

Williams Township Land Preservation Board (LPB)

Minutes April 25, 2023

Williams Township Community Building

655 Cider Press Rd., Easton, PA 18042

Present: Bob Schmidt, Lorraine Mineo, Tom Heilman, and Lori Cox; Alternate Polly Clark; Supervisor Ray Abert

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bob Schmidt at 7:05 PM. Schmidt stated that an Executive Session was held prior to the meeting at 6:45 PM regarding alternate board members.

He called for the Pledge of Allegiance, then a review of the March 28, 2023 minutes. Correction noted on minutes for 2021-1 Berger Road regarding clauses shifting the High Protection Area (HPA) line. Motion moved by Mineo, seconded by Heilman. Approved 4-0.

Updates on Preservation Projects:

- 2021-1 Berger Road: Settlement occurred April 19, 2023, project is closed. It took longer than usual, about three years, due to issues out of LPB's hands such as COVID-19 and change in staffing at Heritage Conservancy.
- 2022-2-Morgan Hill: The two properties are on two separate deeds which presents a challenge. The Township attorney said no to preserving and then selling the upper parcel. Matt Babbitt from Heritage offered options to review with the property owners:
 - Phased approach: Preserve lower (larger/rear) parcel this year and the upper (smaller/front) parcel next year. This would break up the costs. Schmidt noted that the upper parcel may not score as well, the County may not be interested, and questions if this is the best option. Mineo noted that preserving the lower parcel first then the upper may help the upper score higher since it will then be adjacent to a preserved property. Or the Township can preserve the upper parcel without the County.
 - Two easements: This will mean two appraisals, two County applications, two surveys, two closing costs, and two stewardship fees. There is the potential for discounts on the appraisals and surveys.
 - Lot line adjustment: Change the lot lines to include the roadside field and larger pond with lower parcel, leaving a smaller front parcel that could be sold. Schmidt noted adjustment would require a new deed and need to go in front of the zoning committee. Schmidt also noted that this would be the most cost effective option.

Schmidt and Mineo suggested LPB have a meeting with Heritage, the County, and property owners to review options. Schmidt will contact Heritage about setting up a meeting and leaving date, time, and location up to owners. Schmidt has not received quotes yet for appraisals.

- 2023-1 Steely Hill: Board of Supervisors approved request to spend \$2,600 on appraisal from Indian Valley. The original easement documentation for the powerlines has not been found yet. Babbitt from Heritage has been in contact with MetEd and is waiting for their real estate department to get back to him. Babbitt also noted that there is an issue regarding the property owner's access to the spring box which is located on the neighbor's parcel. Reportedly, there is nothing on the owner's deed saying that they can take water from the spring and this is something that will need to be corrected. Babbitt left a message for the owners to touch base on this. Babbitt asked if LPB wants to ask owners about doing well survey, Schmidt to follow up. The survey results would be used in drawing up the HPA properly.

- 2023-2 Raubsville Road: Schmidt reviewed that the owners outreached him about preserving their ~22 acre property. Owners had applied in December of 2019. They had an appraisal which was \$8,000 an acre, highest that LPB has ever had. There were site visits with Heritage and the County, and the Township attorney wrote up the Agreement of Sale. At this point, the LPB stopped hearing from the owners. LPB continued to outreach owners for a year. Eventually, previous LPB member Ron Hineline spoke with owners who declined the preservation process; they did not share a reason why. In the owner's recent outreach to LPB member Schmidt, the owner said that the appraisal value had been too low. Owner noted having a fence put up to delineate where the HPA would be. Owners would need to know that a site visit and new appraisal are needed. Mineo and Heilman will contact the owners and offer to meet with them to discuss.

Old Business: Board discussed Heritage Conservancy Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Heritage's role in land preservation was discussed. No concerns were noted by the Board. Mineo made a motion to approve the MOU and Heilman seconded. Approved 4-0.

New Business:

- An Executive Session was held before the April 25, 2023 LPB meeting. Mineo made a motion to recommend Ben White to the BOS as an alternate Board member, seconded by Cox. Approved 4-0.
- Schmidt spoke with Township Manager, Mike Sabatine, about the preserved property on Hexenkopf Road which broke the easement by logging and cutting in roads. Although there was an error on the Township's part about approving it, the property has not been cleaned up per the Forestry Remanagement Plan (required whether or not a property is preserved). The Township attorney advised Schmidt that there were no plans to pursue the matter further. Mineo expressed concern about the Township following up this and other properties that have logged. Ray Abert informed the Board that the Township has a new Zoning Officer, Anthony Altimare. Mineo suggested that at our May 23, 2023 meeting, LPB discuss concerns about the Forestry Remanagement Plan not being followed and see if this can be brought to Altimare's attention. This will be added as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Reported by Mineo. Checking account: \$17,023.60, savings account: \$397,781.10, CD: \$1.5 million, total: \$1,914,804.70. It was noted that the balances reported do not include Berger Road closing. Schmidt followed up with Sabatine about attorney charges listed on the January and February 2023 invoices which were paid out of the LPB funds. The Painter Farm charges were correct, there was one incorrect charge which was corrected.

Announcements:

- Schmidt announced that former LPB member Ron Hineline is an awardee by the Advisory Council of the Northampton County Area Agency on Aging, as a recipient of their Outstanding Senior Award. The ceremony is Friday, April 28, 2023 at 1:00 PM at the Charles Chrin Community Center.
- Schmidt also announced that on Friday, May 5, 2023 at 2:00 PM, the Williams Township Gardener Club will have their perennial flower exchange at 30 Browns Dr. People can dig up and divide their perennials to exchange. (Date since changed to Friday, May 12, 2023 at 12:00 PM)

Comments from audience: None

Meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM. Mineo moved, Heilman seconded. Unanimous approval.

Next meeting May 23, 2023 @ 7:00 PM, Williams Township Community Building.

Submitted, Lori Cox, Secretary