



## Peter Barnes Wildlife Preserve Commission

216 Amboy Avenue, Metuchen NJ 08840

Public Meeting - March 29, 2022, 7:00 pm

Commissioners: Dorothy Rasmussen, Walter Stochel, Kenneth Sammond, Bob Seader, Charles Tomaro, Rob Bencivenga

Guests: Peter Fairclough, David Nelson

**Chair Rasmussen** opened the meeting at 7:07 pm. She asked the commissioners to review the minutes and asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes.

**Walter Stochel** made a motion to approve the minutes. **Rob Bencivenga** seconded. All commissioners approved.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that as a matter of old business that we need to approve the resolution to pay Najarian Associates.

**Rob Bencivenga** made motion. **Ken Sammond** seconded. All commissioners approved.

**Chair Rasmussen** put forth a resolution the creation of Peter Barnes III Wildlife Preserve signs to be made through the support of private donations. **Charles Tomaro** made a motion. **Rob Bencivenga** seconded. All commissioners approved.

**Rob Bencivenga** brought up some old business to confirm whether or not the Chevron property located in South Plainfield had been removed from the metes and bounds of the Barnes Preserve and that the truck route for the Helen Street extension had been accommodated.

**Walter Stochel** wanted to make sure that South Plainfield had reviewed the updated metes and bound map, showing a version completed and signed on July 2021. He stated that the Chevron lots in Edison are deeded and cannot be removed. Walter Stochel gave copy of the official, approved map to Rob **Bencivenga**, who added his signature alongside that of the other commissioners.

**Rob Bencivenga** requested a copy of the resolution for South Plainfield council to pass at their upcoming meeting. He asked about protocol regarding the resolution.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that the resolution should be introduced at a regular public council meeting, then voted on by the town council.

**Rob Bencivenga** stated that he will give the resolution to the South Plainfield council on Monday or put it on agenda for the 18<sup>th</sup> of April at 7 pm meeting. He stated that he will be there in support of the resolution. He will also ask the town clerk invite other members of the commission.

**Chair Rasmussen:** We can introduce the commission. And we can tie it into Gulton.

**Rob Bencivenga** stated that there is a spot at the end of Coolidge where you can put a path over to Edison.

**Walter Stochel** recounted how he had led an eco-walk up the Songbird trail toward South Plainfield last Sunday. He pointed out that from there we can walk or bike to the downtown, which is good.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that it would be ideal if we could link it to Woodbrook in the future. But there is the railroad line in the way.

**Charles Tomaro** pointed out that Conrail wants to open up to Atlantic Landfill and Chevron as part of contract to remove hazardous fill. He mentioned that the County Executives proposed to Conrail that we put a trail alongside the rail line so as to not impede or interfere with it, but the railroad said no.

**Walter Stochel** stated that the rest of the Greenway was abandoned, which is the reason it exists.

**Chair Rasmussen** asked if we approved the resolution regarding the metes and bounds as described in Najarian's report. **Walter Stochel** made a motion. **Rob Bencivenga** seconded.

Dorothy stated that we need to set a meeting schedule going forward and that the end of the month would be preferred. She asked if the fourth Tuesday of the month would be okay? If it is, we could set that as the official meeting day for each month.

**Walter Stochel** gave an update on Woodbrook, the Superfund site in Edison. EPA in contact with responsible party. EPA feasibility study is currently being done (add details from Walter's email) attached.

**Rob Bencivenga** stated that he will try to get the resolution on Monday's agenda at South Plainfield and will work to have the council approve it then.

**Chair Rasmussen** informed us that Walter will attend the meeting on behalf of the commissioners.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that we should be spending money on projects such as improved signage and improved trails.

**Walter Stochel** pointed out that the Songbird trail is based on an old road, which can be transformed easily into an ADA compliant trail.

**Chair Rasmussen** mentioned that she spoke with developer of the Gulton Site on the previous evening. Match whatever kind of materials are used. Want a serene look. Similar look, etc. Looking to make it ADA compliant. Per the law.

