

Morris Township – Public Hearing
7:00 p.m. – Wednesday, November 12, 2003

Morris Township Municipal Building – Public Meeting Room
50 Woodland Avenue, Morris Township

2003/2004 Update to the 1997 Township of Morris
Open Space and Recreation Plan

Welcome – Mayor Jan Wotowicz

History of the Open Space Program

Councilman Richard A. Watson, Open Space Committee Chairperson

- Township has preserved over 208 acres of land since inception of Trust Fund in 1993
 - Fanok Road – 1994 – 1 acre
 - Jones Woods – 1995 – 10 acres
 - West Hanover Avenue tract – 1998 – 57 acres
 - Bojkuk – 1998 – 46 acres (18 acres in the Township)
 - Jockey Hollow Top VI – 2001 – 58 acres
 - Blue Gate Farm – 2001 – 14 acres
 - Deer Haven – 2002 – 23 acres
 - Spence – 2003 – 17 acres
 - Lupo – 2003 – 8 acres
- Priority areas for preservation in the Township have included:
 - Washington Valley
 - Expanding existing municipal and county park facilities
 - Jockey Hollow
 - Great Swamp watershed
- Goals for preservation:
 - Limit or prevent development, including property that is subdividable
 - Environmental protection
 - Increase recreational opportunities for both passive and active programs
- History of Open Space program:
 - Currently Township Trust Fund is set at 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value and brings in about \$1.1 million per year
 - The Township has partnered with a variety of funding partners including Green Acres, Morris County, Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA), Morris Land Conservancy and the Great Swamp Watershed Association
- Township has received a grant from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) to update the maps and 1997 Open Space and Recreation Plan

- As recommended by NJ Green Acres, the Township Open Space Committee, Mayor and Township Committee are hosting this public hearing to receive input from the public and Township Boards and Committee members regarding:
 - The direction of the open space program
 - What has been accomplished
 - Goals for preserving and protecting land in the Township
 - Review the criteria for acquiring open space
 - Discuss the Township’s Open Space Map

Public Comments:

- Ellen Taylor, Environmental Commission: recharge areas should be shown on Open Space Map
- Dr. Lynn Siebert, President, Burnham Park Association: LETTER TO COMMITTEE ATTACHED TO MEETING NOTES – Burnham Park Association would like to see the 20 acre set aside for Jones Woods to be included in the Township’s Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI). Hillcrest School received a Dodge ecology grant to study Jones Woods, the Unity Charter School is using Jones Woods for school projects as well. Drew University (Dr. Sarah Webb) is monitoring the forested land via a deer enclosure study, Boy Scout Pack 513 has adopted Jones Woods for clean ups and history projects. Local residents have been involved in an invasive plant species removal program entitled “free a tree” at Jones Woods. Most importantly it is used for recreation and enjoyment. The land was originally set aside as part of a projected COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) obligation, the Township does not currently need COAH units. Jones Woods is also contiguous with other green spaces in the Township.
- Barbara Klingsporn – President of Jones Woods: LETTER ATTACHED TO PUBLIC MEETING NOTES – The 8 acres of the pond should also be included in the ROSI, she feels it has a deed restriction on it. The pond is part of a former reservoir and its shape is that of a “scoop”, with the rim of the scoop on Picatinny Road/Dorothy Drive, the “spout” was dammed for the pond itself. Laws since the 1700s have protected water resources. Its topography makes it vulnerable to eutrophication and nonpoint source pollution.
- Stu Sendell – Open Space Committee/Environmental Commission: Open Space doesn’t exist in a vacuum, the Committee should look for lands that have significant environmental issues and public use. There should be an affordable housing component to open space, where the ranking of a parcel is raised if it includes affordable housing.
- Joe Cavanelli – President of Morristown Little League (American), Open Space Committee: Open Space should have a public use, part of the recreation component of the Master Plan, active and passive recreation needs should be answered as part of an open space program. We need to look at resources we have now for recreation use, perhaps better use of existing lands or conversion of existing lands will integrate existing parks with new sites to expand opportunities. Feels the Township has enough Little League fields, but need to improve them. Greystone presents great opportunities for the Township and County. Concerned

the Township is not getting back from the County Open Space Trust Fund what the Township has contributed.

- Jim Stranger – Morristown Little League (National): Township has been gracious with the public use of its fields, but baseball needs increased access. Suggests develop lacrosse fields where there are not baseball fields (to eliminate competition for space and potential interference of uses). Feels township maintenance of fields is adequate.
- Paul Woodfred – Recreation Committee, Past President of Lacrosse: There has been a rapid growth in lacrosse, in 4 years the program has expanded from 50 participants to over 175 and there are not enough fields for the players. Four years ago there were two teams, today there are eight. Need to minimize the interaction between lacrosse and baseball for access and safety. The Township needs to determine its future needs for lacrosse and then work to answer those needs. There are currently recreational lacrosse programs from 2nd grade through 8th.
- Rick Hahn – Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Board of Adjustment: Hope Greystone will be developed into active recreational facilities and then Morris could use its open space funds to purchase more lands for passive recreation. There are not enough recreational opportunities for the southwestern portion of the Township. Farmland in the Township should be preserved and permanently protected.
- Arthur Hedge – Board of Morristown Little League: The Master Plan's recreation element should incorporate a demographic study to determine future use and needs for active recreation.
- Don Green – Recreation Advisory Committee and Past President of Morris United Soccer: Township should separate fields for different sports, especially since sports are now year round. Fields are being used constantly with no time to rest. Morris United Soccer put in \$100,000 into the Frelinghuysen Fields for field maintenance, but the fields are not allowed to rest so the investment is lost. The recreation program needs a comprehensive multiyear plan – perhaps an oversized area could be utilized to rotate field space, thus wear patterns could be managed on the property.
- Rick Watson – Township Committee, Open Space: The Open Space Committee is sensitive to expanding active recreational facilities. They have encountered problems from residents not wanting the facilities near their homes and neighborhoods.
- Barbara Klingsporn – Recreation also includes cross county running, skiing and bicycling.
- Lynn Siebert – Patriot's Path should be extended into Jones Woods.
- Joe Cavanellini – The Township should include neighboring towns trails into their open space program (ie Randolph Township).
- Scott Rosenbush – Township Committee: Recreation programs are successful and the Committee thanks Peg, the Recreation Director.
- Kathleen Hyland – Township Committee: Land acquisition is a balancing act, it is important to provide transitional housing. Soccer (and other recreational) fields can also cause distress for neighbors.

- Mayor Jan Wotowicz – Recharge areas and lands of environmental significance are important. The Ten Towns Great Swamp Watershed Management Committee is continuously updating model ordinances and Morris Township is in the process of updating their own ordinances to incorporate these recommendations. Morris Township has its own water company (the Southeast Morris MUA) and the Township needs to be concerned about its water quality and quantity. The Township is fortunate to have SEMMUA servicing the residents.
- Dr. Ted Larson – Chair Environmental Commission, Whippany Watershed Action Committee: The Township owns 14 acres near the Armory, formerly Mountain Reservoir. Proposed this site as a park or environmental center with park benches.