

# **MORRIS CANAL WORKING GROUP**

## **FINAL Meeting Minutes**

**August 13, 2013**

**10:00 am-12:00pm**

**Waterloo Village**

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### **1. Introduce New Members/Solicit Additional Members**

The meeting began with brief self-introductions/affiliations of approximately 50 Morris Canal Working Group (MCWG) members and others present. See attached sign-in sheet.

### **2. Update on Activities to Date**

Megan Kelly, NJTPA Central Staff, gave an update on activities since the Working Group's summer 2012 meeting. This update included discussion of materials contained in an information packet that was distributed before the meeting.

Kelly discussed ongoing efforts to plan a Morris Canal Greenway implementation conference for next year, to be tied-in to New Jersey's 350th birthday celebration. She said such a tie-in could enable the MCWG to leverage marketing and public relations resources from the state, resulting in increased visibility and interest in the Greenway project. The state's year-long celebration will focus on the themes of innovation, diversity, and liberty ([www.officialNJ350.com](http://www.officialNJ350.com) has more information). Kelly noted she is a member of the NJ 350 Planning Committee, which will help the MCWG target partnership opportunities for the conference.

Kelly also confirmed that the state will produce a short documentary on the Morris Canal, and also develop a corresponding school-age curriculum. Kelly said she will be looking for material for the film and curriculum from Morris Canal stakeholders and members of the MCWG's Data and Information Collection Committee. Kelly said the results of the 2014 Morris Canal Events Survey (distributed prior to the meeting and also distributed in the meeting's information packet) could be a useful tool in determining exactly when to hold next year's conference.

Several Morris Canal stakeholders announced annual events occurring this year and in 2014 featuring the historic Morris Canal. The Working Group also reviewed a Target Events timeline to help identify opportunities for marketing and promoting the working group and conference. Such opportunities could include hosting vendor tables at local fairs or festivals, or preparing a poster session or panel discussion for professional conferences. Kelly said identifying target events will be one of the main objectives of the MCWG's Events and Marketing Committee.

Kelly said the MCWG has been encouraged to respond to the NJ Forum's call for posters. The deadline for this submission is September 9, 2013. Kelly also reviewed other survey and solicitation materials.

Kelly updated the working group on the formation of the Morris Canal Executive Team, comprised of the Canal Society of NJ, Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Morris County Parks, Warren County Planning, Passaic County Planning, Jersey City Planning, Jersey City Redevelopment Authority, East Coast Greenway Alliance, and the NJTPA. The Executive Team will help refine ideas before presentation to the full MCWG and serve as a forum for discussing other ideas. The Executive Team met for the first time on May 23, 2013 at the NJTPA's offices in Newark. Meeting minutes were distributed.

Kelly also discussed the initiation of outreach to the Morris Canal's 36 municipalities. Invitation letters were sent out to mayors, who were asked to distribute the MCWG's meeting invitation to their planning boards, economic development commissions, open space committees, environmental commissions, recreation commissions, historic commissions, etc.

### **3. Finalize MCWG and Conference Vision, Goals & Objectives**

Building on the work that was done in previous meetings, Kelly introduced three draft vision statement options, drawing partly on common themes from the Warren County Morris Canal 25-Year Action Plan, the Jersey City Morris Canal Greenway plan, and Passaic County's Morris Canal Greenway project.

#### **a. Vision Statement Option 1:**

Traveling 102 miles from Phillipsburg to the Hudson River in Jersey City, the Morris Canal was historically and regionally significant in the development of northern New Jersey. The Morris Canal Greenway will highlight that past while serving new interests (non-motorized recreation, heritage tourism, education, economic development and environmental preservation). The Morris Canal Greenway will provide, to the greatest extent possible, a continuous greenway experience.

