

Williams Township Land Preservation Board (LPB)

Minutes June 27, 2023

Williams Township Community Building

655 Cider Press Rd., Easton, PA 18042

Present: Ken Kodama, Lorraine Mineo, Tom Heilman, and Lori Cox; Alternate Polly Clark; Supervisor Ray Abert; Matt Babbitt of Heritage Conservancy; and township residents

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Ken Kodama at 7:03 PM.

He called for the Pledge of Allegiance, then a review of the May 23, 2023 minutes. Babbitt noted that the minutes under Steely Hill should be revised to say that MetEd did not record *the width* of the easement on the deed with Northampton County. Motion to approve the minutes with the edit moved by Mineo, seconded by Kodama. Approved 4-0.

Updates on Preservation Projects:

- 2022-2-Morgan Hill: The property owners were present for the meeting. The property owners informed the LPB that they wish to preserve their lower parcel first. The owners also shared that they had an opportunity to speak with Babbitt who advised to have their attorney speak with Heritage's attorney. The owners do not wish to get attorneys involved. As previously discussed, if the owners wish to preserve the lower parcel first and the upper parcel in the future, another site visit and scoring needs to be done for the lower parcel.
- 2023-1 Steely Hill: Babbitt discussed MetEd's easement. Babbitt shared that MetEd has shown all internal documentation of the easement. Heritage needs MetEd to amend the easement as it currently shows a blank right of way width, which is likely 150 feet. Schmidt, Mineo, and Heilman met with the property owners at the property and Schmidt was able to measure and determine that there is ample room for any future well or septic needs. It was also noted that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved to have Heritage write up the Agreement of Sale (AOS) which they will vote on in their next meeting. There was also a discussion with Babbitt about the owners' request to cut firewood on the property for their home at another location and to remove invasives such as multiflora rose. Babbitt did not see Heritage having an issue with either of these requests. Babbitt stated that for the wood cutting, it would need to be written into the easement and for the invasives, there would need to be an email discussion between all parties (Heritage, the landowners, and the township) and then written into the AOS. Babbitt also noted the future step of applying for county funding.
- 2023-2 Raubsville Road: There was a discussion about the June 13, 2023 site visit with the property owners, LPB, and Heritage. An issue of concern is the six-foot fence where the stream is located. Babbitt reviewed that the fence does not allow for some wetland species, such as box turtles, to pass. This is mainly where the fence contacts the stream, which is in about five locations. The fence would need larger wire holes where it contacts the stream on the bottom to facilitate passage of wetland species. Babbitt also noted that there needs to be a minimum 50 foot buffer on either side of the stream. It was suggested to rescore the property and then discuss the options with the owners. An updated appraisal is also needed.

Old Business: Still seeking to fill LPB alternate seat.

New Business:

- Resident Michael Cortright and his spouse attended the meeting. Mr. Cortright expressed his interest in land preservation. Mr. Cortright will reach out to Schmidt or Kodama about his interest following this meeting.
- Schmidt, Mineo, and Mikal Sabatine had an unofficial session with the township's Zoning Officer, Anthony Altimare, regarding which properties in the township are preserved and should not be logged.
- Abert asked Mineo if the BOS gave the LPB a copy of the Forestry Management Plan, which went before the Planning Commission last Wednesday, and Mineo said she will follow up with Sabatine on that.
- In the LPB's May meeting, there was discussion about asking Heritage about logging and cleanup of preserved properties. Babbitt said that he is not sure what say Heritage has when they only monitor preserved properties. Mineo expressed concern about the guidelines used by local loggers for cutting down mature trees. Additionally, Mineo expressed concern about the preserved property that recently logged and still has not cleaned up the property. Mineo would like to see a remediation plan. Heritage is waiting for their contract to be ratified in July then they can address the situation.
- Sabatine forwarded the Grant of Conservation Easement and Declaration of Covenants to the LPB for review and asked for the LPB's recommendation to the BOS at the July meeting. The LPB noted that they were previously asked to review this document as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in February 2023 (MOU contained Conservation Easement Co-Holding Agreement between Williams Township and Heritage Conservancy, Agreement to Provide Professional Services and Hold Conservation Easements between Heritage Conservancy and Williams Township, and Grant of Conservation Easement and Declaration of Covenants). As long as the document has not changed, the LPB had no concerns regarding the document. Cox will inform Sabatine.

Treasurer's Report: Mineo reported that she was unable to get the financial documentation from the township office prior to the meeting. Mineo will share the information in the LPB July meeting for May and June 2023.

Announcements: None

Comments from audience: Babbitt announced the county grant cap amount, which is a maximum contribution of \$350,000, meaning that the total project would be \$700,000. He shared that if it is known that a project will go above this amount, outreach to the County is needed to negotiate what they would be willing to cover, such as a 40/60 split. Babbitt shared that the County is more focused on funding large projects (about 300 acres), like parks, and less focused on funding smaller easements. Babbitt also shared that the state still provides funds but they take much longer to approve but the township can get reimbursement later.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM. Cox moved, Mineo seconded. Unanimous approval.

Next meeting July 25, 2023 @ 7:00 PM, Williams Township Community Building.

Submitted,

Lori Cox, Secretary