

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING
MINUTES
APRIL 10, 2024

151

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Moyer called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

In attendance at the meeting were: Reed Moyer; Chair, Jim Smith, Christine Bracken-Piper, Patti Hartle, Joann Fisher, George Stine, Amy Smith, and Meagan Beck.

Citizens in attendance were Cady Barkac and Justin Segal; Centre Documenters.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in Attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fisher stated that she would like to amend the minutes noting that she was quoted making a statement that she does not recall making. Mr. Moyer requested that line of the minutes be redacted.

- *Ms. Bracken-Piper made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 13, 2024 meeting, with the requested correction. Mr. Hoover seconded the motion. All are in favor; motion carried.*

5. PERMANENT EASEMENT INTEREST MATRIX

Ms. Smith showed the board the matrix document she made. She explained that it lists the properties and owner's that are interested in Permanent Easement. Elizabeth Pironne-Brusse, Centre County Ag Preservation Coordinator, gave these properties an unofficial score to see whether they would qualify for the county's program. Ms. Smith stated that a property needs to score at least a 70 to qualify for the program. She also stated that she gave the properties an unofficial score for the township.

Mr. Hoover noted that there is a long list of people interested for county preservation.

Ms. Hartle stated that it might be worth it to apply even if their unofficial score was close to 70, because the property won't be officially scored until after they apply.

Mr. Reed asked if all the properties on the county preservation list scored over 70.

Mr. Hoover said he can't recall for sure, but he thinks there might be several properties that have been on the list for a long time that are below 70.

Ms. Fisher stated that when she applied for county preservation her property needed to score over 70.

Mr. Moyer, then recalled that Ms. Smith had asked if the board wanted Ms. Pirrone-Brusse to attend the next OSPB meeting. He wondered if the board wanted to continue with that plan.

Ms. Hartle asked if there were enough questions that needed answer to make the visit 152 worthwhile. She commented that Mr. Hoover gave a thorough presentation about the county program at a past meeting.

Mr. Moyer stated that they needed to figure out how to cooperate and work with the county preservation program.

Ms. Hartle noted that the county approached the township about the Thompson property, and the township approached the county about Ms. Fisher's property.

Mr. Moyer suggested that the board decide which properties would be the best fit for the county program, then reach out to those land owners and have them apply.

Ms. Hartle suggested that the board pick their top priority for the county program, have them apply, and then once they're on the list, the board can approach the county and ask them to partner to preserve that property.

Ms. Smith noted that the BOS will then write a commitment letter to the county.

Mr. Moyer asked Ms. Fisher if it is hard to apply to the county preservation program.

Ms. Fisher responded that it is not hard, but there are requirements that need to be completed before the county will look at your application.

Mr. Moyer asked if the board should let the property owners know that they are available for assistance with this process.

Mr. Moyer said that the board should let the owners know they can ask for help, but doesn't want it to be a necessity for the board to help.

Mr. Smith stated that the county office will help land owners with any questions they have. He also suggested that the board let land owners know where to go for assistance.

Mr. Moyer stated that he was getting the impression that the board does not need Ms. Pironne-Brusse to attend the next meeting.

Ms. Hartle said the board needed to go down the list of properties and prioritize them.

Ms. Bracken-Piper noted that the board needs to address with the land owners that the county isn't interested in properties that are heavily wooded.

Ms. Fisher stated that she ended up donating her wooded portion of land after Clearwater Conservancy did not have the funding for the survey and she wanted to keep the process moving. She also noted that there is other landowners that donated the wooded portions of their land.

Mr. Moyer asked if the township can be more efficient than Clearwater.

Ms. Fisher stated that they would just need to keep pace with the county.

Ms. Hartle suggested to move more heavily wooded properties down the prioritization list. She also suggested that Clearwater might be interested in the Burke property.

Mr. Hoover asked if a property owner would have to subdivide their property to remove the woodland and be accepted into the county program. He noted that around the state there are often properties much smaller than 50 acres being preserved. He asked if those property owners are creating two deeds to remove the woodland.

Mr. Moyer thought that perhaps they will preserve the Ag land and donate the wooded land.

