

Open Space Preservation

Township of Lafayette

Presentation:
ANJEC
April 12, 2021

TOWNSHIP OF LAFAYETTE

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

COUNTY OF SUSSEX



Getting to know Lafayette Township

- Lafayette Township is comprised of 18 square miles centrally located in rural Sussex County
- Rich history in agricultural in the heart of the Kittatinny Valley
- Approximately 6000 acres are farmland assessed (not farmland preserved)
- Located at the crossroads of two abandoned railroad beds converted to trails- Sussex Branch Trail and the Paulinskill Valley Trail as well as the Paulins Kill River
- Population of about 2500
- Housing units of approximately 900
- No public water or sewer- well and septic
- Twp. is defined by 4 scenic ridgelines known as Harmonyvale Ridge, Old Beaver Run Ridge, Statesville-Quarry Ridge, and the Sunrise Ridge
- Strong equestrian presence along with standard livestock and niche livestock farms such as emu, bison, ostrich llama and alpaca
- Former gristmill in center of Lafayette along with surrounding buildings operated by many antique dealers
- Twp. and NJ Natural Lands Trust co-own a tract known locally as the Blue Heron Rookery- approximately 262 acres-preserved prior to Twp. formal Open Space initiative.



Blue Heron, May 2005

Lafayette Township

Open Space Advisory Committee facts

- 7 member advisory Committee to the Twp.
- Created 2004
- 3 original members still serve
- Conduct monthly meetings
- Sponsors outreach programs to advise residents of preservation opportunities
- Facilitate State direct acquisitions
- Facilitate Farmland Preservation projects with Sussex County Program
- Appear before LUB and Twp. to facilitate Open Space Preservation initiatives
- Assist in keeping Twp. ROSI up to date (Recreation and Open Space Inventory)

Open Space Advisory Committee

Lafayette Township

Committee Charter and Mission Statement

Mission Statement

Our mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance the open space located within Lafayette Township and its historic, scenic, agricultural and recreational resources for the use, benefit and enjoyment of township residents and the public

History of Lafayette Open Space Preservation Efforts

- **5/4/04- The Lafayette Township Committee passed a resolution forming an Open Space Advisory Committee for purposes of developing the Township's Open Space and Recreational Plan**
- **Fall 2004 multiple meetings with Sussex County Representatives and The Land Conservancy to explore options to preserve properties in the Township- Recommendation to Township Committee of need to prepare a formal Open Space and Recreation Plan in order to pursue an opportunity to seek preferred Planning Incentive Grant Funding available from Green Acres Program- Twp. retained the Land Conservancy –NJ to assist in the endeavor. Favored status with GA 50/50 matching funds available. Sought grant funding to underwrite cost of initial plan.**
- **4/26/05 Twp. hosted a public meeting for public to offer feedback on the Open Space needs of the community that was heavily advertised and well attended to identify various preservation goals that the Twp. wanted to pursue and identify in the Plan document. Residents stressed protecting rural character of the twp., farmland preservation, preservation of the unique and picturesque ridgelines and steep slopes, and expand recreational opportunities for residents as top priorities- Plan referred to the Twp. LUB with recommendation it be adopted as an element of the Twp. Master Plan.**
- **Summer of 2005 OSAC drafted a recommended referendum question for 11/05 election to establish a local Open Space Trust Fund and collect local open space tax of between 1 and 3 cents per hundred assessed value in line with N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7 - Township voters approved the collection of a municipal Open Space Tax by a margin of 57% in favor and 43% against at November 8, 2005 election.**

