

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179
Oxford, NJ 07863

**May 13, 2025
Meeting Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Fineran called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Charles Fineran, John Trontis, Tom Lizzi, and Jane Bullis
Members Not Present: Mike Helbing, Michael Margulies
Staff Present: Corey Tierney and Elizabeth Roy
Staff Not Present: Justin Tibbetts

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT:

Mr. Fineran read the Open Public Meeting Notice.

MINUTES:

Lacking a quorum of members who attended the April 8, 2025 meeting, the meeting minutes review was deferred to the June 10, 2025 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT (related to agenda items): none

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REPORT OF COMMITTEES:

Morris Canal Committee – Mr. Fineran reported the Morris Canal Committee’s met on May 12. The boat and mule silhouette project at Meadow Breeze Park is nearly complete. It was funded by a transfer of funds from the Morris Canal Committee to a grant program in the Cultural and Heritage Division to be used specifically for this project. The Warren County Parks Foundation received the grant and built and installed the silhouette.

Warren Heritage Scenic Byway – A meeting of the committee, which included the election of officers, was held on April 15. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 16.

Warren Highlands Trail – A meeting of the committee was held on April 4 at the Land Preservation Office. Mr. Trontis commented on and thanked Mr. Tierney for the meeting being focused on what is needed to establish the trail route.

Other trails: Mr. Trontis reported on a multi-agency meeting for the Lehigh and Hudson Rail Trail, held on May 9, hosted by the Land Preservation Department, with the focus of what will be needed to establish the trail route. Mr. Tierney was thanked for advocating this project. The meeting summary will be shared with the board members that were not in attendance at this meeting. After discussion about regional trails, it was decided to include the Lehigh and Hudson Trail as a regular agenda item.

Ms. Bullis shared **a publication** from the Trust for Public Lands. Mr. Tierney stated that he is in contact with Greg Socha of the Trust. The Highlands Council is working on a Highlands Open Space Plan. Updates from this relevant to this Committee will be provided. Mr. Lizzi asked if there is a Warren County Lands Trust. Mr. Tierney stated that there is not one for the County but that the Ridge and Valley Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and the Land Conservancy of New Jersey are all active in northwest New Jersey, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation is active in the Scotts Mountain/Merrill Creek area.

Mr. Tierney reported that the County's Open Space Plan which includes a trail component will be updated in 2028.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Marble Hill loop trail request- A park visitor contacted the Land Preservation Department with a request for a new loop trail on the south side of Marble Hill NRA. He provided a rough description of the proposed location. It was suggested that the proposed location be visited in the fall when the route can be more easily viewed. Mr. Lizzi volunteered to be part of the project. Additional information will be provided to the Board in the future.

Administrator's Reports – Mr. Tierney shared the following reports with the board.

- **ACQUISITIONS**

- Mr. Tierney reported on an update to the Bodolsky property (Lehigh and Hudson railroad). Mr. Tierney and Ms. Roy met on-site with the owner. The project will proceed to be submitted to Green Acres and will be appraised two ways – as an outright purchase and also with exception area. Both provide trail connectivity on the former railroad.
- Mr. Tierney reported on an update to the Towpath Apartments project. They are still interested in proceeding but the process is taking longer than anticipated.
- The purchase of the Ken Miller property next to Port Warren is still in process. A structural/architectural assessment was done for the house and the report provided to the Board.
- New projects updates:
 - Santini/Strykers Road: no response from property owner
 - 65 Wishing Well Road, Knowlton – still proceeding
 - Oxford Twp. Surplus – no updates, referred over to Green Acres
 - Cheema/WH trail easement – developers agreement has not been perfected
 - Not on report: W. Miller property on Alphano Road 200± wooded acres adjoining Pequest River. Green Acres offer was made to landowner and landowner asking if County is separately interested. Mr. Trontis lead a motion, seconded by Mr. Lizzi, declining to intervene. All voted in favor, motion carried.

- **MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS**

- Plane 9 turbine chamber timber replacement and associated engineering work is on the next County Commissioners' meeting agenda for approval. Preparation and submittal of the DEP permit application for the bridge at Plane 9 is being pursued.
- Nature center and Park HQ design moving forward. The scheduled State Historic Preservation Office meeting will guide what is needed for the nature center project.

- Mr. Lizzi asked that in future it be noted who did the cleanup.
 - Mr Lizzi asked if there are any updates on prescribed burns. Mr. Tierney gave a brief update. This is a long-term project that will require dedicated resources.
- PARK PROGRAMS
 - MEETINGS & EVENTS
 - The Warren County Bicentennial Celebration will be on Saturday, June 28th, from 12pm-9pm (rain date Sun. June 29th) at the Warren County Community College.
 - Mr. Fineran reminded the Board of the upcoming Delaware River Sojourn, scheduled for June 14-20.

Mr. Fineran suggested that this board send a letter of thanks to Kim Barnes who has moved on other employment. Motion Mr. Fineran, seconded by Mr. Trontis, all voted in favor; motion passed. Mr. Fineran will draft the letter.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Referring to the maintenance report, Ms. Hehn questioned what signage was installed at Mt. Rascal. Mr. Tierney reported it is the “Trail Maintained by the Mt. Rascal Crew” sign, installed by Justin Tibbetts. She asked if there is an update to the Hackettstown Water Company parcel. Mr. Tierney stated that the property is still under contract and the project is progressing. Ms. Hehn asked why concerts are not held at Bread Lock Park as the steep slopes at Shippen Manor are unsafe by many people. Mr. Tierney reported that multiple factors affect concert scheduling this year. No concerts are currently scheduled for Shippen Manor as it is still a construction site. Because of staffing constraints, no schedules are scheduled for Bread Lock Park this year as all efforts are being directed to the June 28 Bicentennial Day when multiple bands will be performing. Ms. Hehn asked if the slopes at Shippen Manor are unsafe for the concerts. Mr. Tierney explained that the slopes are not unsafe. The County is addressing ADA requirements.

Mr. Trontis left the meeting at 6:04 pm.

NEXT MEETING: The next Board of Recreation Commissioners meeting will be on Tuesday, June 13, 2025 at 5:00 PM.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Mr. Lizzi motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Fineran. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:14 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Roy
Warren County Land Preservation Dept.