

MONTGOMERY COUNTY OPEN SPACE BOARD

March 31, 2022

12:00 P.M.

Montgomery County Planning Commission

Norristown, PA

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

MINUTES

Board Members Present

Bruce D. Reed, Chair
Kim Sheppard, Vice Chair
Gail Farmer
Michael Stokes
Mark Vasoli

Staff Present

Bill Hartman, Trails & Open Space Planning
Manager, MCPC
Brian Olzsak, Senior Trails & Open Space Planner,
MCPC
Ellen Miramontes, Senior Trails & Open Space
Planner, MCPC

Board Members Absent

None

Other Attendees

Kate Raman, Conservation Project Manager, Natural Lands Trust
Jacob Kratz, Natural Lands Trust
Barbara McMonagle, Salford Township
Dulcie Flaharty, Green Lane Borough
Scott Berman, Whitemarsh Township

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 12:02 p.m.

Bill Hartman said that this public meeting is being held as a “hybrid” meeting— with both physically present and virtually present attendees. In addition, at least one Board member must be present. 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, meeting access code and password, along with instructions to allow the public to participate via phone or Zoom.

Bruce called the roll; three of the five board members were in attendance. It was determined that a quorum was satisfied. The two additional board members joined after the roll was called. 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 February 23, 2022 Minutes (Action)

Mike called for a motion to approve the Open Space Board’s February 23, 2022 minutes.

***Motion:** Bruce D. Reed moved to approve the minutes; Kim Sheppard seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0.*

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

Bill introduced Kate Raman, Conservation Project Manager with Natural Lands, who made the presentation on her organization’s behalf. Kate described the 7.33 acre property in Salford Township that Natural Lands would like to acquire and conserve via fee-simple acquisition. Located in the Unami Valley and adjacent to Natural Lands’ Fulshaw Craeg Preserve, this area is host to a variety of plant species currently being researched and protected on the Fulshaw Craeg Preserve. Kate said her organization is appealing to the county for an open space funding grant of \$52,400 towards the purchase of the 7.33 acre parcel. Salford Township has contributed \$20,000, and a DCNR grant of \$60,000 has been requested.

Barbara McMonagle of the Salford Township Open Space Committee voiced her support of the resolution and added that this is the first time the township was making a financial contribution towards an open space acquisition.

The draft resolution presented to the Board recommended that the county commissioners’ award an open space grant of \$52,400 to Natural Lands to assist with the acquisition of this land.

***Motion:** Bruce D. Reed moved to approve the resolution; Mark Vasoli seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0.*

D. Public Comment

Prior to call for public comments, Bill thanked the Board for attending on short notice and during lunch hours. He also reminded the Board of the provisions of the March 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and indicated the county was exploring the establishment of an open space grant program for 2023 utilizing ARPA funds, if received. He added there are significant outreach efforts underway by the county to spread the word about the ARPA program.

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Ellen Miramontes said that the county website has information on the program, and encouraged interested parties with ideas to submit them to the county. She said the deadline for submissions is April 30, 2022.

Dulcie Flaharty added that if anyone needed assistance getting their submission idea “across the finish line” they could reach out to the county. The county website location for more information and to submit ideas is located at: montcopa.org/4060/Submit-A-Project-or-Idea

Mike called for public comments.

Barbara McMonagle expressed her support for the idea of the county’s open space funding program and thanked the county for supporting today’s resolution.

Dulcie Flaharty said that Natural Lands’ partnerships with municipalities on open space opportunities is very helpful to the county.

E. Adjourn

Mike Stokes adjourned the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:41 p.m.

Next Open Space Board Meeting: Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at 4 p.m.