

## **Narberth Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes**

Date: January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006

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Attendees: Todd Bressi, Mary Jo Pauxtis, Paula Estornell, Eli Holtman, Bob Wegbreit, Bill Martin, Matt Pettigrew

The meeting began at 7:35 pm

Todd distributed an updated draft of the Implementation Chapter to the Committee and spoke about the changes suggested by the Montgomery County Open Space Board in order to finalize the plan. Per Mike Stokes at the Board, the Open Space Board only requires a cover memo accompanying by the plan pages that have changed. Since the revisions to the plan were minimal, the changes can be submitted seven days before one of their upcoming meetings to be considered. Todd noted that the Board's next meeting was January 24<sup>th</sup> and the meeting following that is scheduled for February 14<sup>th</sup>. Todd felt that his office could submitted the required changes by January 17<sup>th</sup> to have the plan ready for final approval on the January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting by the Board. Todd also noted that in light of the minor nature of the plan revisions, Mike Stokes said that there was no reason that the Board's approval of the plan could not occur concurrently with the Council's approval of the plan. Also, Mike Stokes indicated that it was not necessary for anyone from the Borough to attend the Board's meeting and that the Committee could make the decision as to whether someone would attend or not and who should go. As soon as the Open Space Board approves the plan, we can begin meeting with the Open Space staff to file an application and to discuss the mechanics of the process – discussing projects and how the implementation is approached.

There was a discussion about the time limitations on the funding. Bill Martin noted that there was almost two years on the initial round of funding before any unused funds are reclaimed by the County and returned to a general pool. Todd noted that per the guidelines and having applied for funding, there is a one-year period to spend the funds and there are two extensions available.

The Committee agreed to submit the plan changes for the Board's February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting meaning that the plan revisions should be transmitted by

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---

February 7<sup>th</sup>. Bob Wegbreit suggested that any changes to the Implementation chapter should be back to Todd by February 3<sup>rd</sup> to allow Todd enough time to make the changes and submit. Bill Martin will distribute the draft of the transmittal to the Board to the members of the Committee and to members of Council.

Paula also submitted an updated document of alternative funding sources beyond the Green Fields/Green Towns program.

Mary Jo noted that at the Council's reorganization meeting on January 3<sup>rd</sup> that Council Committees were assigned specific projects – both priority and non-priority projects from the open space plan. As a result, contrary to what Mary Jo noted that the last meeting, she felt that the Open Space Committee should be wound down since its work – preparation of the Open Space plan – has been completed and now the Council needs to pick up the implementation of the plan's projects. Mary Jo also noted the Committee members could continue to provide input as individuals upon request of Council Committee chairs on specific projects. In this way, the requirement for meetings would be eliminated while still having the benefit of the Committee members' expertise and knowledge in the process. She acknowledged the Committee members' excellent work and solicited comments from the other members as to whether or not this change would work for the members.

Jason wondered how the Council's standing committees would relate to the implementation of the Open Space Plan. Mary Jo explained that the six members of Council – not the President - each serve on three committees in different capacities – Chair, Associate Chair and Member. The Highway Committee, for example, looked at traffic calming. Public Safety is related to police and fire safety but could also include bike and pedestrian safety. In addition, Mary Jo noted that the Finance Committee would be investigating whether or not a Storm Water Management Authority (SWMA) would make sense for the Borough.

## **Narberth Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes**

Date: January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006

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Mary Jo also noted that the members of Council are aware of the Plan and they are aware of the members of the Committee as resources as part of the implementation process. Mary Jo noted that as part of the original Open Space Plan, the Borough Commissions – such as the Shade Tree Commission – played an active role in the implementation phase for that plan. The implementation of this plan would follow that same model. “Council always has the ability to bring in expertise where it sees fit.”

Paula asked about the implementation phase with respect to the Council Committees implementing the various projects. She suggested the idea of hiring an “advocacy engineer” to help implement both the Open Space projects and the SWMA idea to support the Council Committee chairs to help assure the success of the projects. Chris Finley spoke in support of that idea. Mary Jo noted that the Borough has implemented projects in this manner in the past employing consultants where necessary to accomplish the projects and that the Borough has an excellent track record of success in doing so. Bob Wegbreit asked about the role of the Downtown Committee. Mary Jo noted that is was a model and was limited to the “downtown” area and that the Open Space Plan covers the entire Borough. Also, the Downtown Committee could not authorized funds directly – it always had to go back to Council.

Chris Finley noted a concern with the Downtown Project’s implementation phase and how that project could have been more successful. He stressed the importance of keeping Todd’s firm involved in the implementation phase to assure the continued success of the Open Space projects in line with the Committee’s expectations.

Eli Holtman asked about how the process would work for the implementation phase and would there be public meetings so that interested individuals – such as the Committee members - would be aware of a project’s process and progress to be able to become involved in implementation given that some of the details and the history would not be able to be captured in the

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plan document. Mary Jo noted that there were four Council members chairing various committees on Council and that "they are listening."

Bob Wegbreit noted that the Committee members are more engaged and experienced but to be able to formally become involved would require additional meetings, which may be burdensome. He suggested that Council chairs invite this Committee to key meetings to be able to "transfer knowledge" from the planning process into the implementation phase while keeping the communication channels open.

Eli noted that he is comfortable with the process as it is being proposed and that the idea of closure with respect to this aspect of the project phase is a good one. He would like to see the appropriate members of the Committee with an area of expertise – i.e. – Paula and storm water management – to be able to review plans to be able to have input. Mary Jo agreed.

Paula reiterated the idea of having the Borough hire additional support staff to be able to have, along with the plan, to continue to support the implementation of the Open Space plan and that the funding package she put together provide includes funding for planning and engineering, not just for the Plan but for other environmental issues in support of the Borough.

Chris Finley indicated that a commitment to an "open door" policy with the Council Committees would be sufficient to allay any of his concerns. Mary Jo requested that the Committee members forward to her any projects that they wish to continue to be involved in or have interest in, she would pass that along to the respective Committee chairs. Matt Pettigrew requested that contact information for the Committee members be forwarded to him for reference by the Council chairs.

Todd Bressi noted the importance of making a smooth transition from the Committee to the various council members. In support of that transition, Todd said that it be appropriate for the chairs of the Committee, or the Committee as a whole, to attend the council meeting where the plan is taken up

## **Narberth Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes**

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and formally present it to Borough Council. This will be on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and Todd suggested that the Open Space Committee all attend that meeting. Todd also mentioned the Committee may want to attend the Planning Commission, which is meeting on February 7, 2006 to brief them on the Plan as well.

Chris Finley indicated that the tree inventory could begin right after the Plan is adopted and that it would be important to build in a process within the Borough's processes to keep the tree inventory current once complete. For example, an annual update to track trees lost or added as well as any trees added through the land development process.

Todd Bressi noted that since the plan has been discussed regularly in public meetings, the Open Space Board would not necessarily require another public meeting. However, the Board did recommend that they would like this Plan adopted as if it were an element of the Comprehensive Plan, which according to the State's municipal planning law requires public notice and hearings. Todd noted that this is the only remaining obligation. Bill Martin agreed to make sure the public notice for the adoption of the plan would be properly made.

The meeting adjourned at around 9:30.