

East Vincent Township Open Space Committee (OSC) Meeting Notes

Time:

November 14, 2023, 7 PM

Location:

The Municipal Complex
262 Ridge Road, Spring City PA 19475

In Attendance:

Christine McNeil, Chairperson
Nicole Keegan, Secretary
Bill Fields, member

Notes:

1. Call to order at 7 pm and pledge of allegiance
2. Christine M. gave a status update on East Vincent Township acquiring GIS environmental maps from Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC).
 - a. EVT prepared and sent a letter requesting environmental GIS mapping but have not heard back from the County.
 - b. Nicole K. noted that her husband Brain Styche (Multimodal Transportation Director CCPC) spoke to Brian O'Leary (Executive Director CCPC) about the mapping request. Brian O. stated that that EVT should contact Kate at CCPC, who is currently working with EVT on updating the zoning ordinance, to get mapping. Christine requested that Nicole contact Haly B. at the EVT to give her the updated information.
 - c. Christine M. stated that environmental mapping is an important first step in analyzing which properties should be considered for open space preservation and conservation.
3. Christine M. provided a report on the EVT Open Space budget.
 - a. The closing balance is currently 5.4 million.
 - b. Christine M. stated that there are many ways to preserve land besides the EVT purchasing properties. Some ways to preserve land are conservation easements, agricultural easements, and Transfer Development Rights (TDR) on a property.
4. Christine M. stated that there are two main types of conservation which are natural resource conservation and agricultural conservation. It is important to understand the EVT conservation objectives.

- a. Natural Resources
Protecting environmentally sensitive land and can include trail easements and easements along streams.
 - b. Agricultural - preserves farmland utilizing the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement. An agricultural conservation easement is a legal restriction that limits the use of the property to agricultural purposes.
5. Christine mentioned that EVT could consider applying for grants in their efforts to conserve both agricultural and environmentally sensitive land, some of the grants include:
- a. Chester County Agricultural Development Counsel – deadline August 1, 2024
<https://www.chescofarming.org/>
~15 million has been set aside for Northern Chester County agriculture land preservation.
 - b. Chester County grants:
www.chesco.org/4614/Grant-Programs
 - c. State grants / PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
www.dcnr.pa.gov/Communities/Grants/pages/default.aspx
 - d. EVT is in the Hopewell Big Woods (70,000 acres of forested land) and there might be opportunities to receive preservation funding.
 - e. Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor mini grants
 - f. Foundation money / Non-profit organizations
6. Other areas to consider for conservation:
- a. Equestrian preservation
 - b. Smaller properties
 - c. Specialty niche farming
 - d. Native plant / native plant production
 - e. Community Sustainable Agriculture farms / Supporting local food production
An example is Lundale Farm <https://lundalefarm.org/farmers-of-lundale-farm-pottstown-pa/>
 - f. Agricultural shared living communities such as Camphill Village
7. It is important to consider school district student population growth as residential developments are being built in our Township. OJR School District must determine school building infrastructure needs to handle the student population growth.
8. The OS Committee reviewed a prioritization review process of the surrounding municipalities and conservation organizations to help develop a ranking system for EVT.
- a. The documents reviewed:

- East Coventry Criteria for Evaluation
 - West Pikeland Township Conservation Mapping and Agricultural Prioritization Mapping, dated March 2008
 - East Pikeland Township Open Space Priority Grid
 - West Vincent Open Space Advisory Committee Candidate Property Evaluation Worksheet, updated 4/23/2019
 - North Coventry Open Space Selection Guidelines
 - French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust Land Protection Criteria
- b. EVT Open Space should develop a land preservation prioritization system that includes a ranking system (similar to above documents) along with GIS Mapping, grants, and an outreach program.

9. EVT reviewed the natural resources open space prioritization ranking systems from the above referenced documents and decided which items should be included in an East Vincent Township land preservation priority ranking system, as follows:

- a. Environmental Sensitivity (from French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust Land Protection Criteria)

Protect Headwaters

- First Order Stream on Property (3)
- Second Order Stream (2)
- Property Drains to First Order or Second Order Stream (1)

PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) plants or species identified Chester County Natural Areas Inventory

- Statewide Importance, Rank 1, 2, or 3 = 3 Points
- Statewide Importance, Rank 4 or 5 = 2 Points
- County Importance = 1 Point
(includes Global or State ranked plant and animal species or and unique/high quality habitats and ecosystems):

Contains Primary Resources (significant areas of wetlands, steep slopes, woodlands)

- >50% of Property contains Primary Resources = 3 Points
- 25-50% of Property contains Primary Resources= 2 Points
- 5-24% of Property contains Primary Resources= 1 Point
- <5% of Property contains Primary Resources= 0 Points

SIZE OF PARCEL

- > 75 acres = 3
- 50-74 acres= 2
- 5 - 49 acres = 1
- 0 to 5 acres = 0

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- Abuts FPCCT easement = 3

- Abuts preserved land; federal, state, county, township or another land trust= 2
- Links/Buffers trail corridors (French, Pickering, or Horseshoe Trails) = 1

AGRICULTURAL USE

- over 50% of tract is actively farmed = 3
- 25 to 50%= 2
- 10 to 25% = 1
- 0 to 10% = 0

STREAM PROTECTION

- Has significant frontage along French or Pickering Creek = 3
- Has significant frontage along tributaries = 2
- Has frontage along other waterways (UNT) = 1

