

Centre Documenters

Meeting: Open Space Preservation Board

Township: Halfmoon

Documenter names: Rivka Wolin and Cady Barcak

Date: March 13, 2024

Start Time: 7:00 p.m.

End Time: 7:48 p.m.

Attendance

- Chair Reed Moyer – Absent
 - Vice-chair Patricia Hartle – Present
 - Member George Stine – Present
 - Member Ronald Hoover – Present
 - Member James Smith – Present
 - Member Christine Bracken-Piper – Present
 - Member Joanne Fisher – Present
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- The minutes of the Feb. 14, 2024, joint meeting between the Open Space Preservation Board and the Halfmoon Township Board of Supervisors were approved.

Review of Open Space Preservation Ordinance – recreation references

- A five-year review committee recommended the removal of recreation references, parts of the ordinance that refer to putting recreational structures on easements, from the ordinance because the land that the township leasing is still owned by the landowner, and it will most likely not be used for recreational purposes.
 - “It wasn’t something we’ve encountered in 25 years,” Patricia Hartle said.
- A motion to recommend the review committee’s removal of recreation references to the board of supervisors was approved unanimously.

A note from your Documenter: A copy of the ordinance and application with changes marked is available on the online agenda for the March 13, 2024, meeting.

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Commented [CBI]: I think a note from your documenter with a definition of recreation reference would be helpful! I have no clue what an example of a recreation reference would be lol

- Amendments to ordinance:
 - Under “Selection Process,” language in part (c) regarding a 30-day window between the board of supervisors receiving recommendations and the board directing the township solicitor was cleared up. The proposed change is that within 30 days of receiving recommendations, the board of supervisors will direct the township solicitor order a title search “of the subject property.” Then the township solicitor will render a title opinion after completing the title search.
 - Under part (d) of the “Selection Process,” the proposed change is to have the board of supervisors determine the amount of insurance after considering the title opinion. The applicant has to obtain title insurance and name “the township as the insured.”
 - Under part (e) of the “Selection Process,” language regarding the board of supervisor’s discretion to deny the application was amended. The proposed change is to let the board of supervisors deny applications “at any time based upon any of the criteria listed above or in any other section herein.”
 - Additional language on the application that pairs with this ordinance will be changed to include an acknowledgement that Halfmoon Township makes “no guarantee that an agreement will be offered,” and Halfmoon Township “may deny any application based on the criteria set forth in Open Space Preservation Ordinance.”
 - A motion to recommend the proposed changes to parts (c) and (e) of the ordinance to the board of supervisors was passed unanimously.
 - A motion to recommend to the board of supervisors the proposed changes to the Open Space Preservation application based upon approval of the denial language in part (e) was passed unanimously.
 - The changes to part (d) regarding insurance decisions will be revisited after speaking with the solicitor. The Open Space Preservation Board has questions about requiring title insurance without an advance and how to calculate the minimum insurance needed to cover the township.

Discussion on permanent easement interest responses

- According to Hartle, this section was added by Reed Moyer after the board sent out letters to lease holders about their interest in permanent preservation. The discussion was created to find the “next steps” after receiving responses.
- Christine Bracken-Piper proposed that the township re-rate the properties and approach leaseholders who have the highest rated properties about getting permanent easements. This would be done to reduce the time spent “bouncing it back and forth.”
- The first step would be to re-rate the properties using the township scale.
 - According to Hartle, members of the board met with Elizabeth Pirrone-Brusse with Centre County Preservation, and she has a tool that can give an estimate on properties using the county scale. If the board knows which township properties the county is interested in, they can get those properties on the county preservation list.

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- A motion, but more like a direction, to re-rate properties and get ratings from the county was called by Bracken-Piper and seconded by James Smith.
 - According to Bracken-Piper, three properties are required to be in the high security area in order for the township to work with the county for permanent easement.

Commented [WRB2]: Didn't seem like a motion more like a direction

Authority board and community reports

- Planning Commission
 - According to George Stine, the commissioners are currently analyzing zoning and land development ordinances. They are looking at adding and changing language for clarity and intention with the ordinances.
 - Stine said the commissioners had “a real good head start” because the Centre Region Planning Authority (CRPA) started this process, and the planning commissioner picked this up.
- Board of Supervisors
 - According to Hartle, during the February meeting, the board approved a donation to the Keystone Water Resources Center for monitoring projects of the Spring Creek Watershed. This donation is something the township had done for years, and during COVID they stopped, but the supervisors have reinitiated this donation.
 - The Land Use and Community Infrastructure (LUCI) committee has plans to redo the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan. According to Hartle, the plan is updated about every 10 years. The last update was done in 2013, and the current plan has been in the works since 2023. The committee’s goal is to complete the plan this year.
 - “The plan serves as a statement of the region’s vision for the future,” Hartle said. “It includes goals, objectives, policies and a broad range of topics, providing direction to guide the region’s growth while maintaining a high quality of life.”
 - At the board of supervisors meeting on March 14, 2024, the agenda lists a potential motion to direct staff to seek a determination from the township’s solicitor on title insurance and subordination agreements and provide any amendment recommendations.
- Other Business
 - Board members mentioned an email received after the agenda was printed. They will discuss later how to respond to it.

Adjournment

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Summary/Takeaways from your Documenter

- Amendments for the Open Space Preservation Ordinance and application were approved to be sent to the Board of Supervisors for review, and the Open Space Preservation Board will seek advice from Halfmoon Township's solicitor.
- The Halfmoon Township Open Space Preservation Board is looking to work with the county on re-rating land that is up for permanent easement.

Follow-Up Questions

- What properties that have applications awaiting approval will be affected by changes to the ordinance?
- What is the email that was not featured on the agenda about?

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