

Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2023

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.

A roll call occurred. The meeting was attended by: Chair Jena Cosimo, Liaison Sue Fitzpatrick, John Clemente, Michael Stivala, Scott Britton Alternate 1, Alison DeNoia, Kevin O'Connor, Tom Morin, Dina Ryan, and Jonathon Fabozzi

Excused or Absent: Albert D. Yodakis

No guests were present.

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2023, meeting. Mr. Stivala 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.

Green Acres Update – The town successfully acquired a 29-acre property as an addition to Five Points Park using NJ DEP Green Acres funds and Monmouth County funds through their new acquisition grant program. NJ DEP Green Acres announced a new funding round with applications due early 2024.

REPI/NWSE Update – The pilot REPI project located in northern Howell recently closed. Partners are preparing to close on the purchase of the development rights to Overbrook Farm. Unfortunately, partners were unable to meet the fiscal year expiration date of September 30 for the FY18 funds and lost the FY18 funding leaving a shortfall for the Overbrook acquisition by about $620,000. Monmouth County agreed to make up the shortfall. The closing should occur any day.

A subsequent Navy/REPI grant award was anticipated for a future Colts Neck project, but it was contingent on the spending of the FY18 funds. Given that the funds expired, it is likely that

partners won't receive the additional funds, and partners will have to ask for more funding from the program next year. The loss of the FY18 funds will hurt requests for more funding.

CADB Report – No Colts Neck preserved farm has applied for a special occasion event based on the new rules approved by the SADC. The soil protection standards comment period had been extended to February 2024.

Open Space & Farmland Tax Increase – There was an error in the financials in the explanatory statement on the ballot referendum. The error was recognized after the mail in ballots were mailed. The Township Committee made the decision to nullify the results of the ballot question due to the error. A flyer was mailed to all Colts Neck residents explaining the error. The Township Committee intends to place the referendum on the ballot again next year asking for the increase to the open space and farmland tax.

Preservation Education Outreach Campaign – The committee expressed concerns over confusion if the question is placed on the ballot again next year. It was felt that additional community outreach may be necessary to explain to residents that the increase didn't occur following the 2023 election. The committee also discussed sending out "good news" postcards to spread the goods news about the preservation of Overbrook early next year, so residents understand where the funds from the tax are utilized.

<u>New Business</u>

Corporate Business Tax – A 2.5% CBT surcharge on every dollar of corporate profits over $1 million was adopted in 2018 by Governor Murphy. The revenue provides funding for land preservation. The CBT surcharge sunsets on December 31st and will reduce the funding available for land preservation through programs such as Green Acres and the SADC's farmland preservation program. Preservation supporters are advocating for an extension of the surcharge.

SADC Farmland Preservation Program Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program 2025 Application – In order to be eligible for SADC funding, each municipality must provide an annual update to the target farms list to the SADC. The update was prepared by Mr. Anfuso, the town planner, and shared with the committee prior to the meeting for review and approval for submission to the SADC. No major updates were noted.

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to approve the annul SADC PIG update and for submission to the SADC. Ms. Ryan seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed. The motion passed.

Comprehensive Farmland Plan Update – In addition to the annual update, municipalities are also required to complete a comprehensive update every ten years. Mr. Anfuso has been working on the comprehensive update and has submitted a draft for review to the SADC. The plan will be presented for adoption by the Township Committee in 2024.

<u>Comments from the Public</u>

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to open the meeting up to public comment. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed. The meeting was opened to public comment. No public participants were present at the meeting. Ms. Cosimo made a motion to close the meeting to public comment. Ms. DeNoia 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 December 11, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. at 3 Veterans Way, Colts Neck Township

Ms. Cosimo made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Stivala seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ms. Cosimo.