

BOROUGH OF OGDENSBURG LAND USE BOARD MINUTES

MEETING DATE: July 24, 2018

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting of the Ogdensburg Land Use Board was called to order at 7:10 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE:

The notice requirement of P.L. 1975, Chapter 231, Sections 4 and 13 have been satisfied with a schedule of all meetings together with the time, location and agenda of same being sent to the NEW JERSEY HERALD and the NEW JERSEY SUNDAY HERALD and posted on the bulletin board at the Borough Hall on January 25, 2017.

1. **ROLL-CALL:** **Present:** Armstrong, Andrews, Fierro, Fitzgibbons, Kibildis, Nasisi and Telischak*
Absent: Hart, Honig, McGuire and Slater
Professionals Present: Gene Buczynski and Roger Thomas
*Mr. Telischak arrived at 7:15 P.M.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2018 meeting was made by Patrick Fitzgibbons, seconded by John Kibildis with Armstrong, Nasisi and Andrews also in favor and Fierro abstaining.

3. **OLD BUSINESS/ NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Master Plan Re-Examination Report

Chairman Armstrong stated tonight we are working on the Re-Examination of the Master Plan which needs to be done every ten (10) years. The last report was prepared in October 2008. Some subjects to be discussed will be economic development, recreation and life in the Borough. Recently Mr. Bishop called me regarding an idea relating to Sussex County and Ogdensburg.

Mr. Phil Bishop said that he is a summer resident of Hawthorne Lake and lives in Kinnelon during the year. He introduced Joe Christian who is his nephew from Minneapolis, the biking capital of the country. We were talking the other day about our experiences in mountain biking and road biking here in Sussex County. Joe is more of a professional and has biked the entire world and his kids are champions and have won national races worldwide. My kids all bike and my daughter was a professional biker. The story is that we have experienced a great deal of enjoyment biking the trails and roads in Sussex County, in particular the ones connected to Ogdensburg. I am very familiar with the area because I

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grew up here every summer of my life. We have a great affection for the town. So how can we help Ogdensburg with a Master Plan that will break into the future with an opportunity for the citizens to grow and enjoy their town and for the town to prosper.

There is a town in Minnesota called Cuyuna which was a mining town where they did strip mining for iron ore and the town went bust. Anyway all the stores closed and there were no jobs available. About ten or twelve years ago, they got the idea to take these old mining caves, trails, lakes and ponds and make them into trails for biking and walking and invigorate the town. They did this and now this is a destination point and one of the highlights of Minnesota. So we wondered maybe the same kind of thing could happen here in Ogdensburg.

In Minnesota, they needed a lot of money to build the infrastructure where Ogdensburg already has the infrastructure. We ride on it every day. You have trails and roads and recreational assets that maybe you are not familiar with. I took my map from 1899 which shows all the railroads that were here in 1899 and they are the rails that we ride today. Now in Sussex County the most popular rails are the Paulinskill Trail that runs from Sparta Junction to the Delaware River in Columbia and the Kittatiny Valley Trail that goes from Stanhope to Branchville. They intersect in Newton. There are many other trails as well, some are more used than others. I went through and highlighted on this map the various trails and how Ogdensburg sits in the center of it.

Now keep in mind from a recreational standpoint, Mountain Creek is the destination for the New York Metropolitan Area for mountain biking and downhill. Downhill is a much more vigorous sport where mountain biking is riding on the trails; and when you get to be my age, you are riding on the rail trails which are essentially flat cinder-based trails which hopefully someone has cleaned and patched up. The roads in Sussex County are almost second to none for road riding. From Ogdensburg, you can move to the Kittatiny Branch or the Paulinskill Branch or you have Edison up above where you can ride to Route 23 and Hamburg Mountain. So there is a lot of opportunity here and now I'll let Joe speak about the trails etc.