History of Lafayette Open Space Preservation- continued

- **Lafayette Twp. OSAC drafted an Ordinance establishing the Lafayette Open Space Recreation , Farmland, and Historic Trust Fund- begin collecting local open space tax in 2006. Trust maintained in accord with N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7.**
- **2006 rate established at \$0.015 per \$100 assessed value in 2006. In 2007 tax increased to \$0.0175- and thereafter reduced to \$0.01 beginning 2009 to the current time. Rate kept above lowest amount Green Acres requires be collected to allow for 50% State matching funding.**
- **Referendum authorized primarily acquisition of properties for preservation as permitted by N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7**
 - Acquisition of lands for conservation purposes;**
 - Acquisition of lands for recreation purposes;**
 - Acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation;**
 - Acquisition of historic properties and structures;**
 - Maintenance of lands for conservation purposes;**
 - Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred by Lafayette to pursue and of these items.**
(did not include development of lands acquired for recreation or conservation purposes to focus on acquisition)
- **2007- Original Application to Green Acres for Planning Incentive Grant favored status (50% matching opportunity)**
- **2012 Township adopted a Ridgeline and Hillside Protection Overlay Zone Ordinance-The purpose was to protect community character, which is, in part; defined by scenic views and vistas of the Township's hilly and mountainous terrain. These features in the terrain establish the setting and essential character of a community. Major goal of preserving ridgelines achieved by drafting design standards to minimize impact of development on higher elevations.**

History of Lafayette Open Space Preservation- continued

- **October 4, 2012- First Municipal Open Space acquisition- Purchase of Lawlor tract on Warbasse Junction Road with targeted objective of the tract serving future active recreation needs- Twp. acquired 53 acres and the State acquiring 45 acres to annex to the Hyper Humus Wildlife Management area and Sussex Branch Trail. Total Cost \$455,677.00 (State PIG funding \$227,838.50; Sussex County Open Space Trust contribution \$200,000, Lafayette Local Trust Fund \$27,838.50)- State involvement avoided formal subdivision process.**
- **October 21, 2013 Lafayette Village Historic District listed on State Register of Historic Places- December 31, 2013 Lafayette Village Historic District added to National Register of Historic Places**
- **March 25, 2015- Second Municipal Open Space acquisition- Purchase of former Moose-Castimore tract off Lantz Road with targeted objective of preserving Statesville Quarry Ridge Preserve- Twp. acquired 73 acres of farm fields and beautifully forested ridgetop with iconic scenic views. Property was subject of subdivision concept and preservation effort prevented development that would have cleared an established forest and likely allow for home construction on ridgetop which occurred in the neighboring township further up County Rt 565. Total Cost \$467,500.00 (State PIG funding \$233,750; Lafayette Local Trust Fund \$233,750)**
- **September 28, 2018- Third Municipal Open Space acquisition- Purchase of former Morgan Farm off Gorney Road with targeted objective of adding to preservation of the Statesville Quarry Ridge Preserve. Twp. Project added 42.79 acres to the neighboring tract preserved in 2015. Total Cost \$300,000 (State PIG funding \$167,046; Sussex County Open Space Trust contribution \$100,000, Lafayette Local Trust Fund \$32,954)**
- **2020 Lafayette drafted an Update to the Lafayette Open Space and Recreation Plan that was adopted by the LUB as element to the Master Plan.**

Flyer for Lafayette's First Open Space Public Meeting

- Individual letters also sent to each Township Department, School, Fire Department, EMS, Senior Citizens, Preservation Society, PTO
- Public Notice in Newspaper
- Letter to Editor to publicize meeting



Lafayette Township Open Space Advisory Committee

Will host a public meeting on:

**Tuesday, April 26, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.
in Lafayette's Municipal Building
33 Morris Farms Road
Lafayette, NJ 07848**

The Lafayette Township Open Space Advisory Committee is developing an Open Space & Recreation Plan to plan for preservation, create greenways, and suggest future recreation opportunities.

Purpose of meeting: The Committee would like to hear your suggestions and comments on open space, farmland, and recreation issues in the community. Residents will be able to view the draft open space map and have an opportunity to discuss preservation goals in the Township.

For more info...

