



Dismal Swamp Preservation Commission

216 Amboy Avenue. Metuchen NJ 08840

Special Meeting May 5, 2021, 7:00 pm

Conducted via Zoom

Commissioners: Dorothy Rasmussen, Chair; Walter Stochel, Vice Chair; Kenneth Sammond, Secretary, Bob Diehl, Treasurer; Charles Tomaro, Rob Bengivenga, John Wiley, Legal Counsel.

Invited Guest: Jonathan Busch, Mayor of Metuchen

Other guests: Gpstrav, Michael Comba,

- Chair Rasmussen opened the meeting with a call to order at 7:05 PM. She welcomed everyone and stated that Jonathan Busch, Mayor of Metuchen, had some news and plans he wanted to share regarding the Gulton site.
- Mayor Busch summarized the work completed so far by the developer/remediator at the old Gulton site, located on Durham Avenue. He stated that there is a raised rail bed, which is helping stop polluted runoff from the old Gulton factory, which produced capacitors. He stated that the developer has spent \$7 million so far to clean up the site, up to the raised rail bed (approximately 5-10 acres).
- John Wiley stated that this all on the west side of the creek.
- Mayor Busch stated that the developer is removing all dumped debris. The warehouses will be taken down and we are planning to have a public access point there for the Dismal Swamp. This is a pilot project to create another passive recreation space in Metuchen, including walk trails and bird watching trails. The hope is that the borough's land will be combined with the cleaned up private property to become part of a park. Ideally, this will merge 25 acres (known as the Boy Scout + 12-13 acres from the privately owned Gulton property).
- John Wiley stated that this will join with public easement property nearby.
- Walter asked if that raised rail bed was the Camp Kilmer rail spur, which is alongside 60 acres next to Durham Woods development.
- Mayor Busch shared a map of Metuchen to show what areas will be transformed into a mixed-use development and how it will incorporate a

separate grand entrance in Metuchen for the Dismal Swamp. He hopes that the Dismal Swamp Commissioners will help support this vision. He noted that nothing is formally prepared yet, but that he wanted to make us aware of the intention and early plans.

- John Wiley suggested that the borough's environmental commission should be looped in too.
- Bob Diehl asked how big of a mixed-use development was being created. What is the ratio of apartments/stores versus passive open space?
- Mayor Busch stated that there is some parking designated for the development and some more dedicated for the Dismal Swamp and the Greenway extension.
- Bob Diehl stated that the most appealing part is the idea of an entrance. An entrance that people can find easily and quickly. Recognizable and easy to find.
- Mayor Busch shared a concept of the proposed plan (the trailhead park and the southern gateway to Middlesex preserve or Dismal Swamp). He stated that they are focused on the opportunity for access, pointing out that the ultimate idea is to have the county take over management of the land and the facilities.
- Walter Stochel stated how currently, Metuchen is not investing much of anything in the Dismal Swamp.
- John Wiley remarked to the mayor that the commission is attempting to create a metes and bounds in Metuchen, and the other municipalities. He pointed out that the chain-link fence at the edge of the Gulton property is coterminous with the line of the metes and bounds, but much of this area in the concept plan (which includes the Gulton tract land) is outside the metes and bounds.
- Walter Stochel state that the boundaries look good and will not affect the current proposal. He argued that Edison can extend the trails down to Edison Woods park, effectively linking this Metuchen section and the Greenway extension.
- Mayor Busch stated that a fuller and more detailed proposal is being readied for a ready for a public presentation on Saturday, May 22, 2021. He stated that there will be public input sessions at Trailhead park. He is inviting the Dismal Swamp Commissioners to attend and be part of the discussion, get information out ahead a couple of days prior to in order to plan and present better. He encouraged the commissioners to be part of this public process.
- Charles Tomaro stated that he is interested in this development.
- Busch – negotiating language that is not comfortable.
- Charles Tomaro stated also that we need to move Conrail to get the next step for cleaning up the Super Fund site abutting the section of the Dismal Swamp in South Plainfield (Cornell-Dublier).

- Diehl – do not think that this will be a problem (only problem will be with the mixed use, parking, etc.
- Busch stated that this is being called a “Greenprint for Metuchen.”
- Walter stated that if the railroad is not moving on and will never move on certain parts of the Greenway extension, then there should be progress in that direction.
- Chair Rasmussen concurred, stating that this is an exciting vision of things to come.
- John Wiley asked if Najarian get back to Dorothy or Walter regarding the suggested changes.
- Walter Stochel stated that they have not yet gotten back but that he expects one is forthcoming in the next few days.
- Chair Rasmussen stated that we will be meeting next to finalize metes and bounds (ultimately towns must pass resolution to accept the empowerment of the DSC
- Walter recommended meeting at the end of the month. Once we adopt the map of the metes and bounds, we can get back to Edison in June. Hopefully, all will be official then by Labor day.
- Chair Rasmussen stated that she would send an email to schedule our meeting on Tuesday, the 25th of May.
- Bob Diehl agreed that once we meet and adopt the metes and bounds, we can put ourselves on the meeting calendar in Edison.
- Walter asked if we need to draft a common resolution for all three towns.
- John Wiley agreed stating that we need a one-page fact sheet.
- Charles Tomaro shared a draft for signage for the Peter Barnes Wildlife Preserve, which will be the new designation for the Dismal Swamp area.
- Ken Sammond stated that he will work with Walter to create the fact sheet and that they should seek out additional guidance from John Wiley.
- Walter stated that such would be a good idea and that he will also ask members of the Edison Wetlands Group for assistance.
- Bob Diehl made a motion to adjourn. Ken Sammond seconded. All approved. The meeting concluded at 8:15 PM.