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Open space, trails, road work discussed

By W. JACOB PERRY, Staff Writer Apr 18, 2014

BERNARDSVILLE – Open space acquisition, hiking trails and road conditions were among the topics at the Borough Council meeting Monday night, April 14.

A proposal to hire the Boonton-based Land Conservatory of New Jersey for \$12,000 a year to seek land acquisition grants and design connecting trails received council approval in 5-0 vote, with Councilman Jeff DeLeo absent.

Councilman Michael dePoortere, who serves on the Open Space Committee, urged approval, calling the Land Conservatory “a perfect fit for the people of Bernardsville.”

Neighboring Peapack-Gladstone has “benefited ten-fold from their expertise,” he said.

The Open Space Committee was unanimous in wanting to move on the borough master plan goals of linking its open space parcels, dePoortere added. “Some (parcels) have been inaccessible and ostensibly useless to our residents.”

Moreover, some acquisition grants “will probably never be offered again,” he said. “I am behind this 100 percent.”

The council’s subsequent approval drew applause from several of the 15 or so people in the audience.

“That’s nice to hear once in awhile,” quipped Mayor Lee Honecker.

The council went on to discuss the borough’s open space update, written by consultant Michael Calafati. Planning Board member Terry Thompson told the council there was still some question over how much the board needs to do to qualify the borough for state Green Acres grants.

The update was referred to the Open Space Committee for recommendations.

In another open-space related matter, the council delayed a vote on a proposed ordinance to appropriate \$2,500 for a survey of the 33-acre, municipally owned Peters tract off Claremont Road.

Councilman dePoortere said the proposal would be amended to add a topographical survey to assist plans for trails. The public hearing was carried to Monday, April 28.

Road Work

On another topic, two residents spoke out on the condition of roads near Claremont Field. Three days earlier, the council overrode Mayor Honecker's veto of a \$2.2 million road improvements ordinance that includes work near the park.

Nancy McLure of Bodnar Street said her road has potholes and presents a hazard to some "30 to 35" young children who live in the area.

As for each side of the road, "I can't call it a shoulder – it's a mess. I don't think this is acceptable," she argued. She said the work should not wait until a child is hurt and the borough gets sued.

"I hope you will seriously consider improving, looking after, these streets," she said.

Gail Moose of Park Lane said she did not agree with putting sidewalks on both sides of her road, but she did see a need for better drainage.