

WILLIAMS TOWNSHIP LAND PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date of Meeting: January 28, 2025

Time: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Facilitator: Keneth Kodama

Locations: Secondary Building, Williams Township Community Center,
655 Cider Press Road, Williams Township,

In Attendance:

Kenneth Kodama (Board Chair), Lorraine Mineo (Board Treasurer), Tom Heilman (Board Vice Chair – as of the evening’s reorganization process), Nurit Baron (standing in as Board Secretary in the absence of Lori Cox), and Michael Cortright (Formerly an alternate to the board but elected to the board during Executive Session held just before the meeting).

Also present were Williams Township Supervisor Raymond Abert; and several township residents.

Introduction:

The board meeting was opened by Kodama and began with all rising for the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S.

Board Reorganization:

The board went through a discussion on the 2025 organization of the board’s structure. With unanimous votes, the following was determined as the board’s organization for 2025:

1. Board Chair remained Kodama
2. Board Vice Chair became Heilman
3. Board Treasurer remained Mineo
4. Board Secretary remained Cox
5. New Board member is Cortright
6. Alternate to the board remained Baron

The addition of Cortright to the board was mentioned and it was proposed by Kodama that the board advise this new addition to the Township Supervisors and that the board should now accept Cortright as a new member. The board unanimously agreed on both points.

Approval of Prior Meeting’s Minutes:

A motion to approve the December 17, 2024 meeting minutes was made by Heilman and seconded by Mineo. It passed with a unanimous vote.

Updates on Preservation Projects/Preservation Applications/Resident Show of interest in Preservation/Preservation Appraisals:

In-Process Parcel Application 2022 (year) -2 (sequence in year): (“South parcel”) (2022-2):

- Status of the Metropolitan Edison (Med-Ed) Right-of-Way (ROW) Title Search for this property:

Consultant to the board Matthew Babbitt of Heritage Conservancy was not present, but Kodama indicated he spoke with Babbitt, and Babbitt reported to him that Med-Ed has a plan to deal with the Med-Ed Right of Way Title Search problems and will be announcing this plan to Babbitt soon. Babbitt will apprise Kodama as soon as he can of the update when he hears the official changes from his contact at the utility.

- Northampton County’s (NORCO’s) New Model Easement:

Kodama indicated that there are no changes and no updates to the lag at the county in processing land preservation funding requests.

- Highland Federal Grant application:

Kodama advised the board that there is no update to the request for federal funding with the Fish and Wildlife Service that Babbitt wrote grant requests for at the end of 2024 for all three open preservations projects on the agenda. Kodama reminded the board that new U.S. President Donald Trump has placed a hold on all federal funding grants nationwide. It was decided that the board would wait one more month to see if this grant would possibly come through by the end of February when the board meets next.

In-Process Parcel Application 2023 (year) -4 (sequence in year): (“North parcel”) (2023-4):

- Status of the Metropolitan Edison (Med-Ed) right-of-way (ROW) title search:
(See above discussion for the South parcel)
- Northampton County’s (NORCO’s) New Model Easement:
(See above discussion of the South parcel)
- Highland Federal Grant application:
(See above discussion of the South parcel)

In-Process Parcel Application 2023 (year) -3 (sequence in year) (2023-3):

- Status of the Metropolitan Edison (Med-Ed) right-of-way (ROW) title search:
(See above discussion for the South parcel on 2022-2)
- Northampton County’s (NORCO’s) New Model Easement:
(See above discussion of the South parcel on 2022-2)
- Highland Federal Grant application:
(See above discussion of the South parcel 2022-2)

Old Business:

Block style map indicating preserved parcels in the township and those parcels still not preserved:

The new 5' by 7' map was visible behind the board in the same room. The board remarked on its clarity and that it will be a great asset on literature promoting a referendum this year for more funding by township taxpayers for land preservation projects in the township.

The board remarked that they will have to check how the new block style map (smaller version) in the main building looks.

Northampton County's New Model Easement

The county's model easement to be used for requesting funding for the township's current preservation projects is still not available. Kodama indicated he would go through proper channels by asking Township Manager Melanie Ernst to ask Babbitt of the Heritage Conservancy to contact the county's Sherry Acevedo, Conservation Coordinator of the Northampton County Parks and Recreation department. Babbitt should ask if the model easement will soon be available so that the township can ask the county for the funding.

New Business:

There was no new business on the agenda.

Kodama indicated he would contact retired board Vice Chair Bob Schmidt if there is any new word from any residents of the township regarding new land preservation project requests. Schmidt had heard of a possible interest from a township resident not long ago.

Treasurer's Report – Board Treasurer Lorraine Mineo:

Mineo gave the current treasurer's report. **The beginning balance** for the period was **\$1,526,710.17**.

There was **one expenditure** during the last period, and it was for **\$5,938.79** paid to **Heritage Conservancy** on **12/26/2024**.

Interest income for the period was **\$821.29** in the **savings** account and **\$4.50** in the **checking account**. The CD is new as of 11/13/2024. **No interest on the CD was reported**.

The board current Open Space account funds are as follows:

A CD with \$1,000,000.00;
a savings account with \$507,241.35;
and a checking account with \$14,355.82.

The current grand total of funds in these three accounts is: **\$1,521,597.17**.

Meeting Adjournment:

Kodama motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mineo seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.

Our Next Meeting – February 25, 2025:

The next meeting will be held in the same location – the secondary building in the township's community complex.