NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

February 13, 2025

Convened: 7:00 pm Adjourned: 8:40 pm

Township Supervisor Dennis Klusaritz called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

In attendance were:		Not in attendance:
Supervisor Dennis Klusaritz	Heather Skorinko	Supervisor Al Geosits
Supervisor Ron Heintzelman	Mark Yatcilla	
Township Manager- Randy Cope	Marlene Stofflet	
Director of Grants, Preservation, And Trails-Mike Kukitz	Paul Semmel	
	Bob Korp	
AICP Community Planner at Gilmore & Associates- Jody Yoder	Susan Williams	
	Mr. & Mrs. Stangle- township residents	

REORGANIZATION AND APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS:

Chairman – Dennis Klusaritz
Vice Chair-Mark Yatcilla
Secretary – Marlene Stofflet

APPROVAL OF October 10, 2024 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion was made to accept by Paul Semmel.
Seconded by Bob Korp.
The motion was passed unanimously.

2025 PROJECTED PRESERVATION:

Mike Kukitz, Director of Grants, Preservation & Trails reviewed the following:

- 2 maps color coded to show properties in various degrees of preservation.
- Arial views of all properties that have submitted applications and are interested in preservation.
- Farmland Preservation Land Ranking System chart – Mike noted that more conditions could be added to this list if anyone has suggestions. A copy of the chart was handed out to committee members.
- Randy Cope noted that there are more people who are now interested in preserving and we should grasp their interest as soon as possible.

- Estimated Farmland Funding Plan chart – payments as lump sum or installments
- If everything goes according to plan, there will be 913 acres in the township preserved by end of 2025.
- Showed the amount of money needed by the township for farms that the county will not assist with financially. The committee discussed various aspects of the spreadsheet information.

Bob Corp asked if there will be many more farms to preserve or is the current list what we will have to fund in the future.

Randy Cope thought that the trend might be beginning to decrease where property owners just want to sell and not preserve.

Randy Cope, Mike Kukitz and the committee discussed possibly using the Earned Income Tax (EIT) revenue source in the future. North Whitehall has a unique funding situation compared to other townships that preserve land.

Randy Cope mentioned and explained Act 503 fund usage which Moore Township uses.

OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN – Stacy Yoder, AICP Community Planner at Gilmore & Associates

Stacy Yoder described how feedback was recieved at the Township Christmas Tree ceremony with a stand for residents to vote. One hundred and thirty five residents participated including children. A community wide survey is the next step in this process. A copy of the draft survey questions was handed out to committee members tonight for review and comment.

- Stacy met with the designated key stakeholders & township residents of various backgrounds and found out that most of them agreed that preservation is a priority.

- Stacy suggested using Survey Monkey, NWT email blasts, Facebook and/or the North Whitehall township website to acquire resident priorities. Signs with QR codes on them could be placed on the Ironton Rail Trails in spring.

- She asked the committee to reply back to her in approximately a week what resources we would like to use. We should email Mike with survey feedback.

- Her next step in the process is to audit the Ranking System.

Paul Semmel informed the committee that other sources of money from the state are included in with the county amount.

Susan Williams said that land and open space preservation increases everyone's land value in the township.

The legal situation for the Rohr/Rabenold property was reviewed and revealed that this is an issue between Rohr and a neighbor for boundary clarification which the township cannot get involved with. The committee concluded that the township should contact them one more time to discuss moving forward and potentially take the Rohr property off the list to allow for the next property owner to get approval. A timeframe must be set up for Rohr to settle the issue.

Chairman Dennis Klusaritz concluded the meeting with the thought that in the next five years there might not be enough farms in the township to try to preserve.

A motion was made to adjourn by Heather Skorinko, seconded by Marlene Stofflet.
Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marlene Stofflet, Secretary

**This meeting was held at the Neffs Volunteer Fire Company 3755 Park Ave, Neffs, PA 18065

Next Farmland Preservation meeting will be held April 10, 2025.