STREAMBANK PROTECTION

- > 50 % of streamfront in natural riparian buffer = 3
- 25 to 50% of streamfront in natural riparian buffer = 2
- < 25% in natural riparian buffer = 1

b. Scenic Viewshed (from West Vincent Township land preservation ranking system)

- Parcel provides distinctive scenic value from a public way or provides a publicly accessible point from which to see significant wide angle unobstructed views.
- Parcel has distinctive visual elements or provides a publicly accessible point from which to see significant wide angle but obstructed views.
- Parcel does not provide scenic qualities.

c. Recreational Value (from East Pikeland Township Open Space Priority Grid)

Recreational Value:	10
b) Suitable for passive recreation	8
c) limited recreational value	3
d) not suitable	0

d. Active/Passive Use (from East Pikeland Township Open Space Priority Grid)

- Parcel has potential for public recreation or has existing public trails
- Parcel has potential for linking of existing public trails
- Parcel has potential for public trail easement/access
- Parcel does not have potential for public recreational or trail use

e. Danger of Development (from West Vincent Township land preservation ranking system)

- In negotiations with a buyer or developer
- Parcel can be easily developed
- Infill development would hurt character of property or neighborhood
- No danger of development

f. Historic Value (from West Vincent Township ranking system)

- Designated site on National Register of Historic Sites

- b. Parcel is located in Historic District (Birchrunville or Highlands)
- c. Parcel is designated in a certain Historic Resource Atlas of West Vincent Township adopted and printed by Chester County and adopted by West Vincent Township as Class I, II, or III
- d. No historic significance

- g. Add category for wildlife preservation.
- h. Should we add a criteria for zoning build out?

10. West Pikeland Township uses “Smart Conservation” and “Ecological Resources” which uses data system to identify ecological value and priority areas. The Committee should consider further investigation of this evaluation ranking system.

11. At the next Open Space Committee meeting the agricultural land preservation criteria should be reviewed. Nicole K. will create a chart to compare the different Township’s criteria.

Motion to nominate Nicole Keegan as Open Space Committee Secretary.

Moved: Christine McNeil Second: Michelle Adams Vote: Unanimous

- i. Christine M. stated that it would be nice if the committee members could sit at a large table as it would create a relaxed atmosphere so members could more easily converse and review mapping / plans. Robert Z. said that it is possible, and he will investigate the matter.

- j. Christine M. reviewed the Open Space Ordinance including the organization, powers and responsibilities, reports and recommendations, and procedures as outlined in the East Vincent Zoning Ordinance Chapter 1. Administration and Government, Part 2. Commissions, Boards and Councils, E. Open Space
 - a. Some of the responsibilities discussed is that the OSC is tasked to identify, review, evaluate and rate the parcels with respect to price and to submit those recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for its consideration to acquire the properties.

b. The OSC is also responsible for preparing, submitting, and coordinating:

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A motion to request Chester County Panning Commission to provide East Vincent Township Open Space Committee with scaled hardcopy and digital maps that include the following layers for East Vincent Township: environmentally sensitive land, park and recreation lands, soils, trails, easements holders, land conservation easements, forested cover, forested riparian buffer, buffers, steep slopes, topography, hydric soils, wetlands, erosive soils, floodplain, pipelines, overhead utilities, water, sewer, watershed designation, 303d land, water quality status, first order streams, population and demographics, connections to parks, trails, and open land adjacent to East Vincent Township.

Moved: Michelle Adams Second: Bill Fields Vote: Unanimous
As amended by 2nd motion to add additional layers.

- a. Robert Z. stated that he would facilitate acquiring the mapping through the Chester County Planning Commission. It was discussed that there might need to be multiple maps due to the quantity of layers requested.
- b. Robert Z. stated that in addition to Chester County the Delaware regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) agency might be a helpful resource for mapping and future endeavors.
- c. Robert Z. noted due to all the mapping needed for the OSC the OSC might consider purchasing Geographic Information software (GIS). This topic was discussed by committee members and a motion was made.

Motion to request funds to purchase Geographic Information software (GIS) and computers to run software program, color oversized plotter to print maps, and a staff person run GIS software.

Moved: Christine McNeil Second: Michelle Adams Vote: Unanimous

- k. OSC meeting times were discussed.

Motion for The Open Space Committee to meet once a month, on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM.

Moved: Christine McNeil Second: Bill Fields Vote: Unanimous

- l. Christine M. stated that the OSC should consider having an executive session meeting to discuss confidential properties. Possible dates for that meeting could be discussed at the next meeting.
- m. Christine M. suggested that in the future the OPC conduct a field trip to visit all East Vincent Township protected lands and to get a better understanding of open space opportunities.
- n. Christine M. requested that Robert Z. provide a summary of the status of bond acts, fee-in-lieu, and the township American Rescue Act funds \$600,000. Need to know the restraints of how the \$600,000 can be used. The money must be used 12/ 2024.
- o. Agenda items for next month's meeting were discussed.
 - 1. Budget / status of funds / bonds act
 - 2. Possible dates for executive session meeting to discuss confidential properties.

p. **Public Comment.** A meeting attendee stated it was extremely difficult for the public to hear any of the committee member's comments and even more difficult if you are listening over zoom. She stated it is not just hard to hear in the OSC meeting but all Township meetings. She requested that the Township address this issue. Robert Z. stated that the Township is currently looking into a new audio system that would address the sound system as well as other issues.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm.

Moved: Christine McNeil Second: Bill Fields Vote: Unanimous