Summary of Public Comment

Many of the comments during the public participation portion of the hearing focused on:

- Retaining Lafayette Township's rural character.
- Preserve historic structures including historic barns, silos, and churches.
- Farmland preservation ranked very high with residents
- Residents did not want to see Route 15 widened in the Township
- Historic Lafayette Center being designated as a historic center.
- Development on the many ridges in the township would detract from the scenic views that Lafayette offers
- Attendees supported the creation of an Open Space tax to provide local funding for land preservation
- Create greenways and/or local trail systems that link neighborhoods to schools, recreational areas and parks, preserved natural areas, historic and cultural sites,
- regional trail systems all of which promote community connectivity;
- Protect drinking water quality and quantity through the preservation of surface water bodies and ground water recharge areas;
- Expand existing recreational facilities
- Ensure the diversity of flora and fauna by protecting natural habitat areas through preservation

Lafayette Township

Existing historic silo located Rt 15
Repurposed as a local landmark

Artist commissioned by Twp. to create mural
capturing local history

Project completed July 2017 by local artist
Art Frisbee

One goal as stated in first Open Space &
Recreation Plan- preserve silos



Lafayette Cemetery

Lafayette Cemetery maintained by Lafayette
Township Preservation Foundation

Photo taken to promote Halloween Ghost
Stories fundraiser event 2017

Some graves date back to the 1700s



Mabee House Rt 15 Lafayette

Township owned

Renovations to residence guided by efforts
and fundraising activities of Lafayette
Preservation Foundation- starting in 2004

Previously used as Lafayette Municipal
Building

Circa 1830

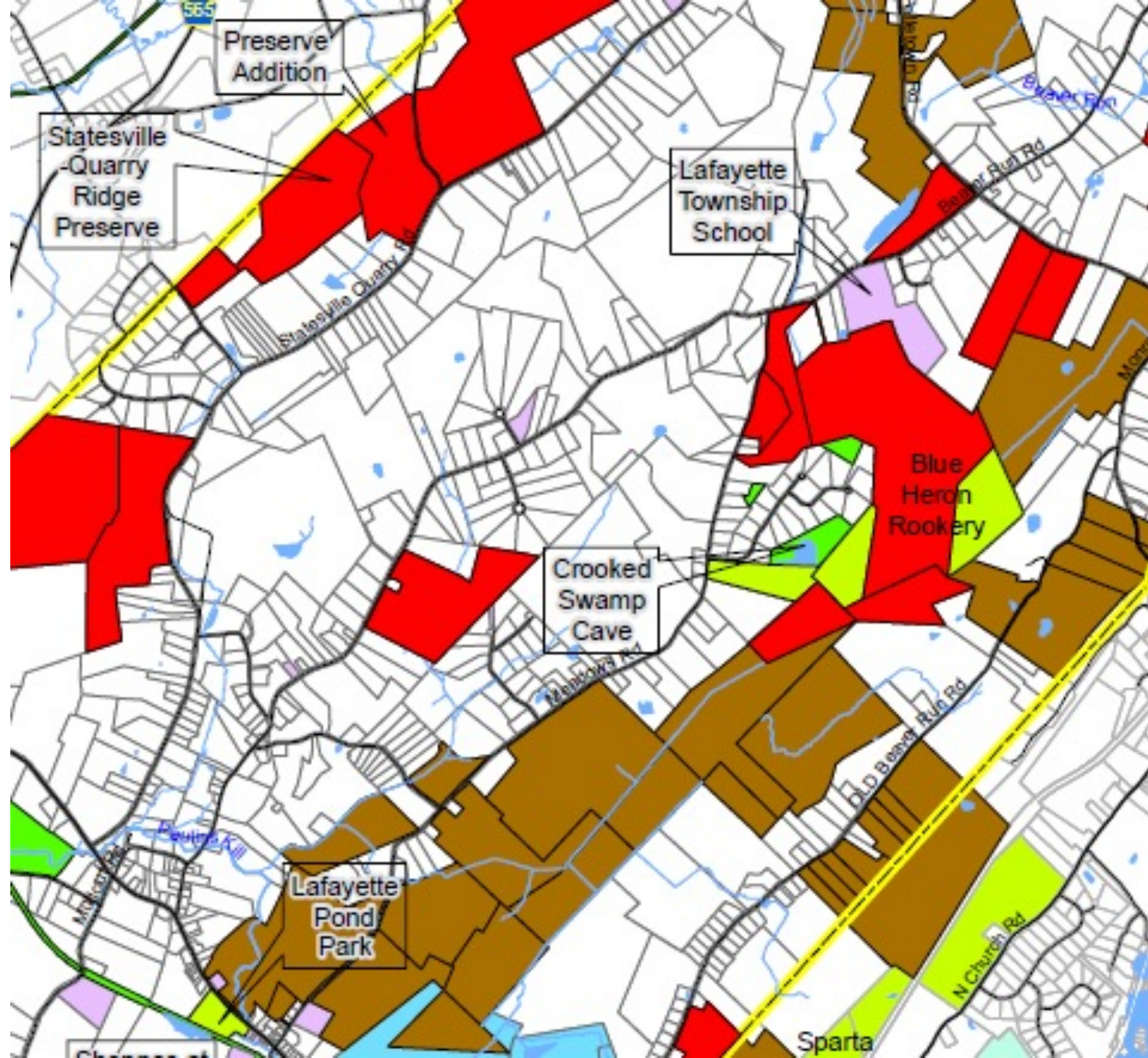
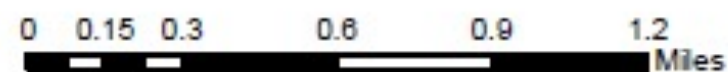


