



OPEN SESSION: Tuesday, February 28th, 2023 – 10:00 am
County Administration Building – 4 Moore Road – CMCH, NJ

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am.

Roll Call: Joan Berkey
Cindy Chemerys
Peter Lomax
David Craig
Leslie Gimeno

Others: Barbara Ernst
Scott Mullen

Open Public Meetings Act: Mr. Lomax read the Open Public Meetings Act Notice

Flag Salute: Mr. Lomax led the flag salute.

Nomination of Officers: Mr. Lomax said that he was rearranging the agenda to bring the Nomination of Officers to the beginning of the meeting. Ms. Gimeno made a motion to return the same slate of officers to the Board for 2023. Namely, Mr. Lomax as Chairperson and Mr. Craig as Vice-Chairperson. Ms. Berkey seconded the motion. All members in favor with the exception of Mr. Lomax who abstained on the portion of the motion nominating him as Chair, and Mr. Craig who abstained on the portion of the motion nominating him as Vice-Chair. Ms. Gimeno commented that she had spoken with Commissioner Morey prior to the meeting and that he asked her to express his appreciation to all board members and to thank Mr. Lomax and Mr. Craig for their leadership. Mr. Lomax and Mr. Craig thanked the Board members for the opportunity to continue to serve.

Minutes from January 24th: Mr. Lomax had several corrections to the minutes, which were noted by Ms. Gimeno. Mr. Craig made a motion to accept the minutes, as corrected. Ms. Berkey seconded the motion. All in favor of adoption of the corrected minutes.

Chairman's Report: Mr. Lomax indicated that he would forego a report.

Director's Report: Mrs. Ernst indicated that she would forego a report.

Correspondence: There was no correspondence.

Financial Statement: Mr. Mullen provided an overview of the Financial Statement. Board members discussed the fund balance (report from Treasurer's Office dated 1/1/23). The total amount of unencumbered funds is approximately \$16m, with the requests for funds in pending applications being \$10m. Board members recognized that these funds are shared by both the Open Spaces and Farmland Preservation Programs. Mr. Mullen said that there are currently 2 active farmland preservation applications, but neither had yet reached the appraisal phase, so there are currently no dollar amounts listed on the financial report for these projects. He indicated that in both cases, cost share with the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) was being sought. Mr. Lomax asked Mrs. Ernst if there is a target allocation that should be kept available in support of the Farmland Preservation Program. Mrs. Ernst said that presently the fund is intaking \$1.5m/quarter and that should be sufficient without carrying a specific reserve. She said that at one time, the County bonded for \$10m in order to complete multiple acquisition projects concurrently, but that most of the key farms in the County have already been preserved. She anticipates future farmland applications to be for smaller specialty/boutique farms which would be less expensive than the development easement acquisitions of the past. She also noted that Right to Farm issues were taking up an increasing amount of CADB and staff time.

LA 23-01: Block 52, Lot 40 & Block 54, Lot 18 – Dennis Township: Mr. Lomax indicated that at the January 24th Board meeting, the Board found the application to be incomplete. Having received the necessary materials from the applicant, the Board could now proceed with discussing the acquisitions.

Mr. Lomax said that ordinarily, the land owner would be present before the Board to give an overview of the properties, but in this case the property owners live out of state and since the properties are actively listed for sale, the Planning Department initiated contact directly with the real estate agent. He described the parcels as being across Route 47 from one another in close proximity to the Eldorado motel, which was recently purchased by the County. Ms. Gimeno provided an overview of the partnership with the Township and the use of Municipal Redevelopment Initiative funds to purchase the Eldorado, a highly visible and blighted site. She said that per the agreement with the Township, there is a committee of 3 Township and 3 County representatives (including herself) that will make a recommendation on what to do with the site after the existing structure has been removed. She said that options discussed to date have ranged from vacant public land (for habitat/preservation purposes) to resale for private use (likely residential development).

Mr. Lomax said that with land acquisition applications where the lands are environmentally sensitive, the Open Spaces Board generally considers the land to be preserved by all intents and purposes due to development restrictions imposed by environmental regulations. While there appear to be environmentally sensitive features on these lots (i.e. stream corridor containing Atlantic White Cedar), the lot on the south side of Route 47 has acreage of developable land, but that the only access to the parcel would be via an easement from the Eldorado property. He suggested that based on a GIS review of the property and the surrounding area, the property is a candidate for acquisition by our Program in that it has value as habitat, cultural significance (stand of Atlantic White Cedar), headwaters of stream corridor leading to public land extending to the Delaware Bay, and potential for development of new trails. Other key factors include eliminating the potential for development of the site, acreage of adjacent public land, and the relatively low cost of acquisition. Mr. Lomax said that deliberation on the matter would take place in closed session.

