

**Ocean County Natural Lands Trust Fund
Minutes of Advisory Committee Meeting
March 22, 2023**

Present: Alan Avery (Chair), David McKeon (Vice-Chair), Martin Flemming III, William Fox, Lisa Hodgson, & Terry O’Leary.

Absent: John Bacchione, Greg Myhre, & John Peterson

Also Present at the meeting were: Mathew Thompson (County Counsel), Tom Thorsen (OCPD), Mark Villinger (OCPD), and Nicole Leaf (OCPD)

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Mr. Avery called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Approval of Minutes**
February 22, 2023

Mr. McKeon asked that the February Minutes be amended to reflect his note that for nomination #687, the property is better suited for donation due to the lack of development potential rather than due to low interest. A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. Flemming to approve the February 22, 2023 meeting minutes with the noted correction. Roll was called, all in favor, motioned carried.

4. **NLT Program Update: 26,467.37 acres**

Mr. Villinger informed the Committee that the County closed on four properties since the last meeting:

Cedar Bridge Tavern Preserve (State Swap), Barnegat Twp., 202 acres

The State Swap was finally executed. The County agreed to transfer ownership of the 270-acre Wading River East Branch Property in Stafford Township for 202 acres of State Property around the Cedar Bridge Tavern in Barnegat to improve the existing 5-acre site. The County will now have the opportunity to develop trails, conduct additional historical and archeological research and improve the site to be more of a destination. Mr. McKeon congratulated the Program on completing the swap, as the project has been in the works for a long time.

#626 Main Street – Tuckerton, Tuckerton Boro, 48.21 acres

The county closed on the parcel which fronts along Route 9. The 48-acres extends north to Admiral Drive, but also includes a small parcel further north on Route 9 near Edgewater Drive.

#654 Structural Management Grimaldi, Lacey Twp., 0.98 acres

This donation parcel is the last piece within a section of Structural Management in Lacey. The County can now vacate a number of roads in Lacey Township that are within the project area.

#606 Ridgeway Road River Corridor II, Toms River Twp., 1.85 acres

This property is located within the Toms River Corridor in Manchester. Adjacent to the Boy Scouts Camp, Camp Albocondo, Ridgeway Road River Corridor I, Ridgeway Campground, and the Pine Lake Park, much of the Toms River in the area is now buffered by preserved County Open Space and Township Open Space.

This brings our NLT total preserved acres to 26,467.37.

5. Old Business

#43 Route 9 Waretown, Ocean Twp., 40-acres—Ms. Leaf informed the Committee that the property is an old nomination that was resubmitted following outreach per Committee request. The asking price is \$1,050,000, nonbinding. The property is assessed at \$144,700 and has commercial zoning. Mr. Villinger added that the property may have historical value as the alleged site of the founder of Waretown's grave. Mr. O'Leary said the property has very interesting maritime forest that does have some non-native plants that indicate homes were on site at some point. Mr. McKeon added that the property would help connect a large open space area between the BBT, USF&W property, and additional County Open Space. The Committee authorized staff to request appraisals on the property.

#670 Hanna Property, Ocean Twp., 0.14 acres—Ms. Leaf informed the Committee that this property was recently reviewed, but placed on hold until Staff completed outreach to property #43. The asking price is \$10,000, the assessed value is \$5,200 and is zoned commercial. Since receiving the nomination for property #43, the Committee now authorized staff to request an appraisal for the property.

#159 Osbornville Property, Brick Twp., 18.51 acres—Ms. Leaf told the Committee that this is also an old nomination resubmitted for review. The property has an asking price of \$999,999 and is assessed at \$1,100. The property is surrounded by USF&W property and the prior nomination was forwarded to the same for their own pursuit. Staff recommended forwarding the nomination again to USF&W for consideration as they are working with other organizations to gather funds to possibly acquire various properties. The Committee instructed staff to forward the nomination per their recommendation.

#594 Roosevelt City Inholding – Harrison LLC, Manchester Twp., 1.01 acres—Ms. Leaf told the Committee that this 1.01-acre property was previously reviewed by the Committee, appraisals were authorized in 2021, and an offer of \$6,500 was made to the owner. The owner rejected the offer but reached back out to staff to inquire about a possible increase in value. He presented an offer from \$30,000 from a third party and

asked the Committee to review. Mr. Avery noted that none of the parcels the County has acquired in the Roosevelt City area have reached that high of a value. Mr. Villinger noted that the property does not have any access on improved roads. The Committee deemed the property of low interest for that high of value.

#609 GLP-Biglin, Berkeley Twp., 0.11 acres—Ms. Leaf informed the Committee that this staff had previously negotiated a purchase price with the owners, but the owners requested one more summer in the house before selling. The property owners have reached back out and staff has requested an updated appraisal on the property.

