

**Ocean County Natural Lands Trust Fund  
Minutes of Advisory Committee Meeting  
May 22, 2024**

**Present:** Alan Avery (Chair), David McKeon (Vice-Chair), William Fox, Lisa Hodgson, John Bacchione, Jennifer Kuhn, Greg Myhre, John Peterson & Michael Mangum

Also present at the meeting were: Frank Sadeghi (Commissioner), Laura Benson (County Counsel), Anthony Agliata (OCPD), Robert Kuhne (OCSWM), Geoffrey Lohmeyer (OCP&R), Chris Palmieri (OCPD), Tom Thorsen (OCPD), Larisa Paxton (OCPD), Tim Gleason (OCPD), Lea Vasilakis (OCPD), Jennifer Morganti (OCPD), George Gilmore (Public), Mayor Robert Arace (Manchester), Administrator Carl Block (Manchester), Jennifer Bacchione (Public), Larry Bathgate (Public)

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Oath of Office**

- Ms. Benson administered the Oath of Office for new member Michael Mangum.

**3. Roll Call**

**4. Approval of Minutes: April 24, 2024**

Mr. McKeon asked that the April Minutes be amended to correct a typographical error.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. Bacchione to approve the April 24, 2024 meeting minutes. Mr. Mangum abstained, rest in favor, motion carried.

**5. TR Ridgeway Branch North, 89.57 acres., Manchester Twp. –**

Mr. Gilmore addressed the Committee regarding TR Ridgeway Branch North in Manchester Township and that this property would be a great acquisition for the purpose of preservation. Mayor Arace also expressed his support for the acquisition and noted that Manchester Township would be willing to donate an adjacent parcel totaling 6 acres if the County were to purchase the land. Administrator Block mentioned that the County has an opportunity to have a tract of continuous preservation if the Committee decided to purchase the property, and if developed, this property could fit 404 housing units. Mr. Bathgate expressed his patience with the process and that he is eager to preserve this land rather than develop it. Mayor Arace stated that the tax assessor for Manchester Township noted that this property is best for preservation over development. Mayor Bacchione noted that he is in favor of this acquisition. Mrs. Bacchione noted that the traffic in the subject area would suffer if this property were to be developed, and that more homes on the property would be detrimental to the density in the area. Mr. Myhre stated that if the property is consistent with the program that he would also be in favor of the acquisition. Mayor Peterson noted that the property is consistent with the program and that he is in favor of the acquisition. Mr. Gilmore expressed his gratitude to the Advisory Committee for allowing them to advocate their desire to preserve the property, and that he hopes the Committee will highly consider preserving the property. The Advisory Committee noted that the information

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presented was helpful and that they would discuss this property more in depth at a future time before coming to a decision.

**6. Program Update: 29,941.26 acres**

- Closings
  - Mill Creek Headwaters – Weber, Berkeley Twp., 0.11 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that we closed on a small 0.11 acre lot in the Mill Creek Headwater project area.
  - Mill Creek Headwaters – Marshall, Berkeley Twp., 0.11 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that we closed on another 0.11 acre piece in the Mill Creek Headwater project area.
  - Run Creek, Tuckerton Borough., 30.28 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that we closed on a 30.28 acre property in Tuckerton Borough. The total piece of land totals 39.28 acres, however the land is being subdivided and Tuckerton is purchasing a 9 acre lot from the County. The 9 acres are not being allocated towards the Natural Lands total preserved acreage.

**7. Old Business**

- Old Business:
  - #718 Berkeley Nine Estates Ext., Berkeley Twp., 4.90 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that staff spoke to Mr. Stillwell, the owner of the property, regarding the above ground storage tanks on the property. The property has a diesel tank which is used to fuel trucks, and three oil burners that go towards the shop burners, the home burners and the oil burners. The Advisory Committee advised staff to see if the tanks are registered with the DEP and to revisit the nomination at another time.
  - #735 Grassle Marsh Ext., Tuckerton Borough., 1.72 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that staff reached out to Tuckerton Borough regarding township support and anticipate the property to be on the agenda in early June. Staff met with Jacques Costeau regarding a partnership on purchasing the property and that they stated that as of this moment, they cannot guarantee a percentage or price that they could contribute, but however have a verbal commitment that they will assist in preservation. The Committee advised staff to return to the nomination at a later time when the Borough of Tuckerton supports the property and Jacques Costeau supplies more information on the partnership.
  
- New Applications:
  - #736 Dry Branch – Gerath, Stafford Twp., 1.06 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that we received a nomination of a small 1 acre lot located in Stafford Township. The property is not adjacent to any of our other Natural Land Preserves and is covered in majority of wetlands. The zoning is Pinelands Village and the asking price for the property is

\$75,000 and it is assessed at \$67,100. The Committee advised staff to gauge the property owner's interest on a donation.

- #623 Jeffreys Creek – Casole, Berkeley Twp., 0.24 acres – Mr. Palmieri informed the Committee that we received a nomination located in the Jeffreys Creek project area. This property was a previous nomination which was moved to hold due to the original asking price. The property owner ended up decreasing the asking price from \$100,000 to \$40,000 and it is assessed at \$17,600. The property was 100% covered in wetlands according to DEP mapping. The Committee was not in favor of the asking price for a property that was covered in wetlands. The Committee advised staff to gauge the property owner's interest on a donation or move the property to hold.

## **8. Public Comment**

No comments were made by the public.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. Peterson to move into Closed Session at 6:16 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.

Mr. Myhre and Ms. Kuhn exited the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. Mangum to move back into Open Session at 6:47 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.

Mr. Avery stated that in closed session two nominations were discussed. There are two nominations that the Committee will take action on.

GLP Voss, Berkeley Twp., 0.73 acres.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. McKeon and seconded by Mr. Peterson to recommend to the Board of Commissioners in an amount not to exceed \$247,000. Roll was called, all in favor, motion carried.

Riccardi Farm, Plumsted Twp., 14.9 acres.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. McKeon to recommend to the Board of Commissioners in an amount not to exceed \$305,000. Roll was called, all in favor, motion carried.

- 9. Adjournment:** A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. Peterson to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.

## **10. Next Meeting: June 26 at 5:30PM**

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Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Palmieri", written in a cursive style.

Chris Palmieri, Program Aide