Joe Christian said that he is from Minnesota but married a Lake Hawthorne gal so we've been coming here for fifteen (15) years. As Phil mentioned, I am a cyclist and raced around the world and when people ask me "Where is one of your favorite places to ride?", it is right here. The people in California and Oregon can't believe it. The old roads with the low traffic level are the road cycling aspect of it.

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My summer home in Minnesota was where the Cuyuna Trails are now. In the 1980's, the employment rate was over 30%. All the shops were closed. Now it's brew pubs, coffee houses, air bnb's, etc. It's a mining town in northern Minnesota – Microsoft was not going to build a center there. Amazon was not going to build there. No one was coming there to create jobs so the people had to create it themselves.

There is a video someone made of Cuyuna which is five minutes long and Phil will send a link to you after the meeting. It is inspirational because there is this great gal who is 80 years old and she went to the meeting and said we should do this. They said they're bike riders, they don't even have pockets or money. Here they are ten (10) years later and this gal went to the meetings and people crossed their arms and said no, heck no. It almost brings tears to your eyes to watch this cause it was a devastated mine town.

They attract cyclists even in the winter because they have fat bike tires so it is a year round revenue source for the community now. So here was a mining town two (2) hours north of the city that didn't have a future. Now they have a high school mountain biking league and New Jersey started one two (2) years ago. These teams are starving for venues and they have about 750 people show up for these events. Lewis-Morris is one in Morristown but they are really hungry for venues to hold their events at. The same thing happened in Cuyuna. Now they have two (2) major mountain bike events that draw 5,000 people a year for the weekend. It's a celebration kind of like the 5K Miners Run.

In this area it is really hard to become a bike rider. Hills are huge. The trails are really rough. But Phil and Cheryl, his wife, they ride the rails to trails. You have the infrastructure like he said and you have the ability to introduce cycling to people that is safe because a lot of times people are concerned about riding on the roads and traffic. Here you can put them on these rails on trails and then they can branch out and do more difficult more technical riding. I ride right here the rail to trail over to Mahlon Dickerson but I have to bushwack my way most of it. Phil asked me what is needed and I said three guys with a chainsaw would pretty much start this thing. It's not a huge investment because the infrastructure is here. About three or four years ago, I sent some emails out to some people to share what is happening out in Minnesota and then Phil retired and needed a new project so he's a very passionate individual.

Councilman Nasisi asked about the location of trails in the Borough. One trail was washed out but would be easily cleared. You can connect a few trails and see if the people start coming. There are cinder trails that aren't overgrown. Mr. Kibildis stated that those are owned by the railroad and we would have to get permission from them. Mr. Bishop remarked that this is a long term plan. The Borough could start with one trail for hiking, bird watching or riding and people will come if you advertise it and make it worthwhile for them. Then little by little move forward cleaning up rail trails. I am sorry that the

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connection that used to go over past the firehouse is no longer there because the bridge over the Wallkill is great. Joe and I, when available, would be happy to help in that process.

Attorney Thomas said that he and his wife are rail trail people, his wife more so than him and have been doing that for the last four or five years. We go to the Columbia trail down in Morris County and the Kittatiny trail. However, we see an awful lot of bikers out and there is a lot of activity but I don't see how that is monetized.

The first thing people want to do when they get off their bikes is have a beer and a burger. As long as there is a parking area in the downtown area of Ogdensburg, people will use this as their beginning and ending points. On a Saturday and you just did twenty miles, you get off your bike and you know that Atlantic Manor is right here, Sam's is right here and they need some Gatorade and some snicker bars. So monetizing is encouraging businesses to provide for those individuals. When you do the trail and you stop in the pastry shop in Califon or the shop located in a bank building in Long Valley. If Atlantic Manor offered a lunch special for bikers, they could sit outside with biking clothes on. I suggest Danforth's put a station outside with a pressure hose for washing bikes which is a \$1,000 investment and have a shelf with bike parts. From the town's perspective, I see success when people say we are going to Sussex County so on Saturday we'll go to Mountain Creek and on Sunday, we will go do the Mine Tour and do some biking in Ogdensburg. But there is no place to stay so we'll find an airbnb in Ogdensburg.

