

Williams Township Land Preservation Board

Minutes, June 22, 2021 Meeting

Present: Bob Schmidt, Ron Hinehline, Linda Heindel, Polly Clark
Supervisors: Mark Ernst, Ray Abert, Michael Bryant
Township Managers: Melody Ernst
Heritage Conservancy consultant Laura Baird

Vice Chairman Schmidt opened the meeting at 7:01 pm. He called for the pledge of allegiance, then a review of the May 25, 2021 minutes. Motion (moved Hinehline, 2nd Heindel) to approve the minutes, passed 3-0.

Updates

Boss – the attorney has left the firm, so the Boss matter has been assigned to a new attorney who needs time to review the documents (AOS, conservation easement). They will contact LPB when they are prepared. Once the AOS has been signed, Heritage will prepare the application to the County. No action was taken on the survey bids by Keystone and Cowan, though Keystone's bid of \$7250 was circulated for information.

O'Brien -- O'Brien had asked about installing solar panels (900 sq ft.) in the Standard Protection area (north of septic mound, out of viewscape). Bauer has learned that the panels would fall within the Minimal Protection area, so there is no issue with the installation. When the survey is completed, the solar panels must be located within the Minimal Protection area. Melody Ernst will check with the township zoning officer to assure compliance with zoning. [It was reported subsequently in email from Zoning to Baird that "the installation of ground-mounted solar panels would be permitted by right at 850 Raubsville Road. They would be in compliance the maximum impervious and building coverage under the ordinance."]

BOS at their May meeting agreed to cover the appraised easement cost.

Russell – Sherry Acevedo from County has sent the close-out documents for this project to Sabatine; the grant was reimbursable (50% plus some soft costs). Baird offered to help Sabatine with any required information for completing the forms.

Old Business

BOS approved Heritage Conservancy's holding of easements.

Discussion of Scoring revisions: Schmidt explained why he changed certain values – to avoid repetition, to place value on areas that have proved more valuable. He described how the revised system's scores would compare with the current system's scores: there were usually differences but not significant ones. He performed the comparison on four recent properties. It was decided to leave the farmland section of the current form as it stands. Schmidt assured Supervisor Ernst that the changes would not interfere with grants from County.

Motion: to present the new scoring sheet to the BOS for review (moved Schmidt, 2nd Hinehline), passed 3-0.

New Business

Discussion of outreach to prospective preservers led to a lively discussion between audience and LPB about number of acres in projects, amounts of money anticipated from easement, whether scores on land affected success of approval, how the appraisal determines the payment, how to inform additional landowners (there were 4 attending this meeting). One question in particular elicited attention: whether prospective preserver could move forward with application before actually owning all tracts in the project.

To continue outreach, Schmidt said he has made initial contacts with the Seiferts, Olexas; Hinehline to contact Henderson, Heindel to contact Beidler and Service.

Treasurer's report: \$1,833,044.04 in the June 22, 2021 Open Space Account

Announcements – Hinehline reported press coverage of the Russell preservation in Express Times, Bucks County Herald' Baird added Conservation PA, and Norco's press releases.

Audience Comments – An audience member asked about the tax benefits on preserved land.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Submitted

Linda Heindel, Secretary

.Next Meeting: July 27, 2021, 7 pm