Open Space Funding

- 2005: Ballot resolution approved to establish the local OSTF
- Currently collects \$0.01 (one cent) per \$100 assessed value.
- As of 2019, Lafayette has collected \$644,067 local Open Space tax & expended \$420,936.
- Twp. has been awarded \$1,125,000 in Green Acres Planning Incentive grants.
- In 2018, the local OSTF collected \$32,848.56. Lafayette is a small community.
- Lafayette has received \$300,000 from Sussex County Open Space Trust- contribution toward two different preservation projects.

The current balance in the OSTF is \$220,844 (March 2, 2021)

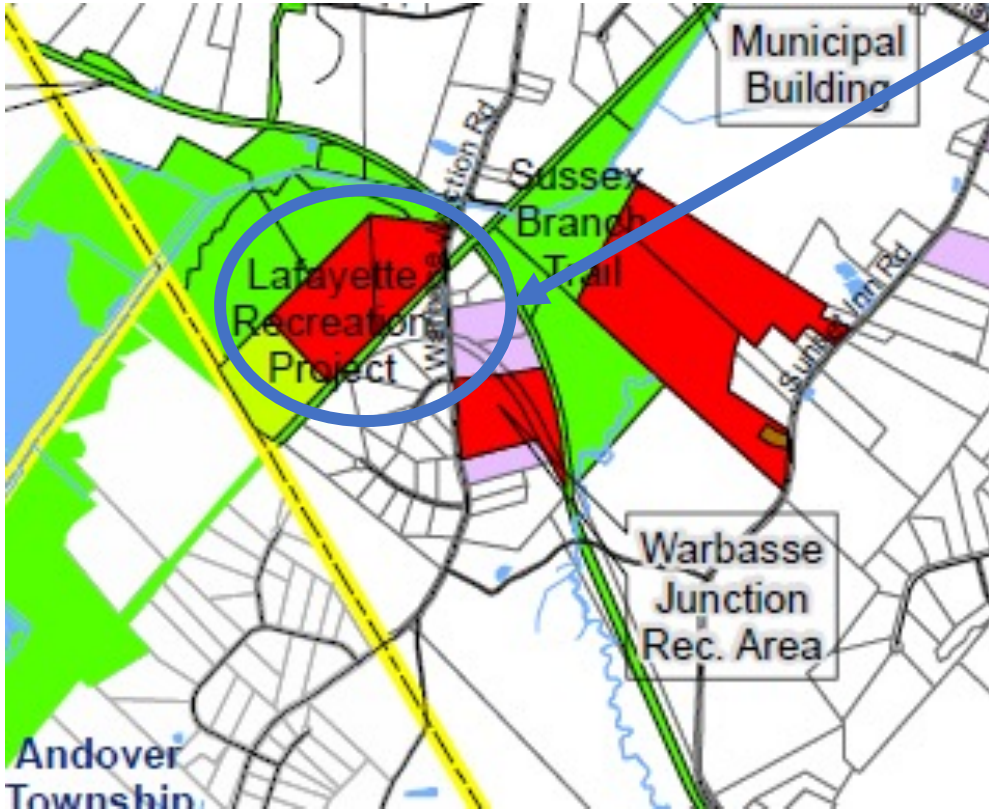




Preserved Land in Lafayette Township

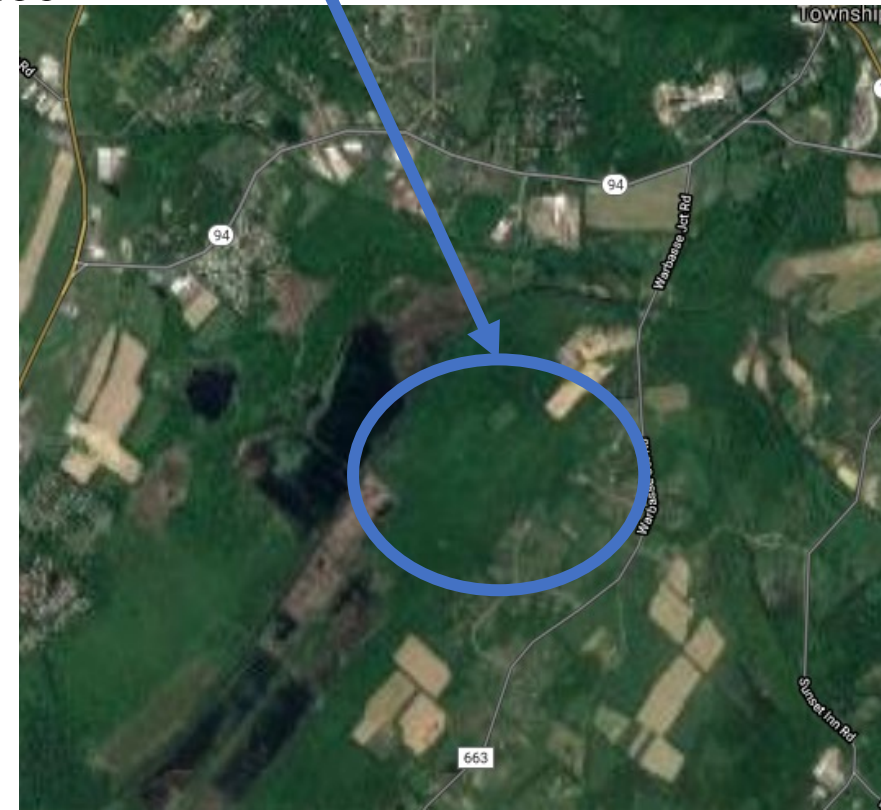
- **457 acres** of municipal open space
 - Lafayette Recreation Project (**53 acres**)
 - Statesville-Quarry Ridge Preserve (**73 acres**) and the Preserve Addition (**43 acres**)
 - Warbasse Junction Recreation Area (**17 acres**)
 - Blue Heron Rookery (**262 acres**)
 - Lafayette Pond Park (**8 acres**)
- **1,662 acres** of protected farmland-Farmland Preservation-17 farms total- Lafayette 1st project 1990. Cost per acre range \$1,700 to \$15,500 per acre. Total cost to acquire development rights-\$6,612,278.02. Cost covered by County Farmland Preservation Program and State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC)
- **356 acres** of state land in five preserves
- **108 acres** in the federal Wetlands Reserve Program.
- **2,583 acres** of preserved land in the Township