#### **b. Vision Statement Option 2:**

Leveraging the collective efforts of 36 municipalities, 6 counties and other stakeholders in the northern New Jersey region, the Morris Canal Greenway is a 102-mile bicycle and pedestrian destination. Connecting the Delaware River in Phillipsburg to the Hudson River in Jersey City, the Morris Canal Greenway will highlight the varied landscapes, history and industrial developments that shaped the historic Morris Canal. This continuous recreational, historic, educational and tourism facility will tell the story of northern New Jersey's industrial history.

#### **c. Vision Statement Option 3:**

This is the original vision statement developed by Warren County: To preserve and enhance the historic Morris Canal, a national engineering treasure, and the cultural landscape through which it passes in a manner that: highlights its distinctive characteristics and the ingenuity used in its construction to distinguish it from other historic resources and canals; tells the story of life along the canal, its influence

on past events and its relevance to today's society to support public education and foster community pride; interconnects communities and links points of interest by serving as a continuous greenway of open space across the county; and provides convenient access to a towpath trail for non-motorized passive recreation use

MCWG members agreed that Vision Statement Option 3, with the following amendments (shown in red), was the most representative of the Morris Canal Greenway vision.

*To preserve and enhance the historic Morris Canal **route**, a national engineering **and transportation** treasure, and the cultural landscape through which it passes, in a manner that*

*...interconnects communities and links **heritage tourism** points of interest by serving as a **near** continuous greenway of open space across the northern New Jersey region;*

*...preserves this **mountain-climbing canal's** scenic, recreational, and historic resources, recognizing the role it plays in sustaining and improving the quality of life for New Jersey residents and attracting economic growth;*

*...tells the story of life along the canal, its influence on past events and its relevance to today's society to support education and foster community pride **and preservation**;*

*...highlights its distinctive **mountain climbing** characteristics and the **ingenious use of inclined planes**;*

*...provides convenient **(urban, suburban and rural)** access to a trail for non-motorized transportation*

Other ideas discussed included: how to incorporate Complete Streets and multi-use education into the vision statement; potentially expanding Morris Canal Greenway boundaries beyond the canal corridor to help tie-in other historic sites; connecting to other regional trails, including those in other states; communicating the fact that most of the canal is no longer classified as a watershed; and focusing the vision statement on the greenway, not just the canal.

Regarding the MCWG's goals, Kelly noted that the following goals were agreed upon in previous meetings (note: the first bulleted goal was previously the vision statement):

- Reclaim and complete the continuousness of the Morris Canal Greenway, to the greatest extent possible
- Build stakeholder support and stewardship across the state
- Raise awareness of this historic resource
- Create a forum and/or resource for stakeholders (including online resources, official committees, and a "master list" or online library of planned and completed work)
- Determine the level of interest for preservation statewide

- Inventory the canal right-of-way
- Create a consistent treatment of the Morris Canal
- Reclaim the connectivity
- Create a corridor-wide identity
- Identify funding opportunities for maintenance and management of the greenway

MCWG members indicated that removal of “reclaim” from the first goal would allow for flexibility with the greenway route, especially in light of various right-of-way conditions. The Working Group also agreed that a distinction is needed to state whether parts of the Greenway are being reclaimed or continued, rather than focusing on the canal’s route. To this point, the Working Group indicated a need to acknowledge that some parts of the Greenway are on-road versus on a towpath.

Other points of discussion included: the Greenway is a “string-of-pearls” that connects a number of interesting and historic sites; and, in some places, the Greenway will be seen as a key transportation corridor for bicycle and pedestrian use (such as in Jersey City), while in other locations the Greenway will incorporate several historic engineering marvels that make it more than just a greenway (such as in Wharton).

Two distinct discussions for the Morris Canal’s preservation emerged: creation of a greenway and preservation of the canal itself; while the greenway can be both, its creation will need to be flexible to accommodate varying needs and conditions. The goal of inventorying the canal right-of-way geographic information systems (GIS) was emphasized as an important first step in mapping the actual Morris Canal route. The GIS solicitation was included in the meeting packet on page 5; MCWG members were encouraged to complete and return.