Ms. Bracken-Piper had a concern that stipulations will cause the land to not be preserved.

Mr. Moyer asked the board which properties they should prioritize. He noted that Clearwater Conservancy is interested in the Brown, Digman, and Dreibelbis/Spencer properties.

Ms. Smith clarified that the county had incorrect information in their system regarding an easement already being held by Clearwater Conservancy on the Dreibelbis/Spencer property, and it has been corrected. She said that property is currently in a lease agreement only.

Mr. Moyer stated that Clearwater Conservancy will be at the next OSPB meeting and that they would like to be introduced to the Browns and the Digman's.

Ms. Hartle asked why Clearwater is interested in the Digman property.

Mr. Moyer explained that Clearwater is interested because of the property being on Halfmoon Creek. He also stated that they have their own separate scoring system.

Ms. Hartle asked if Clearwater has looked into the Burke property because it has a much longer stretch of stream.

Mr. Moyer said that they should have, but he will check into it.

Mr. Smith stated that the Digman property has an intermittent stream that comes down from the ridge and that might be why Clearwater is interested.

Mr. Moyer asked the board what properties are left for county preservation.

Ms. Hartle said that the Gray property would be a good fit for the county. She noted that since the Podgurski property isn't in Ag Security it would not qualify for the county program. She wasn't sure what it would take to get that property in Ag Security.

In response to comments and questions regarding the Ag Security Area (ASA), Ms. Smith explained that the process would have to be started over again to add properties to the ASA. Ms. Smith added that it takes about six months to complete and is done every seven years unless there is a request for an amendment.

Ms. Hartle said the board would have to see how interested Ms. Podgurski is and questioned whether the advanced payment would need to be paid back.

Ms. Smith wasn't completely sure. She said normally that can be negotiated, but isn't sure how it would work in a partnership.

Mr. Smith stated that he thinks the property owner would have to pay it back because the money belongs to the township.

Ms. Hartle asked Mr. Moyer if he would ask Clearwater about their interest in the Burke property.

Mr. Moyer said he will check with Clearwater to make sure they have the full picture of all the properties. He stated that the board needs to check with Podgurski's to gauge their interest and noted that the properties the board is encouraging to apply with the county are the Stine's and Gray's.

Ms. Hartle stated that an exception might be the Digman property depending on how interested Clearwater is in that property, because their county score is high. She suggests they apply with the county if Clearwater isn't going to move forward with them.

Mr. Moyer asked if anyone disagreed with those decisions.

Mr. Smith asked if it raises the score to be next to another preserved property.

Mr. Hoover agreed that if the properties are contiguous that it will raise their score.

Mr. Smith noted that if the Digman's preserve with the county, then the Gray property is right next to theirs and it might boost their score.

Ms. Smith clarified that the Digman, Stine, and Gray properties are going to be prioritized for the county program.

Mr. Moyer added that Ms. Smith will talk to Ms. Podgurski as well. He then noted that Ryan Hamilton from Clearwater Conservancy will be at the next OSPB meeting. He wondered whether there are any properties the board would like to move forward with without a partnership.

Ms. Smith asked if Clearwater was interested in the Rider property.

Mr. Moyer said he will check.

Mr. Hoover asked if we could not have Ms. Pironne-Brusse come to the next meeting because he will be out but would like to talk with her.

Mr. Moyer stated that there wasn't immediate interest for her to come to the next meeting, so that should be fine to have her come in the future.

Ms. Fisher stated that the extra time might give Ms. Pironne-Brusse time to gather more information.

6. AUTHORITY, BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Planning Commission- Mr. Stine noted that the Planning commission is still reviewing the zoning and land development ordinances. He said they are hoping to have amendment recommendations for the BOS soon.
- b. Board of Supervisors- Ms. Hartle stated that at the last meeting the BOS approved the request from the OSPB to send their questions to the solicitor.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

None

8. ADJOURNMENT

- *Mr. Smith moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:53pm. Ms. Bracken-Piper seconded the motion.*

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meagan Beck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meagan Beck

This page was
intentionally
left blank