Property Purchased with Township Funds

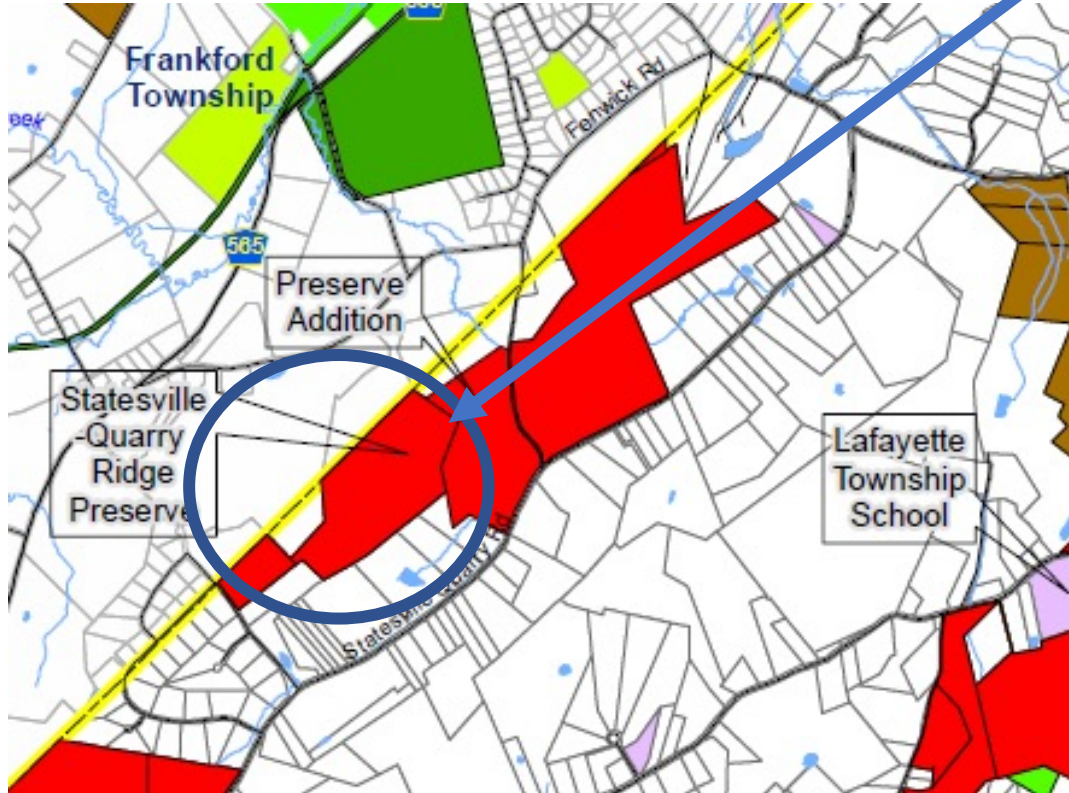


Lawler: Lafayette Recreation Project

- 53.03 acres
- \$227,838.50 State Funding
- \$200,000.00 County Funding
- \$27,838.50 Municipal OSTF
- Total Cost: \$455,677.00

