



Peter Barnes Wildlife Preserve Commission

216 Amboy Avenue, Metuchen NJ 08840

Metuchen Borough Public Meeting – March 9, 2023, 7:00 pm

Location: Metuchen First Aid Squad Conference Room

Commissioners: Dorothy Rasmussen, Chair; Walter Stochel, Vice Chair; Ken Sammond, Secretary; Tom Walsh, Bob Diehl, Charles Tomaro, Bob Spiegel. John Wiley, Legal Counsel.

Public: Brian Weeks, Mark Herzberg, Michael Spiegel, Peter Fairclough, Judy Hopey, Tom Dowling, Dave Nelson, Gerry Rice, Pat and John Teeple.

Chair Dorothy Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM and reviewed the agenda. She announced the email address for comments: barnespreserve@gmail.com.

Field Code Changed

Each of the commissioners introduced themselves.

Walter Stochel conducted the slideshow presentation of the Master Plan.

Dorothy asked if there were any questions or comments.

Bob Diehl pointed out that the commission plans or has discussed low impact development such as building trails, kiosks, and some yurts. He stated that it would be akin to development in Lord Stirling park. He also stated that an ADA trail would benefit users...it should be a permeable trail.

Bob Spiegel said that the Songbird Trail could become ADA compliant.

Peter Fairclough pointed out that an ADA trail could possibly be built on the old Kilmer spur rail bed.

Walter said that the area nearby the rail bed, also known as the Gulton Tract, has been remediated and around 3000 trees have been planted, which are fenced in to protect it from deer and other animals.

Brian Weeks as if there is any risk or large development under way.

Walter stated that biggest risk is the way that the Woodbrook Superfund will be remediated.

John stated that the master plan permits us to work with citizen groups to acquire and hold property.

Bob Spiegel stated that, once remediated, the property would have to be held by someone, and the commission's ability to own land will benefit that process.

Mark Herzberg asked if there been any special communications to other private landowners?

Walter stated that he was not aware of any communications beyond general public outreach.

Dorothy pointed out that once we have the power with adoption of the Master Plan, we will have to be contacted with regard to what they will do or want to do with their land.

Dave Nelson stated that the key concern is that zoning and planning ordinances will be written by and for the Barnes Commission that will supersede other powers normally held by the municipalities.

Dorothy stated that such is true. We will create land use ordinances.

Bob Diehl stated that we will make some similar to the Pinelands Commission

John emphasized that we must have a master plan in order to have ordinances created.

Several public attendees asked about invasive species and the deer problem.

Ken discussed the invasive strike force team effort that is beginning in April 2023 and continuing through June. It is a pilot project that will be conducted again in the fall and next spring.

Robert Spiegel stated the Edison Wetland Association uses a beetle to manage purple loosestrife.

Judy Hopey was concerned about people dumping trash in the preserve and asked what to do about it? She stated that she and others try to help out and remove garbage but it is a challenge.

Bob Diehl thanked them for their efforts.

Tom Dowling stated that cooperation from Conrail and PSEG is needed determine how and what they will do with their properties.

John Wiley state that once power is created by master plan...we can require PSEG to see us first prior to any cutting. Then we can tell zoning officers in different towns that all such requests must come to us.

Michael Spiegel asked if we have signage about "no dumping".

Walter stated that we currently do not.

Bob Spiegel stated that only 60 acres of the preserve has such signage.

Mark Herzberg commended the commissioners for the process.

Walter stated that the metes and bounds have fixed the area of our jurisdiction, which includes private properties such as Texas Eastern, the Woodbrook site, the Chevron site in Edison, etc.

Brian Weeks asked if there was any opportunity to create wetlands in the preserve using state funding.

Robert Spiegel stated that there should be some opportunities over by the Songbird Trail.

Walter stated that some deeds restrict wetlands mitigation (including the Green Acres land).

Brian Weeks pointed out that he is very impressed with the plan.

Dorothy asked if there were any other comments.

Robert Spiegel thanked the commissioners, but especially Peter Barnes for his legislation in making this preserve possible.

Ken stated that final comments are due by April 13, 11:59 pm to barnespreserve@gmail.com

Field Code Changed