



DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING AND PLANNING
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County of Sussex

SUSSEX COUNTY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

December 18, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:38p.m. by Chairperson Lisa Chammings. The meeting is being held remotely in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (PL Chapter 231). Proper notice has been sent to the local newspapers, County website and posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Center, 1 Spring Street Newton, New Jersey 07860.

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lisa Chammings, Chair
R. Michael Dolan, Vice Chair
Bill DeBoer
Marie Springer

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Stephen Skellenger

STAFF PRESENT: Joel Penkala, Ag. Resource Specialist
Robert McBriar, Esq. OSC Counsel
Christy Degeorgis, Recording Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Alan Henderson, Commissioner Liaison to the OSC

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Marie Springer to approve the Minutes of September 25, 2025 as presented. The motion was seconded by Bill DeBoer. A roll-call vote was taken. Results were as follow: Lisa Chammings-Yes; Mike Dolan-Abstain; Bill DeBoer-Yes; and Marie Springer-Yes. All were in favor, with an abstention from Mike Dolan. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

A. FY2026 Local Recreation Improvement Grant

Mr. Penkala briefed the OSC members on the FY2026 Local Recreation Improvement Grant. He highlighted that the deadline for the grant is February 13, 2026. The state allotted \$10 million this year and is expected to happen year over year. He stated that Sussex County is not prepared to create an application for that grant this year but is entertaining the possibility of applying for it for the 2027 iteration with the intent of focusing on rail trail improvement

Chairperson Chammings noted that the LRI grant is extremely helpful to the municipalities.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Approval of the Open Space Committee’s Schedule of Meetings for 2026

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Thursday, January 22, 2026 | Thursday, August 27, 2026 |
| Thursday, February 26, 2026 | Thursday, September 24, 2026 |
| Thursday, March 26, 2026 | Thursday, October 22, 2026 |
| Thursday, April 23, 2026 | Thursday, November 19, 2026 |
| Thursday, May 28, 2026 | Thursday, December 17, 2026 |
| Thursday, June 25, 2026 | Thursday, January 28, 2027 |
| Thursday, July 23, 2026 | |

MOTION

A motion was made by Marie Springer to approve the Open Space Committee’s Schedule of Meetings for 2026 as presented. The motion was seconded by Bill DeBoer. A roll-call vote was taken. Results were as follow: Lisa Chammings-Yes; Mike Dolan-Yes; Bill DeBoer-Yes; and Marie Springer-Yes. Motion carried.

B. 2026 Trails Grant Schedule

Mr. Penkala briefed the OSC members on the 2026 Trails Grant Schedule memo. He highlighted that the County is moving forward with the 2026 Trails Grant. The County has given out the one sheet for notification and as of January the County will start formally accepting applications. He explained that as part of the grant program are pre-application meetings that will happen during a scheduled Open Space meeting. The applicant will present and hopefully have the majority of their application complete. The County can help any applicant through any issues they might be having, and vet them before they formally submit their application. He added that because of timing the whole schedule is rolled back by one month. It was initially set to March but is now April to make sure that all the municipalities would have enough time and to consider options of

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the projects. After a formal hearing on the application; sometime in the summer would be when we could make a recommendation and it could go before the BCC for their approval.

Chairperson Chamblings stated that it is a good timeline with the one-month change to April and then the application deadline would be May 15. Then a review period in June during the summer of 2026, all the necessary administrative parts would be complete for approval. That gives everybody one year to complete the project from the summer of 2026 to the summer of 2027.

Robert McBriar, Esq. stated that there has been a lot of discussion regarding the dates and it would be appropriate to approve the amendments of the 2026 Trails Grant Schedule as presented.

MOTION

A motion was made by Marie Springer to approve the 2026 Trails Grant Schedule as presented. The motion was seconded by Bill DeBoer. A roll-call vote was taken. Results were as follow: Lisa Chamblings-Yes; Mike Dolan-Yes; Bill DeBoer-Yes; and Marie Springer-Yes. Motion carried.

C. 2026 Trails Grant Rules/Regulations Power Point Presentation

Mr. Penkala took the past grant presentation and changed the verbiage inside of that presentation to reflect the changes made in the rules and regulations, as well as the timeline. The PowerPoint was created so that if there are inquires it could be presented with this PowerPoint and run through the different items.

Chairperson Chamblings asked if this could be shared with a municipality or someone who may be interested.

Mr. Penkala stated yes. It is a generic presentation that could be given by any member of the OSC that covers the details of what the grant rules and regulations state. What projects are acceptable and what is not acceptable. It stays within the boundaries of the will of the OSC and the BCC for the Trust Fund and for what these monies are to be used for.

There was some discussion between Chairperson Chamblings and Mr. Penkala about producing a One Sheet for a January release and the timeline moving forward for municipalities.

Commissioner Alan Henderson asked Mr. Penkala how long the presentation is.

Mr. Penkala stated that it is about 20 slides and the presentation would take roughly 20-30 minutes. If there are questions or discussion of the specifics about a project it could take 40-60 minutes.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. BCC Resolution of Support for Amended Open Space Trails Rules and Regulations

Mr. Penkala briefed the OSC members that the BCC approved a resolution of support for the amended rules and regulations. They earmarked the money that was suggested for this grant round.

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Chairperson Chamblings thanked Commissioner Henderson and the BCC.

Mr. Penkala added that he has received inquiries from Hardyston, Hamburg, Wantage, and Sussex Borough. He has had conversations with Sparta, Franklin and Byram and is expecting proposals from them. We do have some interest already and he expects more to come.

B. Open Space Trust Fund Renewal Approval in November

Mr. Penkala updated the OSC members on the Open Space Trust Fund Renewal Approval in November. It has been renewed and approved for the duration that was asked for.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chairperson Chamblings asked for a motion to open the meeting to the public at 7:57p.m. A motion was made by Marie Springer to open to the public for comment. The motion was seconded by Bill DeBoer and carried unanimously.

No public was present.

Commissioner Henderson thanked the OSC for all the work that was put into the program and that there is interest in it and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Chairperson Chamblings asked for a motion to close the meeting to the public at 7:58p.m. A motion was made by Marie Springer to close to the public for comment. The motion was seconded by Bill DeBoer and carried unanimously.

Mr. McBriar wished everyone a merry Christmas and thanked Mr. Penkala, Autumn Sylvester, and the OSC members for all of the hard work done this year.

Chairperson Chamblings thanked the Division of Planning staff for the work done.

Mr. Penkala stated that he is excited for the coming year's projects.

ADJOURNMENT:

All business having been completed, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Marie Springer. The motion was seconded by Bill DeBoer and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:00p.m.