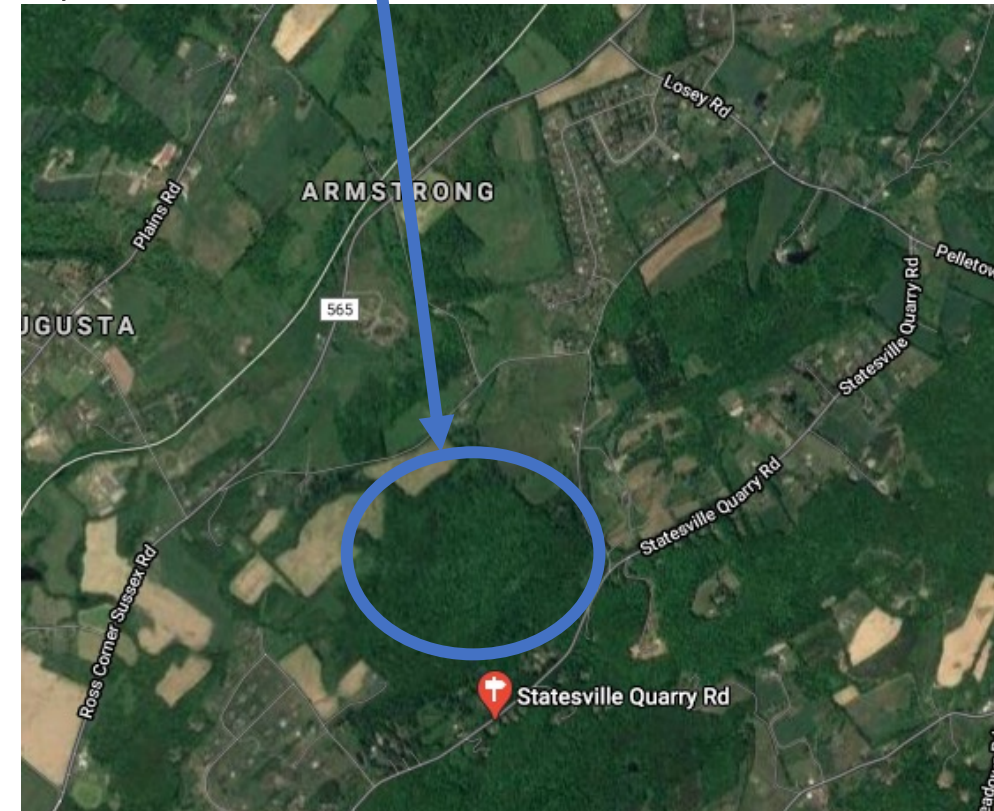


Property Purchased with Township Funds

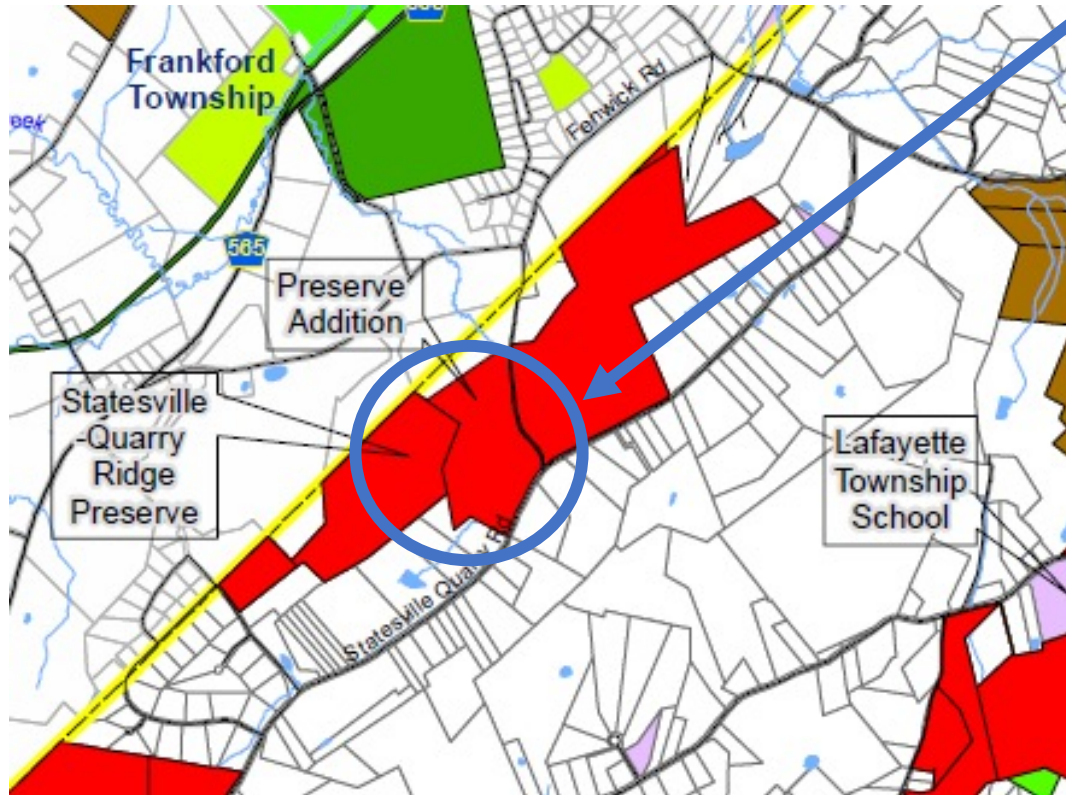


Moose-Castimore/Statesville Quarry Ridge Preserve

