

**New Castle County Land Preservation Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 2, 2019 4:30PM  
Gilliam Building Multi-Purpose Room  
67 Reads Way, New Castle, DE 19720**

Land Preservation Task Force Members in Attendance:

Jeff Downing, Chair  
Jack Coleman  
Doreen Fletcher  
Lee Jarmon  
Steward Ramsey  
Jennifer Kmiec  
James Metzger  
Ginger North  
Michele Giofre Pyle  
Janet Kilpatrick  
Timothy Sheldon  
Austin Short  
Elena Stewart  
Sherri Evans-Stanton  
Betsy Caufield  
Kendall Sommers  
John Filaski  
Maureen Zieber

New Castle County Representatives:

Councilwoman Dee Durham  
Richard Hall  
Tracey Surles

The following members of the public were in attendance:

Peggy Schultz  
Marianne Cinaglia

**I. Approval of August 7, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Members of the Task Force voted to approve the minutes from the August 7, 2019 Full Land Preservation Task Force Meeting.

**II. Task Force Sub-Committee Report-Out**

A. Funding Sub-Committee (Jeff Downing, Chair)

- The Funding sub-committee held its first meeting on September 11, 2019 and discussed the a number of topics, including the purpose and role of the sub-committee, sources of funding available, appropriate uses of funding, and how the funding subcommittee will work in conjunction with the other two subcommittees.
- Potential sources of funding included:
  - Inclusion in the New Castle County & State annual budgets
  - Grants
  - Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations and State Organizations
  - Installment purchases(?)
  - Bonding (deployed on a state or local level, tax exemptions for donations)
- How is the County currently funded?
  - Through annual budget
  - Discussion around the use of trusts-
    - NCC has received one trust, includes around \$180,000 annually for maintenance
    - Recommendation of a trust for the purchase of land
- Discussion around other jurisdictions including State of Maryland, Chester County, etc.
- Discussion of the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), which are permitted per the provisions in the UDC; however, are restricted to Planning Districts

#### B. Open Space Sub-Committee (Sherri Evans-Stanton, Chair)

- The Open-Space sub-committee met on September 5, 2019. New Castle County provided a presentation on the current Open Space Process
- Discussion around the creation of a transparent process for land acquisition that includes the establishment and application of specific criteria when it comes to selecting properties for acquisition
- Funding mechanisms to stretch funding for open space (use of easements over purchase of land)
- Comparison of draft criteria, discussion around seeking public input on what should be incorporated into the criteria for land acquisition.
- Draft criteria and evaluation topics to include:
  - Connectivity to other properties
  - Matching funds provided
  - Size of land / parcel
  - Partnership opportunity – Nonprofits and division of land to be maintained as open space
  - Watersheds in a given area
  - Ecological Sensitivity
  - Infrastructure
  - Needs assessment (evaluated once a comprehensive inventory of open space in the County is available)
  - Long term maintenance and operation costs

- Public Open Space Database (Federal GIS database for outdoor recreation opportunities) discussion of how it could interact with a County Open Space database and create tourism opportunities
- NCC Parks Master Plan

### C. Agricultural Sub-Committee Report

- The Agricultural Sub-Committee met on September 4, 2019
- Meeting included a presentation on the State of Delaware Agricultural Preservation Program by Austin Short, which outlined how the program works, what properties it has preserved, etc.
- Discussion around public input from the farming community and non-farming community, as well as what the general public may see as goals for an agricultural preservation program at the County level
- Next meeting to include a panel of farmers- some who do participate in the state program, some who have not been able to join the state program, to provide prospective and recommendations on how a county-level agricultural program may work

## III. Further Definition of Task Force Direction

The members of the Task Force discussed the mission and goals of the Task Force based on the report-out of the sub-committees.

### Land Inventory and Tracking Discussion:

- Creation of a map or tabular data that includes information about all open space in the County – to have in DropBox by next meeting
  - Task Force will evaluate this to ascertain if there is additional information that should be added

### Land Acquisition Strategy:

- Develop a process on how to determine what priorities should be set for land preservation and how to achieve those priorities
- Ranking of potential land preservation opportunities
- Discussion of previous county-level agricultural ranking system for agricultural preservation in the County dating back to the 1980s (\*ensure any information on this is included in the DropBox)
- Goal is to establish a definition of what “Open Space” means at the County level
- How will management costs impact the criteria or approach for land acquisition? This is something the Task Force would like to define further
- Open Space Sub-Committee should discuss:
  - Where is the need for open space in the County?
  - How would we define or divide areas across the County to define open space areas? Look to the Parks Master Plan, Route 9 Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and public input to define this.

- What would public input on this effort look like for feedback on land preservation? Should it be addressed in another public forum, or multiple forums, to open up to diverse groups of peoples.
  - Would the public support tax increases for open space and land preservation purposes?
  - Open Space and Agricultural surveys should be completed separately, however there should also be a general land preservation survey.
- Discussion around public access in open space parcels, the dual use of properties (i.e. what can be developed for the public use of land vs. what should be protected for the public).
- How should the Task Force characterize where land preservation efforts should be targeted and what the next step should be?
  - Geographic prioritization
  - Underserved communities that may need parks or open space
  - Transfer of Development Rights- how can they be better used? Does this take a change to County or State code?

The Land Preservation Task Force set a goal to have a draft set of criteria for both agricultural preservation and open space acquisition as well as a draft plan for a public survey in two months. These should identify targeted areas that the public input process should inform.

#### Funding Analysis:

- Funding subcommittee will look at the County’s operating budget
- Once an understanding of preservation priorities are further established, the types of partnerships the County should pursue and what types of enabling legislation will be needed shall be further defined.
- Discussion of endowment accounts and land trusts- need further definition of the logistics of these resources.

The Task Force discussed partnership development and future processes / management. Members decided that once criteria and preservation priorities are established, targeted partnerships should be established. The Task Force recommended that surveys should begin at the beginning of 2020.

#### IV. Wrap Up & Action Items

##### NEXT MEETING DATES

Ag Subcommittee	November 13th 430 DE Wildlands Room
Open Space Subcommittee	October 23rd 430 Community Service Bldg
Funding Subcommittee	October 30th 4pm Mount Cuba
Full Task Force Subcommittee	December 5th Gilliam Multi-Purpose Room

#### V. Public Comment:

Peggy Schultz, representative from the League of Women Voters, commented that there should be a focus on underserved communities, as well as areas that are subject to sea level rise, and that the public should be kept in the loop on Task Force communications.

Marianne Cinaglia, representative from CCOBH, commented that the membership organizations should be included on the Land Preservation Task Force website.