

Newbury Township Park Board

Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2017,

Newbury Town Hall

Present: Judy Barnhart, Mark Fritch, Wayne Mansfield, Jim Stephancin, Les Ober, Roger Mezak, Carol Draybak

Guests: Bill Skomrock, Brett Rodstrom, Greg Tropf, Rick Endres

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.,

Oberland Park: Conservation Easement.

-a special meeting was called to discuss a conservation easement on 53 acres of Oberland Park with Brett Rodstrom, Vice President of Eastern Field Operations with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Les stated Oberland Park is a unique piece of property with native forests with walking trails, 20 acres of wetland plus active recreation that should be protected. Les passed around pictures of a local township park that was logged, a contract had been signed then trustees realized they made a mistake. The park has been a working sugarbush for over 100 years. It was the intension of the /Ober family it remain a park when they sold the land to the township.

13 acres along the road will remain open for possible future development and is not included in the conservation easement.

-Brett was approached by the trustees and Park Board to develop a conservation easement (CE)that will have a set of restrictions that which lists what can and cannot be done with the property. There are many kinds of CEs including agricultural, active use, allows owner to put restrictions on property in perpetuity.

There are currently about 9000 acres in easements in Geauga County, most are conservation easements.

-owner can get paid by WRLC for easement if WRLC can raise the money through grants, not as many grants available today as there was in the past.

-hard to find money to purchase easements especially on private property, easier on public property.

-Conservancy will monitor property once a year, can make recommendations for management, and will defend in court if the need arises.

-Brett prefers to leave ball field out of easement.

-WRLC looking for donors so can waive fee for park district and township.

--Bill asked for further explanation of donated easements – township would give up some rights such as developing, however a 5 acre block can be added to possible development if the situation arises in the future, possibly in the hidden meadow or on the edge for access..

--a passive park easement allows for decks, boardwalks etc. to be built

-easement will not limit hunting or fishing if the township wants to provide.

-question about mowing the hidden meadow, with Les haying it saves the township from having to mow it.

Question asked if alternative energy sources can be added, ie. Solar or wind generators, energy generated would have to be used on the property.

-existing gas wells are grandfathered in.

-conservancy restricts large fracking pads

-Easement can be modified to make it more or less restrictive for agriculture.

-if trees blow down in a tornado, OK to harvest them,

-OK to harvest ash infected with Emerald Ash Borer. Conservancy Will stay on site if ashes are harvested so no other trees are taken.

Can consult a third party for any major management issue.

-WRLC can help with tracking down persons breaking easement restrictions

-if decide to sell the property, conservation easement stays on the property but there will be a transfer fee to the new owners.

--OK to enhance property and control invasive species.

-the same property cannot be used as mitigation with Army Corp or EPA.

-will fight power lines going through property unless there is an eminent domain instituted.

- recommend putting development box near parking area so have access.

-OSU looking at doing maple research affects from climate change on the property.

-want the most flexibility for the future, can add property to the easement in the future if not all included now.

-Brett has a temporary easement drawn up, will email to Les who will get it out to board and trustees to review.

-will discuss at next park board meeting.

Next regular meeting Thursday, October 12, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at town hall.

Judy Barnhart– Newbury Park Board Secretary