

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY OPEN SPACE BOARD**

**February 23, 2022**

**4:00 P.M.**

**Montgomery County Planning Commission**

**Norristown, PA**

**Hybrid Meeting (both Virtual & In-House Attendees) via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

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**Board Members Present**

Bruce D. Reed, Chair

Gail Farmer

Mark Vasoli

Michael Stokes

**Staff Present**

Scott France, Executive Director, MCPC

Bill Hartman, Trails & Open Space Planning  
Manager, MCPC

Brian Olszak, Senior Trails & Open Space Planner,  
MCPC

Ellen Miramontes, Senior Trails & Open Space  
Planner, MCPC

Yvonne Montgomery, Solicitor, MCPC

Barry Jeffries, Senior Planner, MCPC

Ann Marie Meehan, Exec. Admin., MCPC

Samantha Zrillo, Intern, OS&T, MCPC

**Board Members Absent**

Kim Sheppard, Vice Chair

**Other Attendees**

John Ferro, Conservation Director, Wissahickon Trails

Lou Savastani

Scott Berman

**A. Call to Order, Chair Recognition & Meeting Protocol**

Bruce D. Reed, Chair, who was virtually present at the meeting, called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Yvonne Montgomery of the County Solicitor's Office provided guidance for holding public meetings in Montgomery County. Public meetings are being held as "hybrid" meetings— with both physically present and virtually present attendees. In addition, at least one Board member must be present in person. Michael (Mike) Stokes attended the meeting in person, therefore satisfying the County's current public meeting requirements. Prior to the meeting, the agenda was published on the county website and included a phone number and meeting access code, along with instructions to allow the public to participate via phone or Zoom.

Bruce called the roll; four of the five board members were in attendance. It was determined that a quorum was satisfied. As Chair and virtual attendee, Bruce designated Mike Stokes to chair the meeting, as he was physically present.

Bill Hartman called the roll for staff.

Mike asked that the members of the public present identify themselves for the record. The names of members of the public who attended are noted above.

**B. Approval of the January 26, 2022 Minutes (Action)**

Mike called for a motion to approve the Open Space Board’s January 26, 2022 minutes.

***Motion:** Gail Farmer moved to approve the minutes; Mr. Mark Vasoli seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0.*

**C. Request for Montgomery County Open Space Funds (Action)**

Yvonne Montgomery of the Montgomery County’s Solicitor’s Office concurred with Bruce that Gail Farmer could remain in the meeting but should not take part in the discussion regarding Wissahickon Trail’s request for county open space funds as she is the Executive Director of the organization.

Bill introduced John Ferro, Conservation Director of Wissahickon Trails, who made the presentation on his organization’s behalf. John described the 2 parcel, 12.1 acre property at 485 Lewis Lane in Whitpain Township. The property, currently owned by Francis J. Carey III, has an appraised value of \$ 2,725,000 and is an important conservation parcel in the midst of existing preserved open space and trail networks. Formerly the site of a 3-hole golf course, the property includes a house, pool and garage and is adjacent to the historic Camp Woods preserve, a revolutionary war encampment near the Prophecy Watershed. The parcels possesses a variety of habitat types and will provide public access to an extensive trail network within and connected to the property. John indicated his organization believes that this land fits the county’s criteria for open space. To date, Wissahickon Trails has raised in excess of \$1.2 million in private pledges towards the purchase and intends to raise \$1.0 million from public sources, including PA DCNR, Whitpain Township and Montgomery County. To that end, Wissahickon Trails is asking the county for \$333,000 in open space funding. The draft resolution before the Board is to recommend the county commissioner’s award an open space grant in the amount of \$333,000 to Wissahickon Trails to assist with the acquisition of the two parcels.

***Motion:** Mark Vasoli moved to approve the resolution; Bruce D. Reed seconded the motion. Gail Farmer abstained from voting. The motion carried 3-0.*

**D. Submission of Grant Application to DCNR C2P2 Program (Action)**

Bill explained that the second resolution before the Board is to recommend the submission of an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) for the potential county acquisition of up to three properties located on Rahns Road in Perkiomen Township that suffered flood damage from Hurricane Ida in 2021. Open Space staff have been in contact with the landowners regarding the possibility of selling their properties to the county. The properties are adjacent to open land owned by the county, the Rahns Road trailhead and the Perkiomen Trail, and staff has determined that these properties would provide the opportunity to expand the capacity of the Rahns Road trailhead, upgrade it to meet ADA-accessibility standards and enhance the Perkiomen Trail user experience by reducing development along the trail. If acquired, the structures would be demolished and the parcels would be returned to a semi-natural state. Appraisals for purposes of the C2P2 application are underway. Given the nature of the circumstances, staff has engaged the services of a right-of-way professional to negotiate the acquisitions on behalf of the county.

Bill said the 2022 DCNR C2P2 grant round closes on April 4, 2022. The intent is to use open space funds as the required 1:1 grant match. The amount of the grant request has yet to be determined. The draft resolution before the Board is to recommend the county commissioner's approve the submission of the PA DCNR C2P2 application.

**Motion:** *Mark Vasoli moved to approve the resolution; Gail Farmer seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0.*

**E. Public Comment**

*There was no public comment.*

**F. Adjourn**

*Mike Stokes adjourned the meeting.*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

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**Next Open Space Board Meeting: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 4 p.m.**