That's what happened in Minnesota. There wasn't a store open on Main Street. Now they have Ulrich's and airbnb's. Actually my stepbrother lives in the town right now and he called me to let me know he wants to rent out two places. There is a little bit of a "build it and they will come" mindset with it and it has been very successful. Mr. Bishop said that if we don't think now about putting money and effort into this in the Master Plan, in three or four years we should have budgeted for this in 2018.

Vice-Chairman Fitzgibbons stated that the popularity of the Wallkill Refuge up there in Wantage has drawn a lot of people in there. Mr. Christian said that cycling is growing and growing because as we age, running isn't really an option but people want to be fit and healthy so the rails to trails are a safe place for people to exercise. The potential for growth is there where we are only talking about five or eight miles right now to connect to the Paulinskill but there is the potential for more connections. The Paulinskill and Kittatiny trails are owned by the State.

Chairman Armstrong said that Thomas Edison started iron ore right here on Sparta Mountain and he went bankrupt in 1900 because they found iron in the Mesabi Range. So Edison went bankrupt. Mesabi Range built up their mines went out of business and their towns are now ghost towns. Sussex County right now has a negative population growth.

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Sussex County right now has the best trail system on the eastern seaboard and the reason that people like trains and trails is very simple: a train cannot go up a hill; it cannot go up, only a 10 percent grade. Why not walk the trail? It's not just for bikes, it's for bird watching, hiking just for walking. Over in Lafayette Village, they park and it's crowded in that parking lot because they go fishing. I bring this to mind because I want to open up your vision that Ogdensburg could someday, as long as we support these type of activities, have something going for it: a bike shop, a beer and a hamburger in the Pub (which was recently sold and being remodeled), and Danforth's washing bikes. What a great idea. We started the 5K Run about ten (10) years ago and it was just a nothing and now it is a big deal in this town. And the other big deal is the Mine. So our Master Plan is supposed to have some kind of marriage between the Mine and the town, and the trail system, the bird watching, etc.

Vice-Chairman Fitzgibbons remarked that when you go back to the original Master Plan, the only viable thing to read are the pieces regarding redevelopment and the business district. A lot of basic work was done but this is a natural tie in and a resource. The investment would be very low to start because the infrastructure is here. A couple of young men with chainsaws and you are all set. Chairman Armstrong stated that an Eagle Scout made a trail on Sparta Mountain. It was a hard trail but anyway he got his eagle I'm sure and it was for free. All those trails on Sparta Mountain are public land.

When you talk about the Historical Society, the Mine and our natural resource of a trail system, it all fits together. The Mine could have an annual bikeathon, bird watching thon and then go take a mine tour at the same time and while you are in town, get a donut. The whole economy grows when you start to capitalize on what's available to you and you don't lose the personality of the town. Mr. Fierro said during the fledgling process here, we need to get in touch with a State Official to determine what properties are State owned. People like Phil and Joe, and committees and groups and the Sussex County Economic Development carry the flag and when they carry the flag into this town, we are here to support it. Attorney Thomas said that John Fierro does have a point and some investigation would be beneficial. Some of these railroads haven't been in use for fifty (50) years but Vice-Chairman Fitzgibbons said that the train is still running behind his house and all around town. There is a freight train that runs here and into Sparta but that is the only one. Mr. Christian remarked that communication with Franklin and Sparta would be good because you are connecting but that is not a barrier for entry.

