



COLTS NECK FARMLAND PRESERVATION
AND OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Farmland and Open Space Committee

10/25/11

Meeting Minutes

Attended by: Chairperson Richard Malinowski, Liaison Ed Eastman, Patrick Gilmore, Brian Grant, John Jacoby, Thomas Morin, Virginia Mumford, Thomas Orgo, Pat Polgar and Richard Rehm

Absent: none

Mr. Malinowski called the meeting to order at 7:30PM. On a motion by Mr. Orgo, and seconded by Mr. Rehm, the minutes of the September 12, 2011 meeting were approved.

Old Business

This special meeting was called to order for the purpose of addressing the Referendum that would permit use of 15% of CNOSPC funds for Recreational purposes.

1. We met with the Recreation Committee and presented our opinion
 - a. We are not opposed to repair of Colts Neck fields
 - b. We would like to give the residents of Colts Neck a clear understanding of what they are voting on
 - c. Our Committee is against mortgaging operational expenses and believe this issue was not presented in a fair and forthright manner by the Township Committee and represents poor fiscal planning.
 - d. Each home that is not built saves the township approx \$4000 per student times 2.3 children per year.
 - e. There is no plan to date on how to use the money.
 - f. CNFOSC has saved approx. \$15,000,000 in tax avoidance for the taxpayers of Colts Neck. If we are to continue this important undertaking we need the Township Committee's support and the taxpayers' support to find an alternative to this funding.
 - i. We suggested increasing the fees to use the fields
 - ii. We suggested the fields were over-utilized and should not be used after heavy rains- the Sunday after the large storms, the fields were saturated and heaving
 - iii. We suggested volunteerism to repair the fields
 - iv. We suggested, as in the case of the library, the senior center at Dorbrook, donations
 - v. We suggested increasing the fees to play sports within Colts Neck thereby placing the burden directly on those participating in the sports program.
 - g. Fulton Wilcox did a good financial analysis of CNFOSP funds but omitted any indication that we would continue to do our Committee's work.

2. We have 4-5 realistic opportunities to preserve large parcels of land for the township with total use of funds exceeding 575,000 (which represents our 16% of our portion of our share.) Monmouth County has a set-aside of \$750,000 for Colts Neck, NJ State would pick up the remaining funding.
 - a. 50 acres (JM) \$35K acre
 - b. 200++ acres \$25-30K acre
 - c. 27 acres \$75 acre
 - d. 17-20 acres \$75 an acre

This would use all available CNFOSC funds for land purchases.

3. We would like to suggest the sale of the Smith farm to pay down our long term debt, and to place this land on the tax rolls. The economy has dramatically changed for the worse with the presentation of an additional downturn in the economy. Those individuals against the original sale should reconsider their position in taking a small loss on the sale of the property.
 - Sell the Smith farm: We purchased the Smith farm for \$2.3MM but would have to sell for about \$1.8MM. The loss would be offset through the mitigation of \$49,000 a year in interest payments and once sold the property would once again go onto the tax rolls. Over 10 years this equates to 490,000 in mitigated interest payments, and approximately \$180,000-200,000 in collected taxes easily offsetting the \$500,000 loss. Our debt service costs the taxpayers 49,000 year.
4. We also suggest we use the \$1,016,000 in the bank earning 0.15% interest to pay down our long term debt.

New Business

Lillian Burry has come out against this referendum, as well as Tom Orgo, and 3 other ex Colts Neck mayors. Jim Stuart was the only one not to call back, so his position is not known at this time. We need to restate our case to the public, through a direct mailing to achieve this goal.

New signs have been noted around town, stating "VOTE YES for Farmland," and giving the erroneous impression that a Yes vote on the referendum will help to preserve farmland, instead of actually diverting funds from farmland preservation into maintenance. Committee members expressed the opinion that the signs are deceptive and inappropriate and should be taken down. Mr. Orgo will request the Township Administrator to have the signs removed, as they are completely misleading, and could result in people actually voting against their principles.

Liaison Report

None.

On a motion by Mr. Orgo, and seconded by Mr. Rehm, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM. Next meeting will be on Monday, November 14, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Terry
Secretary

Colts Neck Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee in response to the proposed November referendum to divert 15% of funds to the Recreation Committee
Letter to the Editor of the Colts Neck Calendar

August 27, 2011

Dear Editor,

The Colts Neck Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee is comprised of Colts Neck residents who have been appointed by the Township Committee with the primary goal of preserving farmland and open space in the township to insure the continuation of farming, and to promote and maintain the rural character and quality of life which has become the trade mark of Colts Neck. The funding for this program has typically been shared by the township (16%), the county (24%) and the state (60%), hence the township has considerable leverage when preservation opportunities are presented and we need to have available funds to capitalize on those opportunities.

Colts Neck residents have voted to approve a special 2% tax to support the farmland and open space preservation program which has allowed Colts Neck to preserve close to 900 acres of farmland and open space. This represents about 1/3 of the potential farmland and open space currently available in Colts Neck. Hence funds (if this program is to succeed) must continue to be available to support the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program.

While the primary goal of this program is to preserve farmland and open space in Colts Neck, which is important to the future of Agriculture in our Garden State, the program has provided a substantial financial benefit to the taxpayers of Colts Neck by eliminating the annual expenses of the Township that are associated with additional housing units that the program prevents from being developed. Based on a present net value study conducted by the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee looking 15 years into the future from the year 2010, the development rights that have been purchased by the program to date will save the residents of Colts Neck a minimum of \$15 million dollars thereby preventing escalating tax increases.

The Colts Neck Township Committee has taken action to put a Question before the Colts Neck voters in November asking if the residents support diverting up to 15% of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation funds collected each year for maintenance of ball fields, dredging townships ponds, repairing gazebos etc. The Colts Neck Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee unanimously oppose diverting any funds from this important program. **These funds are required to pay our debt service on the current program and, as noted above, to maintain the township's ability to capitalize on future preservation opportunities.** A diversion of 15% of the Farmland Preservation funds will severely diminish the ability of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee to save future parcels of land without relying on additional loans. We strongly suggest our Township Committee to look into other resource alternatives for ball field maintenance and the above mentioned operational costs. **Once land is lost to development, it is lost forever and the character and quality of life in Colts Neck is diminished.**

The proposed diversion of funds, although well intentioned, from Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee to the Recreational Committee without a viable Recreation Committee plan and budget for how these funds will be utilized should not be considered. Additionally, converting the Farmland's short term debt (1% interest over 6 years) to long term debt (4.5% 10 year debt) will only continue to mortgage our

future into an additional \$175,000-\$200,000 in additional debt service to cover operational expenses. We feel each Colts Neck program should stand on its own merits with its own budget and plan. Colts Neck should preserve its borrowing power for critical future issues and preserve farmland and open space for our future generations and not move monies from one account to another.

We kindly ask our neighbors, our friends, and the residents of Colts Neck to vote NO on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Richard Malinowski
Committee Chairman Farmland and Open Space Preservation Committee