

# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION BOARD

## March 11, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Members present for the meeting were Chairman Greg Churach, Matt Dallas, Nancy Toothaker, Dennis Elliott and Commissioner liaison Herbert Miller, Jr. Also present was Planning & Zoning Administrator Michelle L. Reddick. Susan Thompson was absent. Commissioner Schreiber was in the audience near the end of the meeting.

**Call to Order** - Chairman Churach called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

**Pledge of Allegiance** - The members, after a moment of silence, pledged allegiance to the flag.

**Approval of Minutes** - A motion by Toothaker, seconded by Elliott, to approve the January 14, 2014 minutes as written. All aye votes.

### Old Business

**Hoffman Field Expansion** - This matter was postponed until later in the meeting as we were waiting for Mitch Mitchell to be present to participate in the discussion.

**Prout Farm Loop Trail** – Commissioner Miller provided a brief update on the proposed trail. He noted that there will be a bridge which will provide access from the loop trail to the Cherrytree Farms development. He further noted that engineering work is proceeding.

**Ken Hamilton of S.A.V.E.** was present to provide an update on what is happening with their organization and the Althouse property. He explained that the foundation is still working on obtaining their 501.3.C status and looking at avenues to expedite the process. He noted that the foundation has accepted the acreage from Hilsee Real Estate Partnership, but cannot transfer the property until they obtain their 501.3.C status. He advised that the goal is to create a resource center for S.A.V.E. as well as a community center for Township open space. He further advised that the foundation is creating a calendar of work days at the property and will provide this to the Township so that they can try to rally up volunteers. The foundation is also working on an operation agreement with the Township. The foundation will be installing a small stone parking lot along the existing driveway immediately to the left of the driveway. Mr. Hamilton requested permission from the Township to create an organization called “Friends of the Althouse Arboretum” which would be a group of local citizens and stakeholders which will provide input, share advice and help with the management of this beautiful 17 acre property. He explained that, under the direction of The SAVE Alliance Foundation, local stakeholders will help lead the effort to transform this property into an environmental center that will most benefit the people of the Upper Pottsgrove Community. The Open Space and Recreation Board members agreed that this would be a worthwhile organization. In response to a question from Mrs. Toothaker, Mr. Hamilton explained that the Township owns 15.55 acres and Hilsee Real Estate Partnership owns 1.60 acres which they will be donating to The SAVE Alliance Foundation. In response to a question from Mr. Dallas, Mr. Hamilton explained that the deadline for transfer of the property

**Ken Hamilton – S.A.V.E. (cont'd)** - is June 30, 2014; however, Mr. Hilsee is flexible and would be willing to extend that date if necessary. Mr. Dallas recommended that they may want to hold off on supporting “Friends of the Althouse Arboretum” until the property is transferred. Chairman Churach suggested the foundation may want to consider access to the parking area from Snyder Road rather than Gilbertsville Road since Gilbertsville Road is a state road and would require working with PennDOT. Mr. Hamilton thanked the Board for allowing him to provide an update and for their continued support of this endeavor.

**Update on 2014 DCNR Grants** – Commissioner Miller advised that there are some grants available which the Township should consider pursuing. Chairman Churach advised that there are some small grants through Natural Lands Trust and would recommend the Township pursue a grant for repairing the pond at Sunset Park. He noted that there was a brief engineering study completed and the larger pond has a leak. He recommended pursuing a grant for further engineering study and plan to repair the pond. He further recommended pursuing a grant for the purchase of a machine to construct and maintain the trails. In response to a question from Mr. Dallas, Chairman Churach advised that the grants would be matching grants.

**Hollenbach Park Maintenance Support** – Chairman Churach recommended that the Township pursue discussions with the Pottsgrove School Board regarding support for maintenance at Hollenbach Park. Commissioner Miller advised that Township representatives met with school district administration today, and the school district is willing to work with the Township. He further advised that Mike Katzenmoyer, facilities director for the school district, agreed to work with Public Works Director Frank Quinter on issues related to the fields at Hollenbach Park. Mr. Miller noted that there is already an agreement with the school district to help maintain the fields at Hollenbach Park; however, money is always an issue. Mr. Elliott suggesting putting a layer of wire mesh (similar to rebar) on the fields to prevent the rocks from continuing to come up through the soil.

### **New Business**

**Credentials for Open Space & Recreation Board Members** – Chairman Churach noted that Mrs. Toothaker recommended the members have some type of identification badge they can carry on them or wear when they are out in the field or doing work on behalf of the Open Space and Recreation Board. Commissioner Miller agreed this was a great idea and requested that Michelle notify Chief Moffett who will be able to complete this task for the members.

**Sunset & Sussell Park Parking Lots** – Chairman Churach recommended we investigate having our Public Works department plow the parking lots at Sunset and Sussell Parks to provide pond access for winter activities.

**Earth Day projects** – Chairman Churach advised that Commissioner Schreiber’s son is involved in Boy Scouts and wants to provide volunteers (including troops) to help clean up the parks as part of Earth Day which is April 22, 2014. Mr. Hamilton from The SAVE Alliance Foundation noted that he would be willing to utilize some of the volunteers to help with cleanup of the

**Earth Day Projects (cont'd.)** - Althouse property. Chairman Churach agreed to survey the parks to see how many volunteers would be needed for that cleanup and then utilize the balance of the volunteers for cleaning up the Althouse property.

**Prout Farm Park** – Chairman Churach advised that a litter can and doggie bag dispenser is needed at the Prout Farm Park. Commissioner Miller agreed to handle this matter. Mr. Elliott noted, and the members agreed, that mile markers will need to be installed along the trail system for emergency purposes.

**Round 3 of DCNR Mini Grants through Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation** – Chairman Churach advised that there is still \$63,000 worth of grants available. He further advised that even though we already received a \$25,000 grant for a pavilion at Sunset Park, we should still pursue other grants. He agreed to have the interim manager contact Ashley at Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation.

**Community Day** - Chairman Churach advised that Mrs. Thompson is working on this event, and noted that he would be recommending that we have Dallas Fries again this year.

**Eagle Scout Projects** – Commissioner Miller advised that Ethan Braglio was unable to get down to Sussell Park to evaluate the tables. He further advised that there is a girl scout who is willing to build a bridge on the Snyder Road trail. Mr. Dallas advised that this project is for his daughter and she will need to submit her application for the project. However, she will need a list of materials and a cost estimate before she can submit her application. Chairman Churach expressed concern that we are going to build a bridge before we build the trail. He recommended that we come up with a list of projects for these individuals before we discuss this matter further.

**Signage Update** – Commissioner Miller advised that the machine broke down halfway through the process of building the Prout Farm Park sign and the company is about three (3) months behind in their work. Therefore, we will not have the Prout Farm Park or Althouse Arboretum signs any time soon.

**Lefever Easement** – Commissioner Miller advised that the township will need a 25 foot easement on the Lefever property to provide access from Maugers Mill Road down to the Stauffer open space property. He requested that another member contact Mr. Lefever as he and Mr. Elliott have not had success with their discussions with Mr. Lefever in the past.

**Hoffman Field Expansion** – Chairman Churach suggested the Board continue this discussion even though Mr. Mitchell was not present. Commissioner Miller advised that the proposal was to build an additional ball field at the corner of Gilbertsville and Moyer Roads. However, as pointed out by the Township Engineer, there are several issues to consider. Mr. Miller noted the biggest issue would be with parking. In addition, another issue would be with baseballs being hit into the road and possibly onto neighboring residential properties. In response to a question from Chairman Churach, Mr. Miller advised he is not sure how old the plan is for the proposed

**Hoffman Field Expansion (cont'd.)** - baseball complex. Mr. Miller noted that the township could possibly put a ball field at the Smola property off of Farmington Avenue. Mr. Dallas, prior Board member for Pottsgrove Little League (he is not speaking on behalf of the current Pottsgrove Little League Board) advised that the concept was discussed over the years, and the goal was to have a central location where all age groups could play and for the possibility of drawing outside organizations to hold their tournaments at this central location. Mr. Dallas noted that the proposal is changing the orientation of the lower field which is going to require tremendous grading work. In addition, lighting and concession would eventually be required with such a complex, and noted there is limited water and not sewer available at the property. Chairman Churach agreed to contact Mr. Mitchell and advise him to contact Commission Miller regarding this matter.

**Reports** – Chairman Churach reported on the following:

- A. The pavilion for Sunset Park has been ordered. The road crew will install gravel base. Mr. Miller will investigate whether excess grant funds may be used to provide utility installation.
- B. A Facebook page for Upper Pottsgrove Open Space and Recreation Board has been created. He will continue to monitor the page seeking public input and also post news and events in an effort to keep the public informed and involved.
- C. Hollenbach Park expansion will be underway soon. Township involvement expense will be confined to some minor drainage work and adding some stone to the new parking areas.
- D. Chairman Churach is the new representative from Upper Pottsgrove for the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee Recreation subcommittee. The previous representative was Jack Layne. The meetings are monthly, and Chairman Churach will report highlights at our bi-monthly meetings. The following are highlights from the February 23, 2014 meeting:
  1. The DCNR circuit rider grant for the regional recreation coordinator has been approved for a four-year term. A task force will be formed by the paying municipalities to establish specifics relevant to the position. The candidate search will be funded by Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, and conducted by Sue Landes (the person who gave the initial presentation to us). Pottstown Mercury article included in your packet.
  2. A contest is in the works to see which area park attracts the most visitors. You will vote by scanning a QR code at the park with your phone. A \$5,000 prize is envisioned. More details to come.
  3. A proposal to form a regional trail committee was presented. This group would work with other regional groups to connect each other's trail networks. Mr. Miller and Chairman Churach will be the representatives from Upper Pottsgrove if it becomes a reality.

**Public Comment** – There was no public comment.

**Executive Session** – Chairman Churach advised that he did have two items to discuss, but advised members to just keep the information he provided in their packet for possible discussion in the future.

**Adjournment** – A motion by Dallas, seconded by Elliott, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. All aye votes.

**Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 13, 2014 at 7:00 pm.**