

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
Meeting Minutes – April 10, 2019
7 PM (DRAFT)

TAC Attendees: Jim Kuligowski (Chair), Vanessa Jones (Vice-Chair), Anne-Marie Orlusky, Charles Martin (Secretary), Tom Lewis, John Herrling (Open Space Committee Liaison), Mark Fortin, Phillip Kramer (Mayor, Township Council Representative), Tara Kenyon (Land Management and Open Space Consultant), Cleo Karanikolas (intern)

Absent:

Note that the committee currently has (1) vacancy, with 9 positions total.

Public Attendees – B. Bowman, Editor Franklin Reporter and Advocate

These minutes follow the order of the April 10, 2019 TAC agenda outline as circulated by Ms. Kenyon

1. Call to Order: Meeting was called to order by Chairman Kuligowski at 7:01 PM
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of the March 2019 minutes. Mr. Herrling moved that the minutes be approved. Motion was seconded by Ms. Jones. Motion was passed with 2 abstentions from Mr. Fortin and Ms Jones, who were unable to attend that meeting.
4. Public Comment – No public comment was offered
5. New Business –
 - a. **Walk, Bike and Hike Plan - Public Meeting #2 (April 11, 2019)** Ms. Kenyon reported on a study by the Somerset County Planning Division funded by the New Jersey Transportation Planning Association. The County has acquired Fed Government funding from the NJ Transportation Planning Association for a public planning survey concerning alternative transportation methods, including bicycle, hiking, walking trails. Several committee members contributed to an on line survey in 2018 that was the first stage for obtaining public input. The county has now created maps of potential trails by municipality. Mark Healy (Township Planner) and Ms. Kenyon met with county officials who presented preliminary maps of proposed bicycle connections and paths in the north part of Franklin. A public meeting was scheduled for Thursday April 11 at the County offices to inform and obtain further input from the public. Municipal maps will be unveiled at the Thursday meeting. Committee members, however, were concerned about ability to attend on a Thursday night and it seemed unlikely that most would be able to attend.

A North-South trail through Township is on their plan and another planned path is the “Shore to Somerset Connector”. Originally proposed in a Regional Planning Association 2017 plan entitled: “Access to Nature”, the starting point would be in Franklin Township, ending at Point Pleasant. That trail would be about 50 miles when completed. The proposal is to use roads, corridors, rights of way, Rails to Trails, D&R canal towpath and Jersey Shore Trail. The trail would eventually connect with a proposed Henry Hudson Trail (#8 on the county map). The County Planners were wondering if we would want to include this proposed trail on the municipality map.

Another public hearing will be held before plan is finalized. This will be followed by a public meeting concerned with adoption of the plan. Ms. Kenyon indicated that she would post minutes and/or information derived from the meeting online for the committee.

- b. **National Trails Day, Saturday June 1 2019** – Ms. Kenyon announced that the township has a printing vendor that could be used to produce a sign or a display trail events. Committee members were concerned about lack of advertising and effectiveness of the events. Trails Committee members usually comprise the largest group of participants in past Trails Day events.

Ms. Jones suggested using the Van Wykle house parking area for the event, with scheduled trail hikes using the Demott Lane bridge access to the towpath. Ms. Kenyon indicated that hiking stickers that were not used for last year’s events would be available for participants. Ms. Kenyon indicated that maybe we could connect with the Meadows Foundation on this event. Given that trail walks or tours would take place on the canal towpath at this location, Mayor Kramer did not think this would be an inappropriate venue, considering that the D&R towpath trails reside within Franklin Township.

Mr. Fortin proposed that the event be staged on the 6 Mile Run State Park trail system, using the Blackwell Mills parking lot. Ms. Kenyon indicated that June 1 is also the opening day for the Farmers Market and thought that the Farmers Market transportation system provided by the township might also be used to take people to the Trails event. The consensus of the committee was to use the Blackwell Mills location. Ms. Jones suggested that the blue trail (entrance at the parking lot) could be used for sponsored trail walks. The proposed time is 10 AM -12 PM for the event which could include a 1 to 1-1/2 hour trail walk. C. Martin indicated that he could hold an event employing smartphone eBird and iNaturalist applications to promote citizen science on the area’s woodland and grassland trails.