She also stated that we also need to see how this consideration fits into the larger branding of the Barnes Wildlife Preserve. We need to advance public communication more intently. We need to create a good or better website. We should create a one stop web location for activities in areas with oversight by the Barnes Commission, since they are all done in different towns. We should also include events such as the Barnes preserve Earth Day and Walter's Eco Tours among other possibilities.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that we should also get word out via social media. Maybe get a high school student or a college student for a project.

**Chair Rasmussen** pointed out that Metuchen has planned an Earth Day event to be in the Barnes Preserve and that we are getting permission from the Gulton Site developer to allow entry for that day.

She asked where the brook is.

**Peter Fairclough** responded that it runs from the Metuchen DPW toward the Talmadge Road underpass.

**Chair Rasmussen** suggested that we extend an invite to Rick Lear, the head of Middlesex County Parks.

**Charles Tomaro** pointed out the Mr. Lear is busy that day.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that Metuchen DPW will provide a garbage truck and bags for volunteers

**David Nelson** mentioned that the Liberty Street area needs a cleanup.

**Ken Sammond** stated that the signage there is broken and needs a complete repair.

**Rob Bencivenga** stated that some work needs to be done near Celebrations, a development abutting the Preserve in South Plainfield.

**Walter Stochel** said that we should talk to Rick Lear about some minor parkland development.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that we should coordinate and promote cleanups of the Barnes Preserve and asked if South Plainfield has anything planned.

**Rob Bencivenga** stated that South Plainfield has organized a town-wide cleanup for the third weekend in April and that the town is always looking for places to assign people. One is scheduled each year in April and another in September.

**Chair Rasmussen** emphasized that we need to coordinate all such events.

**Chair Rasmussen** asked Rob if South Plainfield has nominated anyone else for the commission.

**Rob Bencivenga** said that they are looking still.

**Chair Rasmussen** asked the guests to introduce themselves and describe why they are attending the meeting, referring to Peter Fairclough who helps with environmental work; and David Nelson.

**Peter Fairclough** stated that he is retired now and doing sustainability studies now. He likes going into the swamp, cleaning it up, clearing trees.

**David Nelson** stated that he was an early greenway guy who is interested in the swamp.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated they are always welcome.

**Walter Stochel** introduced a discussion about signage and distributed examples, pointing out that we need universal signage in the Barnes Preserve. He reiterated that if we have a website and social media, we need uniformity across all outreach.

**Ken Sammond** asked if the county is going to manage the properties in the Barnes Preserve, will their signage be standard for the Barnes Preserve?

**Charles Tomaro** stated they would only put county signage on county property.

**Chair Rasmussen** asked how much we can spend before we need to put things out to bid.

**Rob Bencivenga** stated \$1750.

**Chair Rasmussen** asked what our thoughts are on soliciting web designers?

**Rob Bencivenga** stated that we should use shared services, suggesting that Edison could host the Barnes Preserve website on their webhosting service.

**Charles Tomaro** suggested talking to Bob Diehl, the Chief of Staff of the mayor there, who is also on the commission.

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that she liked the idea of centralizing that resource in Edison.

**Walter Stochel** suggested that the commissioners visit to Mercer Meadows Park and he distributed a descriptive handout of the park. He also suggested that we centralize the Barnes Commission to the property at 205 Tyler Road in Edison.

**Chair Rasmussen** asked what is located at 205 Tyler Road?

**Walter Stochel** stated that there is a vacant house there which was donated to environmental commission of Edison. We would need grant money to make ADA compliant and ideally to take it off the grid.

**Rob Bencivenga** asked, as far as money goes, how much do we have and how much will be coming in the future?

**Chair Rasmussen** stated that we will have to spend in order to get an appropriation.

**Walter Stochel** pointed out that he and Ken talked with the Green Acres commissioner at the Barnes Preserve unveiling event with the governor in August 2021.

He also stated that we cannot match Green Acres funding with what is in the budget since it already is state money, which cannot be used to match other state money.

He asked what can we do when something occurs within the boundaries of the Preserve? What action can we take?

**Rob Bencivenga** affirmed that we have land use jurisdiction, but not enforcement and that we should explore this point further.

**Rob Bencivenga** made a motion to adjourn. **Charles Tomaro** seconded. All commissioners approved. The meeting concluded at 8:43 PM.