



## MORRIS CANAL WORKING GROUP



### PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE FINAL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday September 30, 2014

NJTPA  
One Newark Center, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor Newark, NJ

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#### Attendees:

1. Bob Barth, Canal Society of NJ
2. Richard Draper, Canal Society of NJ
3. Naomi Hsu, Jersey City Planning
4. Mike Kruimer, East Coast Greenway
5. Jonathan Luk, NJ State Parks—Liberty State Park
6. Donna Macalle-Holly, Lake Hopatcong Foundation
7. John Manna, Borough of Wharton
8. Jerry Rohsler, Morris County Planning
9. Elizabeth Roy, Warren County Planning
10. Gerry Scharfenberger, NJ Office of Planning Advocacy
11. Jason Simmons, Passaic County Planning
12. Eric Snyder, Sussex County Planning Director
13. Cyndi Steiner, NJ Bike & Walk Coalition
14. Ron Farr, NJDWSC
15. Ted Ritter (NJTPA)
16. Megan Kelly (NJTPA)
17. Doug Greenfeld (NJTPA)
18. Eliza Haburay-Herrling (NJTPA)

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Megan Kelly, NJTPA staff, and Planning and Implementation Committee (PIC) co-chairs Elizabeth Roy, Warren County, and Eric Snyder, Sussex County, called the meeting to order and prompted self-introductions.

#### **II. Featured Speaker: Implementation Process**

John Manna, Borough of Wharton Grants Specialist, conducted a presentation about the Borough's project to restore its Morris Canal Lock Two East; to date, more than \$1 million in grants/funding has been secured for the project. A grant from the NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for \$20,000 in 2004 facilitated the initiation of the lock restoration project in Wharton. Manna said the Borough is very supportive of the Morris Canal Greenway concept, and he noted

that Wharton even changed its official logo to include an image of the Morris Canal lock. Among the other points Manna made during this presentation:

- The Borough realized that in order to turn Wharton into a destination, it needed to restore the former Canal lock. The first step was creating a Master Plan of the historic site as an “outdoor museum” which laid out the framework for the restoration project. Next, a feasibility study was conducted to identify key resources for implementation and funding options.
- Public outreach has been essential and has also included curriculum that teaches students about the history of the Canal. Students were involved in the lock excavation project, as well.
- Other grants utilized for this project were outlined by Manna, ranging from \$20,000 to over \$400,000 in awards.
- Manna indicated the borough established a maintenance agreement with the Morris County Park Commission approximately 20 years ago for this facility.
- Also, to help facilitate reception of varied grants, a non-profit friends group for the Morris Canal project was created by Manna.
- Key hurdles for the lock restoration included DEP permitting (which required close coordination), funding (NJDOT, NJ Historic Trust and the Morris County Historical Trust were key grant resources), establishing a maintenance agreement for Hugh Force Park and its historic assets, lack of municipal staff, and the need for programming or other activities to draw people to the location.
- Wharton’s annual Canal Day is now a major tourism event, drawing 5,000 to 8,000 people each year. This requires extensive promotional activities to sustain and grow the event.
- Next steps for the Wharton project will be restoration of the lock tender’s house and mechanical restoration of the lock and its gates.

Discussion following the presentation included takeaways from the presentation for coordinated corridorwide improvements. One idea the Working Group may want to consider is how to use the Wharton example as a model for other projects to link to the statewide Morris Canal Greenway.

### **III. Map Discussion**

PIC co-chair Eric Snyder and Megan Kelly prompted a table discussion focusing on current Morris Canal maps (poster-size maps with some key features shown were made available to the committee) to get a sense of what portions of the Canal right-of-way are still accessible/preservable as well as potential regional connections (such as existing trails, town centers, transit, etc.).

Committee members emphasized the importance of looking at smaller, individual projects through the lens of the overall Greenway, thereby enhancing potential

funding applications and illustrating the importance of an individual project as part of a regionally significant project to granters.

#### **IV. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis on Implementation**

A SWOT analysis was conducted to help the PIC focus on how to advance Greenway implementation on a local and regional scale.

##### **Strengths:**

Strengths included the significant number of resources at the disposal of the working group, the demand for multi-modal recreational trails, and the demonstrated economic benefits of trails.

##### **Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses identified included communications, long-term needs, funding, municipal support, and limited existing connectivity.

##### **Opportunities:**

Opportunities identified included Greenway champions/stakeholders; recreation and health; tourism/economic development; identifying model projects; funding; economic growth; education; continuity; trail connections; and identifying environmental advocates.

##### **Threats:**

Threats discussed, in addition to those covered previously as a weaknesses mainly related to property issues including development pressure, land ownership, political will, and momentum.

#### **V. Next Steps**

The committee discussed a range of potential next steps, in addition to the opportunities outlined previously. These included outreach, advancing the corridor study, and compiling an existing inventory of resources.

The date and location for the next PIC meeting will be rescheduled due to a conflict with the American Planning Association, NJ Chapter annual conference.