Chairman Armstrong said that he sees when people go to the Mine and when they walk into the lobby of the Mine, they see a blown up map of this that these trails are available for bird watching, hiking and biking. Mr. Fierro stated that we have to identify that and Chairman Armstrong said we could do that. But Chairman Armstrong said that he won't market it because he doesn't have the time but will support it and thinks that the Mine would be

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interested in marketing this and hold events like a Bikeathon and a bird watching walk. People can park in their lot, ride the trail and come back to their lot. Mr. Fierro said that we need to get the Mayor and Council involved if there is any seed money from somewhere to clear these trails. Councilman Nasisi stated that another option is some of the local businesses might donate money. The trail near Harry's can be cleared and a brown trail marker from the State placed at the trail entrance. We can reach out to the Boy Scouts for clearing the trail.

Mr. Bishop stated that there are 120 cottages in Beaver Lake where the residents would bike and hike down to Ogdensburg instead of driving to Franklin. Mr. Christian said that he rode a rail trail from Ogdensburg all the way to Mountain Creek right to the gondola on top of the mountain. Suggestions for new small businesses were discussed i.e. asking a bike shop to open in town for the weekend. The initial business would address the immediate need but then there are the secondary and tertiary needs which will grow from that. Even though Ogdensburg is very rural and separated, yet right off of Route 23 and Route 15 so unlike Califon or going way out to High Bridge. Everyone who comes up from New York City comes up Route 23 and goes to Mountain Creek so you can easily be another destination point.

Chairman Armstrong said that if you look around at Sugar Loaf, Lafayette Village and Andover, they are busy towns on the weekends because they did a theme. We have the trail system and a hiking system that are here. Mr. Bishop suggested a fishing contest at Heater's Pond. The Fire Department used to hold a fishing contest up at Heater's Pond. Chairman Armstrong said that we are recognizing our natural resource and should capitalize on it. Councilman Nasisi agreed that we should incorporate this concept into the Master Plan. Mr. Kibildis stated that we had the owner of two (2) buildings in town at a previous meeting with an open store front and Louella's which is vacant if they can tie into that.

Mr. Kibildis asked about our deadline for the Re-Examination and Attorney Thomas stated that the report should be completed this year. Since there is a recreation component in the current report, it will be easy to include the rail trails and other trails in the new report. Engineer Buczynski recommended the Board Members make notes to the current document to be given to the Planner. Chairman Armstrong stated that our next meeting will include a work session on pages 1 through 6.

Councilman Nasisi remarked that there is a Park Commission that the State is involved and there was a conversation regarding a path around Heater's Pond and there is a trail commission which might be part of Green Acres. Mr. Fierro remembers talking about this when Mr. Sekelsky was the Mayor. Mr. Telischak said that we have to be careful because once you get the State involved in the trail, we will lose our sovereignty of Heater's Pond.

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The Secretary wanted to know how can we be notified of the programs offered such as the “Opportunity Zone” program which was offered by the New Jersey Democratic State Committee. Chairman Armstrong will follow up on it.

4. DRIVEWAY ORDINANCE

A draft of the ordinance is in Legal at the moment. Engineer Buczynski will email the draft to the Secretary who will email it to the Board Members.

5. INTERSTATE INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT

A brief discussion regarding the status of the Interstate Industrial property consisted of the inactive progress on the building. As of now the owners have not posted the performance bond. Engineer Buczynski and/or the Zoning Officer will do a site inspection.

6. BILLS/VOUCHERS:

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| Dated 7/10/18 from Van Cleef Engineering re: General | \$306.50 |
| Dated 6/29/18 from Dolan & Dolan, Esqs. re: General | \$203.46 |

A motion to approve the bills and vouchers was made by Patrick Fitzgibbons, second by John Kibildis with Armstrong, Nasisi, Andrews, Fierro and Telischak also in favor.

7. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A motion to open to the public was made by Vito Telischak, second by Anthony Nasisi with all in favor.

8. CLOSE TO THE PUBLIC

A motion to close to the public was made by Vito Telischak, second by John Kibildis with all in favor.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Vito Telischak, second by Councilman Nasisi with all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:16 P.M.

Blanche Stuckey

Date of Approval

Land Use Board Secretary