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Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee Minutes of the Meeting March 9, 2023

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: William Connolly, Chairperson of the Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Mr. Connolly led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were:

William Connolly, Chairperson, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Lynn Laurelli, Secretary, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Joanne Mancini, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Christian Jones, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Melissa Conte, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc committee
Michael Parker, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Phillip Rittenhouse, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Patricia Tuberty, Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee
Mary Roth, Alternate Member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee

Attending Virtually Was:

Eileen Albillar, former member, Warrington Township Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee

Also present were Vincent Kelly, Ivy Ross, Barbara Brown, Ruth Schemm, Mike Diorka, and Brian Tuberty, all members of the public.

Mr. Connelly stated that Ms. Albillar has resigned from the Warrington Township Board of Supervisors. The Board has appointed Fred Gaines as her replacement in the Supervisor position of the Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Consider February 9, 2023, Minutes for Approval.

Mr. Connolly asked if there were any comments or corrections to the February 9, 2023, Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Connolly made a motion, seconded by Ms. Mancini, to approve the February 9, 2023, meeting minutes. The February 9, 2023, meeting minutes were approved by the Committee members.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Tuberty, a member of the public residing at 3490 Pond View Drive, commented that he observed there was lots of cooperation between Committee members and positive momentum.

2. MEMBERS' COMMENTS

None

3. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Discussion on Site Visit

Mr. Connolly stated that the scheduled site visit did not happen due to unfavorable weather conditions. After a brief discussion, the site visit has been rescheduled to Saturday April 15, 2023, from 10 a.m. until noon. Mr. Jones will send out an email confirmation to everyone.

- b. Habitat Preservation Land Disturbance
 - i. Inventory of Wildlife on Preserve

Ms. Tuberty asked Mr. Connolly if an inventory could be made of the wildlife on the preserve. Mr. Connolly stated that people have walked the land and did an inventory of plants. The deer are an issue. There is an occasional fox in Warrington Township. A report entitled "2021 Planning Assessment Report of Neshaminy Greenway Trail" has information about wildlife. Mr. Jones will be given the link for this report. Ms. Tuberty stated that Churchville Nature Center and Wilma Quinlan Preserve have rules about disturbance. Mr. Connolly stated that those kinds of recommendations are within our scope. These recommendations become part of the plan. He will obtain a copy of this report. See Page 28 of the Resource Management Plan. Ms. Tuberty can provide the Link to "Developing Trails in Sensitive Areas."

- ii. How Wildlife Habitats on the Preserve can be Protected and Enhanced

Mr. Rittenhouse stated that fragmentation caused by walking trails could contribute to habitat loss. When people go off the trails, they trample vegetation. Water contamination can occur due to dogs. Should any dogs be allowed in sensitive areas, such as wet meadows and streams or riparian areas? Have the soils been analyzed? Mr. Connolly stated that a study of soils and vegetation was done.

Mr. Rittenhouse stated that animals migrate. Mr. Connolly replied that Mill Creek is connected to the Weisel preserve under a conservation easement. Mr. Rittenhouse suggested a recommended 1 to 1 ratio of trail to edge. That 1 to 1 ratio is lost if trails are located down the center. He also asked whether the field should remain as field because then normal plant succession would not happen. Mr. Connolly replied that it is unlikely that trails would be located on the far side of the creek.

Mr. Connolly stated that we must get rid of invasive plants. Native animals cannot utilize nonnative plants, which make no contribution to the ecosystem. Mr. Rittenhouse said that meadows are a promising idea to assist native plant growth. Native plants placed on the Preserve should not be all trees.

iii. Letter from PA Game Commission dated April 5, 2022

Ms. Tuberty referred to the Game Commission letter. The PNDI results did include U.S. Fish and Wildlife. She contacted the Game Commission, and they informed her that the Blue Heron is a protected species as is the Red-Tailed Hawk and the Red Flicker. What does it mean if the species are protected?

Mr. Jones asked Ms. Ross, a member of the public, to provide an answer. Ms. Ross stated that the Blue Heron is a species of special concern during the nesting season. No construction can occur during the nesting season. The rookery is located on Mill Creek Road and Pickertown. There are currently no construction plans except for the meadow installation. Ms. Ross does not favor anything being done in the wetlands.

Ms. Conte asked why the inventory was not done before producing a Master Plan. Mr. Connolly said that nothing in the Plan has a legal status. The State Comprehensive Plan has some legal effects. But this Plan has no legal status – it is a bunch of Ideas. The Mill Creek Property is the crown jewel of the Township. It is one of the last remaining parcels - a great piece of property.

Ms. Tuberty asked about the location of the proposed Community Building. Mr. Connolly said that the potential location for the Community Building could have been at the police station, but the plans were redone. Lion's Pride Park made the most sense. This location does not interfere with the neighborhood for traffic consideration.

Ms. Ross responded regarding the DCNR Grant for the meadows. The grant covered three plans specific to the Township. The Master Plan had all variety of concepts. The meadows can be used to obtain the funding. If a proposal has been thought through, it will receive more consideration.