LA 23-02 – Block 567, Lot 28 – Upper Township: Mr. Lomax indicated that the Township of Upper is in favor of the acquisition of this property which is owned by Mr. Vanderslice, and is located adjacent to a Township park at the entrance of Osprey Point development. Mr. Lomax said that there is a structure on the land that may have historic value and that this is a concern for a number of reasons. Ms. Berkey said that she is familiar with the house and it was built in the early 1800's, but that it is currently boarded up. Conversation turned to the future use of the property, with the Township's intentions being unclear to the Board. Ms. Gimeno suggested that a site visit be arranged and that a representative from the Township be asked to attend to answer questions related to the historic structure, future plans for the land as public property, and expectations of the residents of Osprey Point as it appears to Board members that the existing park functions more like a gateway to the development rather than being a true public park.

Resolution 1-2023: Extending Various Shared Services Agreements with Expiring Term Limits: The Board had discussion regarding the need to encourage the timely completion of projects and the current status of the projects where applicants have requested extensions. Mr. Mullen said that extensions allow applicants time for completion of projects, as well as for the applicant to submit the required close-out documents to the Planning Department for payment.

There was discussion related to the ability of applicants to have multiple applications open at any given time. Ms. Gimeno said that there is nothing in the Program guidelines that preclude that from happening, but that the Board has the ability to consider successful implementation of past projects when determining a course of action on pending applications. Mr. Lomax said that some flexibility in project timing is needed because the Open Spaces Board encourages applicants to pursue multiple funding sources which have different funding cycles that may not coincide with the Open Spaces Program funding rounds.

Creative Placemaking Update: Mr. Mullen briefed the Board on the update of the Creative Placemaking Plan indicating that issues previously discussed: alternative railings have been identified; original light pole vendor will continue to manufacture similar product; moveable patio furniture colors have been identified; and fencing system colors of green and black have been selected. Ms. Gimeno indicated that she was doing a presentation to the Commissioners later in the day to provide specifics on the recommendations to changes in the Policy Guide, as well as a general overview of Creative Placemaking Plan updates. She said that the documents would be circulated to the Commissioners for comments in advance of resolutions being offered for their consideration on March 14th or March 28th. Mr. Craig asked if the County would be using the Plan when making improvements to County facilities. Ms. Gimeno said that she believed so, and provided the specific example of the Park System Master Plan project which is underway. Mr. Lomax noted that there had been several questions by municipalities related to the Plan recommending specific vendors, and that the issue had been vetted and cleared by Administration due to the vendors in the Plan being part of a state or nationally recognized purchasing cooperative. Ms. Gimeno said that another question from municipalities related to lead time for obtaining specified products and that alternative products (with same functions as original products) had been added to the plan to help mitigate this issue.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Closed Session: The Board went into Closed Session at 11:19 upon a motion by Ms. Chemerys, seconded by Mr. Craig. All in favor.

Open Session: The Board returned to Open Session at 11:53 upon a motion by Ms. Berkey, seconded by Mr. Craig. All in favor.

LA 23-01: Block 52, Lot 40 & Block 54, Lot 18 – Dennis Township: Mr. Lomax indicated that the sellers agreed to accept the tax assessed value of the properties as the sales price. Mrs. Ernst said that since that is the case, no appraisals are needed and the County can proceed directly to ordering a Phase 1 environmental report and title search. Ms. Berkey made a motion that subject to title search and phase 1 due diligence, the Board recommend acquisition of the properties to the Board of County Commissioners in the amount of \$61,800. Ms. Chemerys seconded the motion. A roll call vote found all members to be in favor.

LA 23-02: Block 567, Lot 28 – Upper Township: The Board reached consensus that a site visit to gather more information is warranted. Mr. Lomax suggested a small subgroup of the Board meet at the property and that a representative of the Township be asked to attend. The purpose of the meeting is to gain a better understanding of the nature of the historic structure, the Township's vision for recreation space available to the public, how the space relates to the existing Township property across the street, and what the expectations of the Osprey Point community may be.

Resolution 1-2023: Ms. Gimeno made a motion to approve no cost time extensions for 4 projects, with the Franklin Street School being given a 1 year extension and the other 3 projects (NASW, MAC, Allen AME Church) being given extensions of less than a 1 year depending on project status to be determined by Mr. Mullen. Ms. Berkey seconded the motion; a Roll Call vote found all members to be in favor, with the exception of Mr. Craig who abstained.

22-04: Diamond Beach Park – Lower Township: The Board confirmed its consensus reached in Closed Session to invite the Township to submit a Full Application with a number of conditions that will be outlined and provided to the Township. Although the dollar amount of participation to be recommended has not yet been determined, it will generally be in the range of 90% of capital costs for project elements related to amenities in support of the regional trail network and 75% of the capital costs for the other Park & Recreation eligible amenities.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned at 11:59 upon a motion by Mr. Craig, seconded by Ms. Berkey.