Overall, the Working Group indicated a level of expectation should be set for the Morris Canal Greenway in the short-term and the long-term, much the same way a national park carries a certain level of expectation to its visitors. One suggestion was made to overlay tax maps on the aerials to illustrate the Morris Canal’s true route. This was the method used for Jersey City’s Morris Canal Greenway study, and it showed the canal’s right-of-way is different from the street grids developed later.

A question arose during the discussion as to who eventually would oversee the Greenway (for example, a public/private partnership or a “Friends of” the Morris Canal). This organization would have to be self-sustaining, with the capability to make decisions and award grants, etc. MCWG members also emphasized the need to spell out the priorities of this project (are we trying to tell the Canal’s story or create a Greenway?).

One example discussed was Warren County’s 25-Year Morris Canal action plan, where an eventual “responsible party” is not identified, thus allowing for whoever has the resources to take on the job when the time comes. Another discussed example: The Delaware/Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, which leveraged \$7 of local funds for every \$1 of federal funds; now, they no longer get federal funding.

One suggestion: consider making one of the Morris Canal Greenway's goals to identify how a national/state heritage corridor designation would benefit the Morris Canal corridor.

#### **4. Create Conference Working Committees**

Kelly asked MCWG members to review pages 14 and 15 of the distributed informational packet, where committee composition and objectives are outlined. Kelly reviewed the three committees' primary tasks and initial action items. The three committees are: Conference Planning; Data and Information Collection; and Events & Marketing.

Kelly explained the Conference Planning Committee is tasked with organizing Morris Canal Greenway Conference logistics and determining sponsorship opportunities. The Data and Information Collection Committee will gather information for the full working group to consider (such as the GIS inventory, school curriculum survey, events inventory, and fact sheet data). The Events and Marketing Committee will seek out events/opportunities to promote and market the Morris Canal Greenway conference and the MCWG's vision for the remainder of this year and in 2014. Committees will be comprised of 10-15 volunteers, including 1 chairperson. The first meeting dates will be set once the membership is finalized.

Kelly said two committees already have immediate action items: the Data and Information Collection Committee needs to collect school curriculum material by September 1, 2013; and the Events and Marketing Committee needs to prepare a poster session application for the NJ Forum conference by September 9, 2013.

Kelly asked for volunteers interested in serving on the three committees and said a poll (<http://doodle.com/uzvxze4kgkrh2ihy>) will be distributed to seek other volunteers.

The following members have volunteered for a committee:

*Conference Planning Committee:*

*Gerry Scharfenberger, Department of State, Office of Planning Advocacy*

*Bob Barth, Canal Society of NJ*

*Jim Lee, III, Warren County Morris Canal Committee*

*Glenn Ceponis, NJ Historic Trust*

*Megan Kelly, NJTPA*

*Joe Macasek, Canal Society of NJ*

Data and Information Collection Committee:

*David Antonio, Essex County Planning*

*Bob Barth, Canal Society of NJ*

*Michael Lysicatos, Passaic County Planning*

*Megan Kelly, NJTPA*

*Barry Bratner, Historical Society of Boonton Township*

*Tom Edmunds, Morris County Parks Commission*

Events & Marketing Committee:

*Megan Kelly, NJTPA*

Next, Kelly went through Morris Canal Greenway conference preparations to be undertaken by the three committees (once membership is set). A discussion followed regarding the conference's format, target audience, potential venue, target date, partnership/sponsorship opportunities, support for the NJ 350<sup>th</sup> event efforts, as well as other targeted promotional events were first discussed.

Mike Dannemiller, of the East Coast Greenway (ECG) Alliance, spoke about his experience organizing planning summits for the 3,000-mile ECG trail that stretches from Maine to the Florida Keys. In New Jersey, the ECG runs approximately the same length as the Morris Canal, at 94 miles. In the initial planning stages of the ECG, Dannemiller said the group first focused on educating its membership base before turning to decision-makers to solicit for funding. Also, he said the ECG did not have the same advantage as the Morris Canal Greenway, with an historic route already pre-defined.