Ms. Brown, a member of the public, asked if she could make a comment regarding the protection of Red-Tail Hawk and Red Flicker species. She said that the federal government protects these species – they cannot be shot. She also mentioned that a Lingo Landscaping employee told her that an adult riding on an ATV, which is coming from one of the neighborhoods, was riding in the open space. The Lingo employee also said kids were there all the time. Ms. Conte replied that the individual or individuals were not coming from the Pond View neighborhood. Once the trails go in it will attract more kids and ATVs. This needs to be addressed. Mr. Connolly said that ATVs are an issue. Ms. Brown responded that she was told they were coming down from the Nursery. Ms. Conte and Ms. Tuberty said they had never seen

ATVs at Pond View and that they came from somewhere else. Ms. Brown said the ATVs are very destructive. Ms. Conte said the teens currently ride up and down the paved trail at Highgate.

Ms. Tuberty asked how can the habitat be enhanced? Mr. Connolly said to see Page 29 of the Mill Creek Resource Management Plan.

Mr. Connolly mentioned that deer management is a large concern. Over browsing deer can ruin the habitat for every other species. Ms. Tuberty mentioned that years ago they encountered hunters in the Open Space. Currently the land has signs posted saying “No Hunting” and it is illegal to hunt or shoot there. Mr. Connolly mentioned that the deer herd must be culled. Mr. Rittenhouse said that deer culling has occurred in Fairmount Park – a deer hunt. Mr. Connolly said that the deer population has exploded.

Mr. Rittenhouse said that amphibians are endangered.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Wetlands Issues

- i. Delineation/Location
- ii. Permits

Mr. Connolly said there are two maps: Map 19 in the Master Plan and Map 8 in the Resource Management Plan. The maps show wetlands and flood plains. Map 9 in the Resource Management Plan shows palustrine shrubland meadow and wet meadow. There should be a large buffer around wetlands - more than fifty feet. Right now, there is no definitive boundary. Wetlands Law states that each proposed project needs to have wetland delineation establishing their boundary. A wetland professional would be required if any disturbance is planned – before anything is done on the wetland or on its buffer. You need to obtain a permit for any disturbance to wetlands. Ms. Tuberty stated that if you wanted to do anything you would have to apply for a permit, which is a lot of paperwork. If you impact wetlands, you must mitigate. Ms. Ross said remediation is very costly. Mr. Connolly said that the boundaries of wetlands do change over time. We know we have wetlands, and we will keep out of them and most likely will not go near the permitting process. We will keep walkways away from the wetlands and back from the edges of the stream.

Ms. Mancini mentioned that there are a lot of wetlands, so you are limited in what you can do.

Ms. Ross said that an appraisal was done. The Township wanted a parcel with wetlands that has habitat. In a high protection area, you do not do anything. The Land Conservancy does lots of plans which enhance the experience for the user. Warrington does not have to do all these ideas.

Ms. Mancini said that Map 21 shows four meadows. Mr. Ross stated that two of the meadows are in fact one meadow – Meadow 1. There is also Meadow 2 and Meadow 3 - which show areas of reforestation. Map 21 is an existing condition map. We do not do anything around wetlands.

Mr. Connolly said the Township is not looking for ways to intrude on wetlands. The permitting process is cumbersome. A site delineation is required for permit application.

Ms. Conte asked that if the wetlands are to be protected, how is the Township going to keep folks out of the wetland areas? Mr. Connolly replied there is talk about erecting fencing to keep people out, marking the area with corner fence, or putting a border up. Signage could be placed that says do not go beyond a certain line.

5. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Ms. Conte said she has never seen ATVs behind her home. Kids are riding on the trail that connects the two neighborhoods. Mr. Connolly said there have been complaints about ATVs on Upper State and Bristol Roads.

Mr. Connolly said the endgame is a new map plus verbal recommendations to make, such as no ATVs.

Mr. Parker said the quarry across the street generates a great deal of dust. Silt and dust run into the creek which is a water quality issue. The silt and runoff should be addressed. Ms. Ross replied that the DEP goes to Tradesville once a month to evaluate water quality. Mr. Connolly stated that the report notes that plants are dusty; but the quarry is a good neighbor. Ms. Ross stated that we could speak to the quarry about the runoff situation.

Mr. Parker asked why is the corner of the property mowed? If the quarry owns it, why don't they let it grow? Ms. Roth stated that the quarry acquired the property because they received so many complaints. They own a lot of land.

Ms. Tuberty asked about the status of the Report of the Annual Survey by Natural Lands. Ms. Ross said that if it arrives on time, it will be placed on the agenda next month. The Report will discuss encroachments and detail the condition of the property. Ms. Tuberty said that Natural Lands has a lot of information about the Wilma Quinlan Preserve which is good to look at.

Mr. Jones stated that the Police Chief and the Director of Emergency Services and Safety Compliance would be attending the April 13 meeting. Mr. Connolly said that safety issues and financial impact will be discussed. Ms. Conte wanted to focus on safety at the next meeting. Ms. Tuberty wanted to discuss quads and unwanted activities. Mr. Connolly said we should have the Police and Fire Departments come and talk to us about how they perceive things.

Mr. Jones noted that the Fire Station is located on the border of the preserve.

Mr. Connolly mentioned that municipal taxes are a bargain. Overall taxes might be high, but they are not Township taxes.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ms. Mancini, seconded by Mr. Jones, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

The next meeting will be Thursday evening, April 13, 2023, at 7 p.m. in the Township Building.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynn Laurelli

Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee Secretary