

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

**MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST
OPEN SESSION MEETING MINUTES**

DATE: December 14, 2016
TIME: 10:00 a.m.
PLACE: NJSEA Environment Center 2nd Floor Lecture Room
Two DeKorte Park, Plaza, Lyndhurst, NJ

TRUSTEES PRESENT:

WILLIAM SHEEHAN, Chairman
Hackensack Riverkeeper

MAYOR ALBERTO SANTOS
HMMC Delegate

RALPH J. MARRA, JR., ESQ. Delegate
Senior Vice President Legal, NJSEA

DONALD PALOMBI, Delegate
Department of Community Affairs

CHRISTINE A. SANZ, Chief Executive Officer

ABSENT:

GREG REMAUD, Vice Chairman
NY/NJ Baykeeper

ALSO PRESENT:

JASON STYPINSKI, Deputy Attorney General

COLLEEN MERCADO, Senior Operations Administrator, NJSEA

1. Welcome - Chairman Sheehan welcomed everyone and called the last meeting of 2016 to order.
2. Flag Salute
3. Sunshine Law Statement - CEO Sanz read the statement into record.
4. Roll Call

5. **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Open and Closed session meeting minutes from October 18, 2016 were moved by Delegate Marra and seconded by Delegate Mayor Santos and carried with all in favor.

6. **REPORTS**

- Chairman Sheehan thanked everyone for all the work that was done during the past year on behalf of the Trust. He noted that the Trust couldn't do it without the wonderful assistance of the NJSEA and that he feels confident knowing the interests of the MCT are being watched over at all times. Chairman Sheehan added that he has just come from a mandatory post-audit meeting and that the MCT's 2015 Audit would be posted on the website very soon.
- CEO Sanz noted that the audit would be posted as soon as it was considered by the Board and in addition, the MCT annual report as well. CEO Sanz provided an update on the license plate revenue, advising that the November revenue was \$1,460 and the year-to-date revenue was \$16,406. She added that there were 921 license plate renewals and 94 new license plate purchases for the year.
- CEO Sanz then gave an update on a recent meeting with the BCUA regarding the Mehrhof Pond project. She noted that in addition to herself, Don Smith and Colleen Mercado were in attendance at the meeting. She advised that the BCUA would need to go to their Board for approval of the project and it is anticipated the project would be constructed this Spring.
- CEO Sanz thanked the Board of Trustees for their support during the year. In addition, she thanked the staff of the NJSEA - Colleen Mercado, Ed Bulmer, John Yarenis, the financial team and Brian Aberback. She noted that it is a group effort between so many people at the Authority. CEO Sanz then thanked DAG Jason Stypinski saying that the MCT could not have gotten a lot done without his assistance. She then wished everyone Happy Holidays.

7. **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

- Chairman Sheehan introduced Cora LoPresti, a graduate of Wood-Ridge High School and first-year student at Rutgers University. The Chairman thanked Cora for her outstanding volunteer efforts and hard work over the past year in organizing two environmental stewardship projects to help the Meadowlands Conservation Trust. Chairman Sheehan read a short statement into the record describing the two projects - one was the building of more than two dozen much-needed tree swallow boxes and the second was the organizing of a volunteer clean up at the Skeetkill Creek Marsh in Ridgefield - an MCT property. Chairman Sheehan congratulated Cora on her achievement of obtaining a Girl Scout Gold Award and commended her on setting a wonderful example for her peers, adding that it is always nice to do things like that, especially when you have young people involved. Chairman Sheehan, along with the Trustees, presented Cora with a small token of appreciation and had a photograph taken of the presentation.

8. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- Mr. Donald Smith, MCT's consultant, provided a final report for the year on the MCT properties. He noted that the properties were all in pretty good shape, adding that there was a little problem with ATVs on the Foxhill property in Norwood but the police advised they would be more vigilant in trying to keep the ATVs off the property. Mr. Smith went on to say, from his personal observation, that the muskrat population was down, which probably transcends to meadow moles, mice and Norway rat; adding that he has seen very few Hawks and this was their food supply. Mr. Smith that there has been a decline of muskrat across the northeast, not all, but spotty. He believes that some of the gaming departments are starting to become aware of this and are trying to look into this to see what the problem is. He concluded by saying he would keep the Board updated and hopefully in a year or two, things would recover and get back to a normal basis.
- CEO Sanz noted that Mr. Smith has been helping the Trust with so many little things on the properties, such as fixing the stones at the marsh pavilion and clearing of fallen trees. She said he is a huge benefit to the Trust and thanked him.
- Mr. Smith commented on the issue of fixing the stones stating that he could finish the work if the weather got warm in the next few weeks, otherwise he would finish the work in early Spring.