Dannemiller said the ECG held two summits at the NJTPA offices in Newark in 2006 and 2007. Both summits were half-day workshops (4 hours) limited to approximately 100 people broken out by region. The first summit served as an introduction of work-to-date; the second focused on implementation. The two summits were held within a few months of each other, and Dannemiller said the half-day format not only increased the level of participation but also helped to keep conference costs down, as food was not provided. Both of the ECG summits were free events. It was suggested that Morris Canal Greenway summits be reserved for decision-makers, while participation in fairs and other special events would be used for Greenway marketing and public information.

Another option discussed was holding a full-day Greenway conference focused on educating MCWG members and other interested parties. The full-day option would be organized in a single track, so all participants would get the same information. A few potential venues were discussed; these included:

Waterloo Village, Paterson Museum, Trenton, Warren County Community College, or the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City.

The discussion then focused on the need to identify “political champions” and determine when to bring in political support for the Morris Canal Greenway effort. In the case of the ECG, Dannemiller said congressional-level support was sought from the project’s inception. ECG Alliance members also attend the annual National Bike Summit (held in November) in Washington, D.C. to meet with members of NJ’s Congressional delegation.

Also, noting the gubernatorial election coming up next November, some MCWG members said holding a Greenway conference in November could make it difficult to attract political support. The suggestion was made to hold the conference in the spring, far ahead of the election season and to consider inviting the D&R Greenway to speak at the conference.

The need for a statewide identity or “branding” for the Morris Canal Greenway and the Working Group was emphasized. Among the suggestions: installing state highway signs alerting motorists to the historic canal route and targeting professional conferences (such as TransAction, NJ American Planning Association, the state teachers convention, or the NJ School Boards Association monthly conferences) and fairs to get the word out. It was also suggested that a basic PowerPoint presentation on the Morris Canal be created to use for public outreach.

## **5. Review Solicitations/Collect Data**

Kelly asked MCWG members to share any Morris Canal-related events planned for 2014, or any annual Morris Canal events coming up this year. The following is a list of events in chronological order:

### **2013 Events:**

- August 24: Annual Morris Canal Day in Wharton
- Fall: Warren County Morris Canal Bus Tour (33 miles, full day tour)
- September 8: Wayne Morris Canal Hike (Passaic County Noon – 2pm)
- September 14: Waterloo Canal Heritage Days (11am-5pm)
- September 19: Highlands Council Meeting
- September 22: Rockaway Historic Panels Art Display
- September 28: Waterloo Canal Heritage Days (11am-5pm)
- October 6: Pompton Lakes Morris Canal Hike (Passaic County Noon – 2pm)
- October 10: Annual Friends of Waterloo Village Fundraiser
- October 12: Waterloo Canal Heritage Days (11am-5pm)

October 11-13: Pathways of History held in local museums

October 12<sup>th</sup>: Sussex County Annual Heritage Festival @ County Fairgrounds (Free)

October 26: Waterloo Canal Heritage Days (11am-5pm)

**2014 Events:**

June: History & Historic Preservation Conference

Fall: Warren County Morris Canal Bus Tour

These events will be added to an updated events listing. Page 2 of the meeting materials packet contains a complete list of other targeted events.

**6. Next Steps**

The next steps for the MCWG include: holding committee meetings in early October and getting the surveys/solicitations distributed. With the aid of the NJ League of Municipalities, involving the municipalities will be an important next step. Also, the format for the Greenway conference must be agreed upon before the end of this calendar year, to be included in the state's NJ 350 celebration plans.

Products to be developed: Create a basic PowerPoint of the Morris Canal to use for outreach (building on the one page fact sheet for municipal outreach).