Linda Doll's inquiries, Chris Lane opened the floor for additional public comment.
 - i. One of the neighboring property owners, Gary Seitz, addressed the committee. Gary introduced himself to the committee and shared his history with his property. He voiced that he was happy to hear the direction the committee is headed with the MAPS topic. Gary stressed that he, nor any of the other neighbors in the area, have ever considered further development of their land, specifically noting how much they all enjoy the natural woodland area. He also stated that Steve's apology was helpful.
 - 1. Gary was one of the property owners that had previously corresponded with the committee about this agenda item, and those correspondences will be attached to the meeting's minutes.
 - ii. A second neighboring property owner, Richard Eden, introduced himself and addressed the committee. Richard shared Gary Seitz's sentiment regarding the topic.

5. OPEN SPACE FUND (OSF) REPORT

- a. Chris Lane mentioned that he identified an approximately \$23,000.00 discrepancy in the Open Space Fund Report, which he notified Tom Blomstrom of prior to the meeting. Tom Blomstrom noted that the discrepancy was the result of a faulty equation in the reporting system, which has since been rectified. The amended Open Space Fund Report is included in the meeting agenda packet, as submitted.
- b. Steve Kaufman brought up the topic of the Township's borrowing capacity and the committee's desire to understand the Township's specific borrowing limits, in case a valuable parcel of land were to become available for purchase. Steve requested that Tom Blomstrom ask the Director of Finance, Kevin Barron, to contact him to discuss this inquiry. Tom Blomstrom noted that he would ask Kevin to reach out to Steve, directly.

- c. Jim Mahoney brought up some concerns he had with the Open Space Fund Report. Specifically, Jim had questions regarding how certain figures were calculated, noting that they seemed low. Hugh Moulton echoed Jim's concerns. While the committee noted that the timing of the report relative to tax deadlines was most likely a factor in the identified figures, Jim expressed that he still had concerns regarding the Township's EIT collection. He requested that Tom Blomstrom ask Kevin Barron to contact him to discuss his concerns. Tom Blomstrom noted that he would speak with Kevin regarding his request.
- d. Ed Shinn proposed the idea of forming a Finance Sub-Committee. Chris Lane made a motion to form a Pro Tem Finance Sub-Committee that will coordinate with the Township's Finance Department to address the committee's concerns. Ed Shinn seconded the motion and the Pro Tem Finance Sub-Committee, consisting of Steve Kaufman & Jim Mahoney, was approved, unanimously.

6. HIGHLANDS MANSION UPDATE – Hugh Moulton

- a. Hugh Moulton gave an update on the ongoing Highlands Mansion transaction. Hugh stated that the process was progressing well until the Department of General Service requested that the property be subdivided between the 29+ acres to be preserved with Open Space funds and the envelope surrounding the historic buildings. He further explained that the Township does not need the subdivision but only a legal description to exempt the 29+ acres from a reversionary interest that the state will impose on the envelope. Hugh noted that it would be surveyed again by the same surveyor. He mentioned that, although this development has delayed the process, the state is aware that the transaction must be executed by December 31st, 2021.
- b. Hugh Moulton also mentioned that the Highlands Mansion received grant-funding from the state to repair the roof of one of the structures on the property. He noted that they are hoping to expedite the completion of this work.

7. OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE – SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Notice to Real Estate Advisors and Landowners– Update
 - i. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Wissahickon Trails – Chris Lane
 - 1. Chris Lane shared that Wissahickon Trails approved the language of the most recent draft of the MOU, which is included in the meeting agenda packet, as submitted. The committee will now submit the draft MOU, with some minor typographical edits as discussed, to the Township Manager and Township Solicitor for review, before formally presenting the proposal to the Board of Supervisors for approval.
 - 2. Ed Shinn added that the Wissahickon Trails Sub-Committee, which currently consists of Chris Lane, Joan Biddle & Ed Shinn, strongly believes that the sub-committee seats should be rotational, so that the committee's interactions are broadened, and relationships strengthened.
 - 3. Chris Lane moved that the Open Space Committee approve the "*Proposed Notice to Realtors and Landowners*" proposal, the recommended "*Notice to Real Estate Advisors and Property Owners*", and the "*Summary of Whitemarsh Township Land Preservation Criteria*" draft documents. Ed Shinn seconded the motion and the motion was approved, unanimously. It was noted that these documents will go to the Board of Supervisors with the MOU, once that has been reviewed and approved by the Township Manager and Township Solicitor.
 - 4. Chris Lane moved that the Open Space Committee take the draft Memo of Understanding, make the few minor edits recommended, add a signature line for the Township Manager, and forward it to Tom Blomstrom, the Township Manager & the Township Solicitor, for their review. Hugh Moulton seconded the motion and the motion was approved, unanimously.

8. STANDARDS FOR APPLICANTS FOR OPEN SPACE FUNDING – ACT 153 MAINTENANCE – Chris Lane

- a. Chris Lane reintroduced the idea of creating standards for applicants looking to request Open Space Funding, as the Whitemarsh Foundation had done at a recent meeting. Chris Lane and Steve Kaufman drafted the Standard for Applicants for Open Space Funding document, which is included in the meeting agenda packet, as submitted. The Open Space Committee members reviewed the document and had discussions on various edits & updates to be made, including changing the name from "standards" to "guidelines".
- b. Chris Lane made a motion for the Open Space Committee to make the edits suggested by Hugh Moulton and Ed Shinn and approve the updated draft to be submitted to the Township Manager and ultimately, the Board of Supervisors, for their review & approval. Ed Shinn seconded the motion and the motion, with the suggested edits, was approved, unanimously.
- c. The Stormwater Retention Basins (Conservation Easements-Maintenance) – Hugh Moulton
 - i. Hugh Moulton inquired about the Township’s process for policing, inspecting, and maintaining the stormwater retention basins throughout the Township.
 - ii. Tom Blomstrom noted that, as part of the Township’s Land Development Process, property owners sign an agreement that permits the Township to enter, inspect, and enforce policies related to retention basins. Tom stated that he would forward the information that he received from the Township Engineer on this topic, to the committee members.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- a. A member of the community, Bob Dambman, was present for the meeting and provided comments. Bob noted that he saw the minutes from the previous Open Space Meeting regarding possible trail connections in and around the Angus Tract and The Hill at Whitemarsh. He wanted to share that there are existing easements from the Whitemarsh Elementary School, connecting to the Angus Tract parcel that was purchased with DCNR funding. Bob hoped to raise awareness of these possible linkages to keep them in mind for the future.
- b. A member of the community, Linda Doll, was present for the meeting and provided comments. Linda suggested that the Township share specific annual estimates for property maintenance with the public for any purchases made using the Open Space Funds.

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. Chris Lane noted that he has agreed to be the Open Space Committee representative to the Spring Mill Area Study Steering Committee.
- b. Steve Kaufman noted that he is the Open Space Committee liaison for the Zoning Committee and that the group recently had an initial meeting

11. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- a. Joan Biddle made a motion to adjourn, Ed Shinn seconded. The meeting was adjourned unanimously at 9:15pm.