

WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

April 14th, 2010

Rich Dilks called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 7:35 PM in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act at the Community Center.

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Rich Dilks (Chair)	X	
Bob Bevilacqua (V. Chair)	X	
Scott Barnes (Sec. / Planning Bd. Rep.)	X	
Scott Birkland		X
Dave Kreck	X	
Tommy Lombardo	X	
Chris Newman	X	

BUSINESS

- **Public Comment (Barbara Astorga):** Ms. Astorga, of the Woman's Club, presented the WEC with a \$500 check to assist in the renovation of the Stone Pond area on the Garden Trail.

PUBLIC MEETING ON MAPLE RIDGE PRESERVATION

Guests: Suzanne McCarthy, Board Chair, South Jersey Land & Water Trust
John Flynn, New Jersey Green Acres Program

- **Overview of the Property (Rich Dilks):** A unique place. Not just what's right for us; what's right for future generations. Developer eager to sell. County not willing to create a park, so some other entity must. 25% cost share required.
- **Potential Funding and How It Works (McCarthy):** This is a collaborative venture; need ideas. No immediate state money. County's money is partly Green Acres. Value of property is unknown. Land preservation is always unique to the property. This will be a two-year process at least.

(Flynn): If Wenonah applied for Green Acres, it could get 25% of the value of the land. If Mantua applied, it could get 50% due to its open-space tax. Non-profits and the County are also eligible for 50%.

Solicitations for last November's bond money will occur over the summer, with appropriations in the fall. Exact amounts not known, but have been \$250,000 - \$300,000 in the past.

Strings are attached to Green Acres funding. (Or, why 150 localities in NJ have never applied.) Wenonah would have to encumber all recreation and conservation land. Deptford, Mantua, and the County have already been through this process. Green Acres match money can come from any other non-Garden State Preservation Trust, non-Green Acres money.

Other possibilities: Developer could donate property to County as a tax write-off over

time. Environmental Infrastructure Trust (but might have to rip up cart paths to return land to its natural state). Division of Fish & Wildlife, since there is no state park land in Gloucester County (but management of state lands is already understaffed).

(Public Comment): What else does IBG own? Is it in financial distress? Someone needs to do research. Maybe preserve part of the land and allow commercial development on remainder. **(Flynn)** Green Acres is absolute: no development can occur. However, a private land trust could subdivide the property.

(Public Comment): Need a good negotiator. Who is the single, responsible entity here? **(McCarthy)** This will be discussed in the Next Steps section of the meeting.

(Public Comment): How did Holly Hills (former golf course in Salem County) become state land? **(Flynn)** There is a lot of adjacent state land in that area. Maple Ridge is an isolated parcel.

(Public Comment, Mantua Deputy Mayor): Mantua may try again for a Maple Ridge ballot initiative in 2011. **(McCarthy)** Need a steering committee. The opposition in Mantua was small. **(Flynn)** If an outside municipality like Wenonah owns Maple Ridge, it would have to pay taxes. A non-profit organization would not.

(Public Comment): What can the public do, right now? **(McCarthy)** One possibility is for the WEC to take the lead in setting up a preservation committee. **(Flynn)** Should lobby local elected officials.

(Public Comment): Developer has applied for water and sewer permits in Mantua.

(Public Comment): Need publicity on TV, specifically Gloucester County Cable.

(Public Comment, Deptford councilman): We are open to suggestions. Don't want to see the ground built. There is no open-space tax and none is anticipated.

(Public Comment): There should be a rally with Senator Sweeney and the mayors. **(Flynn)** This is unnecessary. Encourage the townships to apply for funding.

(Rich Dilks): County supposedly will fund 75% of acquisition costs. Can the remaining 25% be matched using municipal Green Acres dollars? **(Flynn)** Unsure of the County's numbers, but probably they are using their 50% Green Acres money.

(Public Comment): Could citizens buy shares of the land? **(McCarthy)** Yes, could use that campaign or others to raise money. There are always closing costs to be paid.

(Public Comment): Need numbers and goals. Who is authorized to negotiate?

(McCarthy) County's valuation of the land is not public information, but the two townships know their "25% amount."

(Public Comment): Need a website to keep public up-to-date. **(Scott Barnes)** WEC will take care of setting this up.

(Public Comment): Could impose tax for limited period of time. That's what Mantua tried, but maybe the voters just didn't understand.

PUBLIC MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:15 PM

BUSINESS MEETING RESUMED AT 9:33 PM

(Chris Newman was not present for this portion of the meeting.)

Minutes of the March 10th meeting were approved. (Motion: Bevilacqua, Second: Barnes, AIF)

- **Chairman's Report:** Spring Hike Route will be the Garden Trail to the Teahouse, possibly including the Monongahela Brook Loop Trail. Meet at South Clinton and East Pine.

Lions Club wants to know July 4th hike route. It will be Hayes Ave. to South West Ave.

Chuck presented an update on the Comey's Lake duckweed situation. To apply the chemical Sonar treatment, Princeton Hydro (the company we used before) wants \$3,450. A different company wants \$3,950. These costs seem very high, particularly given the poor results last time. The borough will acquire a Lake Lowering Permit good from November through March, but it only allows lowering 3-4 feet. Bob suggested doing excavation around the dock area at that time. Chuck said the lake historically was 12 feet at that location, but now it is only 7 feet.

Tommy proposed WEC participation in another summer day camp at Wenonah Lake this summer. Rich said he would be happy to take part if it is in August.

Synnott's Pond digging occurred on 3/27. Cost was \$4,100, of which Mr. Pritchard paid \$500. Mr. Pritchard is hiring an 8th grader to rake leaves from the channel. He also wants us to put down another load of stone in the channel.

The Stone Pond donation from the Woman's Club comes with a stipulation: they want us to put up a sign acknowledging their donation. After discussion, there were no objections to this stipulation. The exact form of the sign will be decided later.

Dave reported that the Shawnee Drive erosion problem is unlikely to be fixed soon. The cost would be \$50,000 - \$70,000, and there are no grants available. Perhaps putting a stone berm at the bottom of the hill would be a cheap, quick fix?

Friends of Wenonah Trails has a balance of \$9,723.96.

- **Public Relations (Scott Barnes):** Atlantic City Electric has upgraded 10 streetlights on Mantua Avenue (Monroe east to Princeton) with Light-Emitting Diode (LED) technology. These are the first LED streetlights in our region. They are projected to use half the energy and last three times as long as traditional fixtures. The company is soliciting feedback on the lights during a six-month test period.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:15 PM