

AGENDA ITEM AS PRESENTED AT THE MARCH 4, 2019 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

4. DISCUSSION OF CONVEYANCE OF TOWNSHIP OWNED PROPERTY LOCATED AT THE BASE OF PINE GROVE MOUNTAIN ON TAX PARCELS 24-7-44B AND 24-7-44 TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES' BUREAU OF FORESTRY

Ferguson Township owns two parcels of land that collectively total 61.06 acres at the base of Pine Grove Mountain. The parcels, identified as tax parcel 24-7-44 and tax parcel 24-7-44B, are 19.45 and 41.61 acres, respectively. Both lots are entirely woodland, and the larger of the two contains steep slopes and a section of Slab Cabin Run.

Description and Zoning

The larger of the two parcels is bisected by SR 26 (Water Street) and the smaller parcel is located approximately 800 feet west of the terminus of Chestnut Street as shown on attached aerial image. The larger parcel is bound on the east by largely wooded residential properties; on the south by land owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; on the west by land owned by the State College Borough Water Authority; and on the north by residential lots. Both lots are zoned Rural Residential (RR) and located in the Township's Ridge Overlay District (ROD). A snip of the Township's zoning map is attached to the agenda (**note, not attached the PGM SAP agenda**).

Ownership and Conveyance

The larger of the two parcels was conveyed to the Township on August 16, 2001, by the State College Borough Water Authority. It was previously owned by the Ferguson Township Authority and transferred to the State College Borough Water Authority on October 6, 2000. The Township received the smaller parcel from the State College Borough Water Authority in 2003, having been previously owned by the Pine Grove Mills Water Company and the Ferguson Township Authority in the 1990s.

Background

The Township was awarded a grant from DCNR to have a Forest Stewardship Plan completed for the property. The plan identifies the attributes of the property including soil types, slopes, forest composition, and recommended stewardship activities. To date, the Township has postponed any active land management activities at the properties including invasive species control, trail development, and timber harvesting. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has approached the Township about conveying the land to the Commonwealth, and the Bureau of Forestry of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources would assume the land management responsibilities. The Township is asked to consider conveying the land as a donation, but the Commonwealth would consider purchasing the land for a value to be determined if the Board were interested in requesting compensation for the properties. This was also an option recommendation by the consulting forester who wrote the Forest Stewardship Plan. The Plan has been attached to the agenda (**note, not attached the PGM SAP agenda**).

Discussion

Prior to proceeding with any further discussion with representatives of DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, staff is asking the Board to discuss and consider whether:

- a) a dialogue should be continued at this time or at some point in the future with the Bureau of Forestry to donate or sell the land to be absorbed as state forest;
- b) to update the land management plan and investment time and resources into maintaining the property to control invasive species and manage the woodlot; or
- c) continue with current practice and maintain ownership of the land with no maintenance plan.

Should the Board wish to own and maintain the property, a further discussion should be had about how best to maintain it. A summary of a meeting conducted with the Township Arborist and the Forester who authored the Forest Stewardship Plan for the properties from November 22, 2016, is also provided with the agenda (**note, not attached the PGM SAP agenda**).

Staff Recommendation

That the Board of Supervisors **discuss** the conveyance of the property and any concerns the Board may have.