

**OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING  
February 4, 2025 MEETING MINUTES**

McDade Administration Building  
Planning Department (4<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
640 South Broad Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068  
**\*\*Meeting via Zoom online\*\***

**VOTING MEMBERS:**

*(Present)*

Maria Connolly, Director of Planning, County Executive Representative  
Haig Kasabach, Chair, Assunpink Representative  
Alan Hershey, Vice Chair, Piedmont Representative  
Michael Shine, Planning Board Representative  
Mike Long, Park Commission Representative  
Timothy London, Urban Representative  
Emily Blackman, Mercer CADB Representative  
Wendy Mager, Millstone Representative

*(Absent)*

Dan Benson, County Executive

**NON-VOTING:**

*(Present)*

Cindy Taylor, Secretary

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Kasabach called the February 4, 2025 meeting of the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board to order at 5:03 p.m.

**I. STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE**

Ms. Taylor announced that pursuant to the Sunshine Law, notice of this meeting was advertised in the Trenton Times on April 7, 2024 and posted on the Mercer County Planning Department website.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Kasabach noted an error in the August 6, 2024 draft minutes; Ms. Blackman was incorrectly listed as absent. Ms. Taylor made the correction, and Mr. Hershey moved to approve the minutes with the correction. Ms. Blackman seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT: None**

**IV. OLD BUSINESS:**

Ms. Taylor shared an update on the grant applications that were approved in 2024. The Lanwin I, Carcagno, Kuser Road, and Giardino projects were all completed. Ridgeview Conservancy's Princeton Academy of Sacred Heart (PASH) fee and easement projects are still ongoing.

**V. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. New Member – The Open Space Preservation Board welcomed Mike Long as the new Mercer County Park Commission Representative. Mr. Long is the Director of Stewardship for the Commission.
- b. Reorganization

- i. Officers – Ms. Mager made a motion to nominate the slate, which is Mr. Kasabach as Chair, Mr. Hershey as Vice Chair, and Ms. Taylor as Secretary. Mr. Shine seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- ii. Schedule – Ms. Mager made a motion to adopt the 2025 schedule, to meet every other month on the first Tuesday. Mr. Hershey seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- iii. Mercer County Open Space Assistance Program Policy Re-evaluation – The Board made an edit to the 2024 policy, clarifying that total public funds *for acquisition* cannot exceed the acquisition price. This clarification was needed because public funds for the project can, and often do, exceed purchase price, as some funds are specifically designated towards due diligence rather than acquisition price. Mr. Hershey made a motion to approve the revised policy and Ms. Mager seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- iv. 2025 Tax Levy – Mr. Hershey moved to recommend the same levy as 2024 and Mr. Long seconded the motion. Ms. Mager suggested that in the future, referendum questions for voters on the Open Space Trust Fund could address how ancillary costs, such as staff salary and benefits, are funded. The Board had further discussion about the language in the tax levy resolution, regarding whether the word ‘allow’ in the phrase “... to *allow* at least 50% of the amount raised by the existing tax levy...” was appropriate and whether its meaning is clearly understood. Mr. Kasabach made a new motion that the Board approve the tax levy resolution language as presented if the term “allow” was used in the referendum question, and to change the tax levy resolution language to “... to *allocate* at least 50% of the amount raised by the existing tax levy...” if the language was not directly from the referendum. Ms. Blackman seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously. Ms. Taylor later confirmed that ‘allow’ was used in the referendum question, so it will remain in the final version of the tax levy resolution language.

## VI. DISCUSSION:

### a. Project Updates

- i. Ms. Taylor gave an overview of acquisition projects the County is currently pursuing:
  - 1. Farmland Preservation
    - a. County staff are in discussion to preserve the DiDonato property in Hopewell Township, which is a targeted farm in Mercer County’s Farmland Preservation Plan. The lot is a remaining unpreserved lot surrounded by preserved farmland in that area.
    - b. Farmland Preservation – County staff are in discussion with the landowners of the Notterman property in East Windsor, which is a targeted farm in Mercer County’s Farmland Preservation Plan.
  - 2. Open Space
    - a. Mercer County has an executed agreement of sale for the Dale property in Hopewell Township. Due diligence is complete but the Estate is still working to clear legal title issues. Once acquired, the property will be managed as part of the Howell Living History Farm.
    - b. D&R Greenway Land Trust has an executed agreement of sale for the Hoge II property in Hopewell Township, which will be transferred to County ownership at closing and will be managed by D&R Greenway.
    - c. Mercer County has an executed agreement of sale to purchase the Penn East property in Hopewell Township but the sale is currently under litigation.
    - d. Mercer County is starting appraisal work for the Exxon Mobil property on Duck Island, which is across the street from a D&R Greenway preserved property.
    - e. Negotiations have restarted for the purchase of the Conrail Line in Hamilton and Robbinsville Townships for the purpose of a rails to trails project. Mercer County is looking to partner with the Open Space Institute on the acquisition.
- ii. Mr. Long gave an overview of Mercer County Park Commission (MCPC) project updates:
  - 1. Lawrence Hopewell Trail – MCPC upgraded a section of trail by the Stony Brook bridge at Rosedale Park. Contractors installed a geogrid to contain the stone dust used in the trail, and construction was completed at the end of September.

2. Dam Site 21 – Dredging and grading was completed in late August and the lake has been refilled. MCPC is prepared to submit applications for trail improvements to NJDEP. There has been a delay because the pipeline on the property must be surveyed prior to application submission. Permitting is expected to take 6-9 months. Concurrently, the sewer service area is being amended so future bathrooms at the property can use sewer rather than septic.
3. Trenton Wharf – This property is owned by the City of Trenton. DOT is installing a new flood wall and the MCPC will fund park improvements once the wall is complete. Park improvements could start as early as August and will likely continue into 2026.
4. Moores Station Quarry – The quarry is filling with water faster than anticipated. The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) is planning a feasibility study to assess the quarry’s ability to be converted to a reservoir. The reservoir would be used to combat salt intrusion from tidal activity. Park development has slowed, as a solution to manage the water level is the current priority.
5. Rosedale Park Improvements – MCPC applied for a Green Acres Jake’s Law grant to fund a fully inclusive playground at Rosedale Park. MCPC also applied for a Green Acres Stewardship grant for ecological enhancement of Rosedale Lake. The enhancement includes targeted phragmites and other invasive species removal, as well as installing a living shoreline and floating wetlands.

**VII. CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**VIII. CLOSED SESSION** (if necessary): None

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Taylor*

Cindy Taylor, Secretary