Ms. Kenyon indicated that the event can be advertised on the Township web site and also asked committee members if they could find other groups to pair with for the event. Mr. Fortin indicated we might need to get a permit for the event from the state

park as they do for the Tour de Franklin. Ms. Jones suggested that Van Wykle house as a backup plan. The committee agreed that a rain date should be proposed for the following Saturday, June 8.

6. Old Business

a. Pathways and Trails Plan – Trail Design and Methods

Discussion continued concerning the revision of the 2008 Pathways and Trails Plan posted on Trails Advisory Committee Links and Information page at the URL <https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showdocument?id=1356> of the Franklin Township web site . On completion, the revised plan would be provided to the Township Council for approval and use by municipality planners. Discussions from the last meetings discussed assets and obstacles.

Ms. Kenyon presented research on new updates for trail design described in Appendices 6 and 7 of the 2008 plan.

Appendix 6 (page 34) describes types of trails

Appendix 7 – (pages 34-41) describes trails design, scouting and management. National Park Service standards for that year are included in the appendix.

In summary, a lengthy discussion (80 minutes) of these sections involved the following questions 1) What is the purpose of the plan? 2) Who will use this plan and how would it be used? 3) What information and requirements should be included in the plan, 4) What is the actual purpose and duties of this committee? and 5) Why are issues concerning Franklin Trails planning, acquisition, construction and maintenance not coming before the committee?

Mr. Fortin suggested that Appendix 7 should simply note a set of minimum trail standards with reference to sources such as the National Parks Service trail standards with no need to reiterate those documents. Discussion was hampered for some of the committee members to reference 2008 plan and its proposed changes. Some committee members were uncomfortable making decisions about revisions to a document that they had not read.

Mayor Kramer suggested that Ms. Kenyon get direction from Mark Healy, Franklin Township Head of Planning about what they want/need in this document for the master plan. Goals could be in a separate document. One goal, for example, could be to educate the public. Ms. Kenyon stated that she feels that a discussion of maintenance, promotion, oversight should also be addressed in the document. She will talk to Mark Healy and re-send the revised goals, and objectives to the committee. Mr. Herrling stated that he also feels that information concerning land acquisition should also be forwarded to the Trails committee for consideration.

7. Reports from Other Committees - Mr. Herrling reported from the Open Space Committee that as the result of meetings between the township and Rutgers that there will be expanded hunting for deer at Hutchison Forest Research Station. He mentioned that the county disapproved construction of the bridge crossing the D&R canal near JFK boulevard, and that as a result of discussions between the Township and NJ Parks commission hunting will be expanded in 6 Mile Run Park to 2200 acres, approximately 90% of the park area.
8. Trail reports – Ms. Jones reports that hunting stands are still in place at the Bunker Hill area, none of them have permit tags. C. Martin indicated that in late March there were three stands on Butler Road purple trail, one on the yellow trail and one on Bunker Hill Environmental Center trails. Ms. Jones indicated that there was a need for wooden bridges at Bunker Hill and that some fencing needs to be removed. She also requested signage that clearly indicated access points to the canal towpath at Demott Lane and the Demott Lane canal bridge. Mr. Lewis asked whether we could come up with a unique logo for Franklin Trails. C. Martin indicated that the dock at the Demott Lane footbridge is out of the water and is sitting on Township property at the end of the parking lot. He felt that it should either be placed back on the canal with the area cleared for good access or removed by the township eliminating the eyesore. He also suggested that the Township survey ticks on our trail systems to monitor the incidence of Lyme and other tick-born diseases in those areas.
9. Adjournment –Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM