COLTS NECK FARMLAND PRESERVATION
AND OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2024

Call to Order – the meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m.

There was a salute to the Flag and the Sunshine Law Notice was read. Jena Cosimo, Kevin Casey, and Kevin O'Connor were sworn in.

A roll call occurred. The meeting was attended by: Chair Jena Cosimo, Committeewoman Sue Fitzpatrick, John Clemente, Alternate 1, Kevin O'Connor, Tom Morin, Dina Ryan, and Jonathon Fabozzi. Alternate 2 Kevin Casey

Excused or Absent: Michael Stivala, Alison DeNoia, Scott Britton

Mr. Fabozzi made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2024, meeting. Mr. O Connor seconded. There was a roll call. The minutes were adopted.

Old Business

Farmland Preservation Update – There are currently no active farmland projects, landowner outreach is occurring to eligible farms and inquiries continue to be made by interested landowners.

REPI/NWSE Update – Monmouth County is awaiting funds from the Navy through their carbon sequestration program to make the County whole on their contribution to bridge the shortfall in 50% Navy funds for the preservation of Overbrook.

Partners are exploring additional projects. A survey and updated appraisal will be underway shortly on a current project. NWSE will be requesting additional funds from the Navy to fund future projects in the pipeline.

CADB Report – There was a discussion about Special Occasion Events (SOE) and the SADC allowing eligible preserved farm owners the right to host limited events in accordance with municipal regulations. The County is receiving many SOE permit requests. Many municipalities are not prepared to handle the requests and are implementing regulations to govern the events.

Open Space & Farmland Tax Increase – There was a discussion amongst the committee about the current open space and farmland tax collected. The governing body is undecided as to whether

to place a referendum on the fall ballot asking voters to approve an increase. The referendum was placed on the ballot last year, but due to an error in the wording, the results were nullified. The town sent a letter to all residents explaining this, however there are concerns that some residents may not be aware the referendum wasn't enacted even though it passed.

It was suggested that if the governing body decides to place the referendum on the ballot again this year, they should post the letter from last year explaining the error on the municipal website.

A motion was made by Kevin O'Connor to make a recommendation to the township committee in support of placing a referendum on the fall ballot asking the voters to approve an increase to the municipal farmland and open space collection. Mr. Fabozzi seconded the motion. There was a discussion about educating the proposed tax and educating the community. A suggestion was made that if the town decides to place the question on the ballot, the town should post the letter that was sent to residents in 2023 explaining the error on the 2023 question on the website.

There was a roll call. All were in favor. None were opposed. The motion passed. The chair of the committee will draft a letter to the governing body outlining this recommendation.

New Business

It was noted that on May 22, 2024, at 7 pm the Township Committee will have their meeting/Town Hall discussion of the upcoming round for affordable housing at the Conover Road Primary School Auditorium. Those interested in learning more should attend.

Comments from the Public

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to open the meeting up to public comment. Ms. Ryan seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed. The meeting was opened to public comment.

Elise Spadea, 73 Mercer Road, Colts Neck, was present. Ms. Spadea introduced herself and asked some questions about how the preservation process works.

Frank Lecceses, 15 Candlewick Way, Colts Neck was present. Mr. Lecceses introduced himself and expressed support for preservation.

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to close the meeting to public comment. Ms. Ryan seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed. The meeting was closed to public comment.

The next Farmland and Open Space Committee Meeting will be held on July 8, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. at 3 Veterans Way, Colts Neck Township

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ms. Cosimo.