#668 Florence T. Allen Ext. II, Berkeley Twp., 26.79 acres—Mr. Villinger informed the Committee that the owners have resubmitted the property following an agreement with the neighbor to complete a land-swap of property. The property is part of the Blackbeard's Cave amusement area and was identified by the Township as a property of interest for preservation. It is adjacent to the NE Mall donation property that is expected to close in the next few months and has frontage on Route 9. It also neighbors Cosmos Autobody. The nomination now has a more contiguous collection of lots to reach the NE Mall property. The asking price is \$9.9 million and the owners have an appraisal valuation of the property at \$15 million. The Committee noted concerns of the high asking price, the environmental quality of the property, as well as the property's commercial potential on Route 9. The Committee instructed staff to hold action on the property until the neighboring NE Mall property's environmental due diligence is received and evaluated.

Walters Group, Barnegat Twp., 147.66 acres—Mr. Villinger noted that this property is the result of staff inquiry following the Committee review of the Cloverdale Breakers nomination. Walters Group owns a number of private lots in close proximity to the County's Cloverdale Park. Many of those lots are deed restricted and are in the process of being donating to the Township. Staff is requesting Committee consideration of interest in receiving the donation from the owners rather than the Town if all parties are agreeable. Acquisition would support buffering the park as well as provide opportunity for further trail development. A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Flemming and seconded by Mr. McKeon to recommend acceptance of a donation of properties if an offer is made and all parties are agreeable. Roll was called. All in favor, motion carried.

6. New Business

New Nominations:

#695 Dorathy's Lane, Jackson Township, 6.69 acres—Ms. Leaf informed the Committee that the property is adjacent to the Clayton Military Easement as well as Township property. Two homes are on site and the property is accessed off of Ollie Burke Lane. The property has an asking price of \$475,000, is assessed at \$297,200 and is zoned Pinelands Village. It is also near the former Legler Landfill. Mr. Avery asked whether the property is within the target area for the military in their action potential zone. Mr. Villinger confirmed it is a mile within the base, so it would be of interest. Mr. Flemming noted

acquisition would help buffer the gun range at the end of Dorathys Lane. The Committee authorized staff to order appraisals.

#696 Miller Avenue, Jackson Township, 27.50 acres—Ms. Leaf informed the Committee this property is located off Bowman Road and Miller Avenue. The asking price is \$799,000 and the property is assessed at \$101,000. The property is also in close proximity to one of the County's preserved farms. Mr. Avery noted that the property is near Township property, County Parks and other County NLT property. The Committee authorized staff to order appraisals.

#697 Lighthouse Drive – Sanom Homes, Ocean Township, 0.46 acres—Ms. Leaf told the Committee that this property is adjacent to the existing NLT Lighthouse Drive property. The owner is currently pursuing a subdivision of the property and has expressed interest in submitting either all of the property for NLT consideration, or the portion of the property that will not be developed. The asking price is \$450,000 for the entire property. It is assessed at \$87,500.

The property representative, Patrina Ozurumba, was present for the meeting and confirmed that the R1 zoning permits lots to be developed at 50'x100' lots. Her property consists of four conforming lots. The owner stated that half of the property is not developable and does contain a County Engineering drainage outlet on the property that controls storm water for the entire Lighthouse Drive property. The owner is hoping that an agreement under the NLT program can help mitigate the drainage issue on the property. She alleges a drainage easement was also placed on the property by the County, but does not line up with the existing outlet.

Mr. Villinger noted that the Engineering Department is the main contact and has addressed the drainage issue in a letter to the owner. The Committee identified the property to be of interest especially as a way to access the Lighthouse Drive property and authorized staff to request an appraisal for the property.

7. Public Comment

The property owner of #594, Roosevelt City Inholding, Mr. Yehuda Nussbaum, provided comment via the virtual meeting chat to the Committee regarding his nomination form. He noted that the adjacent property at 1680 Scranton Avenue sold for \$15,000 in 2022 and is now pending sale for \$35,000. He inquired whether the sales were comparable. Mr. Villinger noted that the property at 1680 Scranton does have immediate road frontage on two sides of the lot where the property in question has no immediate road frontage. 1680 is also adjacent to a developed lot and likely has accessible utilities where the subject property may not. The Committee asked staff to continue conversations with the owner and consult the appraisal as necessary.

Ms. Barbara Hoopengardner was present and asked whether any action would be taken on #688 Mill Creek Trail Ext Property. Mr. Villinger advised that the property is to be discussed in closed session as appraisal values were received, however the property is

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under contract for a private sale and staff has yet to get an update on the contract. She also asked whether a tree frog study was completed for the property or if there is evidence of frogs present in the Florence T. Allen Conservation Area. The Committee could not confirm, but instructed staff to contact her to discuss at a later date.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. McKeon to move into Closed Session at 7:00 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Flemming and seconded by Mr. Fox move back into Open Session at 7:03 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.

Mr. Avery stated that in closed session two of nominations were discussed. No items that were discussed will have action taken.

Adjournment: A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. McKeon to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nicole Leaf, Environmental Specialist