9. **OLD BUSINESS** - None

10. **NEW BUSINESS**

- Chairman Sheehan welcomed the new delegate from the Department of Community Affairs, Mr. Donald Palombi. He noted that Mr. Palombi has been with the agency a long time and that he brought the Board greetings from Commissioner Charles Richman. Chairman Sheehan added he was glad Mr. Palombi was here and hopefully he would be with the Board for a long time.
- Delegate Palombi thanked Chairman Sheehan and said he was happy to be here.

11. **RESOLUTIONS**

Resolution 16-11 Resolution Adopting the 2017 Annual Schedule of Meetings

Motion to adopt the resolution was made by Delegate Palombi, seconded by Delegate Mayor Santos and unanimously carried.

Resolution 16-12 Resolution Adopting the 2017 MCT Budget

Motion to adopt the resolution was made by Delegate Marra and seconded by Delegate Mayor Santos. Chairman Sheehan asked if there were any questions on the proposed budget.

- Delegate Mayor Santos commented that the budget for Trust Fund Utilization had jumped up and inquired as to what properties were going to be acquired from that budget item.
- Chairman Sheehan responded by saying the Trust had funds available to reserve for a project that was being worked on by the Riverkeeper, the Baykeeper and the City of Jersey City. He noted that they were working on getting a riverside park done on the PJB landfill – adding that it was a good opportunity to get another good public access park on the river. Chairman Sheehan advised that he and Vice Chair Remaud had recently met with the Deputy Mayor of Jersey City and there was no commitment made; they just stated that the Trust had some money available in the budget.
- Delegate Mayor Santos noted he was aware of the project, believes it is a good project but as an HMMC Delegate wanted know if there was a process to determine how to utilize Trust Fund resources on other projects going forward. He asked if these funds were designated to Jersey City or for a process of application to be considered.
- Chairman Sheehan responded by saying it was designated for a project and right now the Jersey City project was the only project that had come before the Trust.
- CEO Sanz stated that the budget would set aside, as proposed, a million dollars for property acquisition, in particular, the project that Chairman Sheehan and Vice Chair Remaud had in mind. She continued by saying the funds could not be spent until the full Board of Trustees voted on the project, adding that if another project came up, the budget could be amended to add those projects. CEO Sanz concluded by saying the resolution at hand didn't actually permit the Board to spend any funds yet.
- Delegate Mayor Santos commented that his questions were more as to how the projects are considered, not so much how the Board approves. He thought it would be helpful for the HMMC members to know the eligibility criteria, noting that it had been done several years ago but nothing recently. He felt the Mayors should have the opportunity to present a project for the Board's consideration.
- CEO Sanz replied that there is a subcommittee of the MCT, which is historically comprised of the Chair, Vice Chair and a NJSEA representative that would discuss projects when acquisition issues or questions came up. She added that she couldn't speak for the Trustees, but letters had been sent out at the staff level to all the communities in the watershed requesting any ideas for preservation projects. CEO Sanz then suggested making a presentation to the HMMC.
- Chairman Sheehan felt this would be advisable and suggested putting together a toolkit that the municipalities could use to present a project to the Board.

- CEO Sanz stated that in the past there was not a tremendous amount of interest, but with that being said, staff's first step would be to go to an HMMC meeting and present it to the Mayors.
- With no further discussion, Chairman Sheehan requested a roll call for Resolution 16-12. All responded in the affirmative to adopt the 2017 MCT Budget.

Resolution 16-13 Resolution Accepting the MCT 2015 Audit and Financial Report

Chairman Sheehan stated that he and Delegate Marra just had the post audit meeting with the auditors and the Trust received a clean audit. Delegate Marra made a motion to accept the findings of the auditors, seconded by Delegate Mayor Santos, and unanimously carried.

12. **CLOSED SESSION**

Resolution No. 16-14 Resolution authorizing the MCT to conduct a meeting, to which the general public shall not be admitted for the purposes of discussing the following:

- Eastern/Western Brackish Marsh Property Transactions Status and legal advice.

Motion to adopt the Closed Session resolution was made by Delegate Marra, seconded by Delegate Palombi with all in favor.

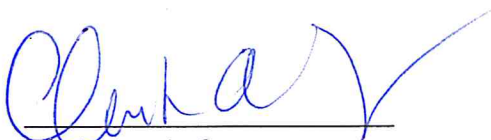
Closed Session commenced at 10:30 a.m.

Open Session recommenced at 10:35 a.m.

Chairman Sheehan asked for a motion to adjourn. Delegate Marra motioned, seconded by Delegate Palombi and carried with all in favor.

The meeting concluded at 10:36 a.m.

I certify that this is a true and accurate transcript of the Open Session Minutes of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust Board meeting of December 14, 2016.



Christine A. Sanz
Chief Executive Officer