- 73 acres (highly visible from SC Fairgrounds)
- \$233,750 State Funding
- \$233,750 Municipal OSTF
- Total Cost: \$467,500.00

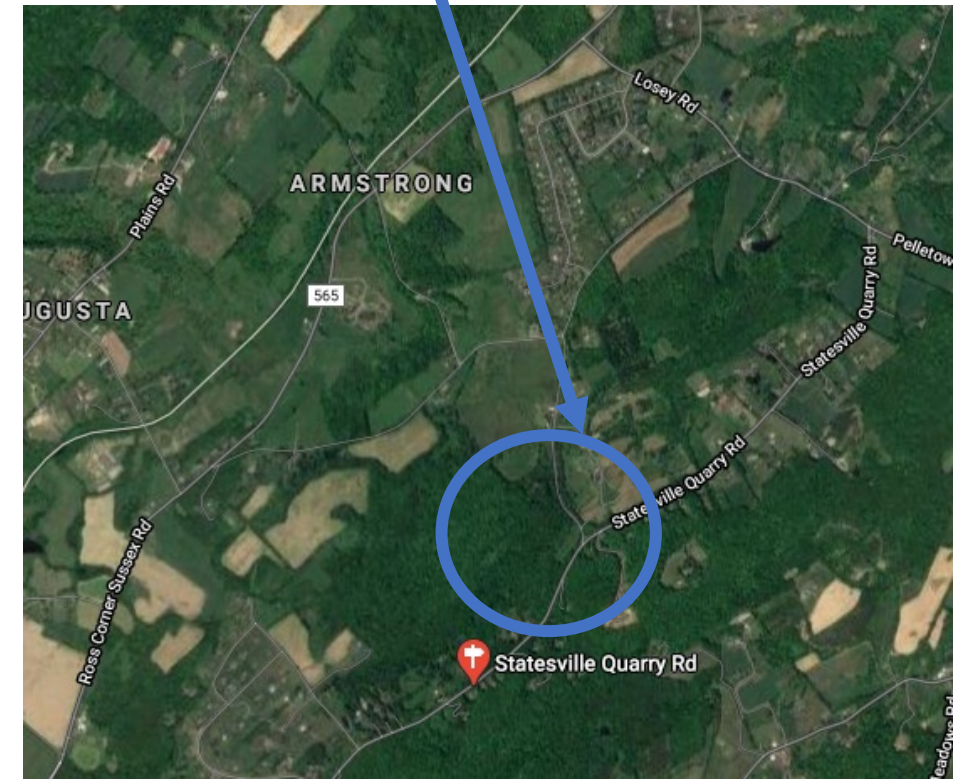


Property Purchased with Township Funds



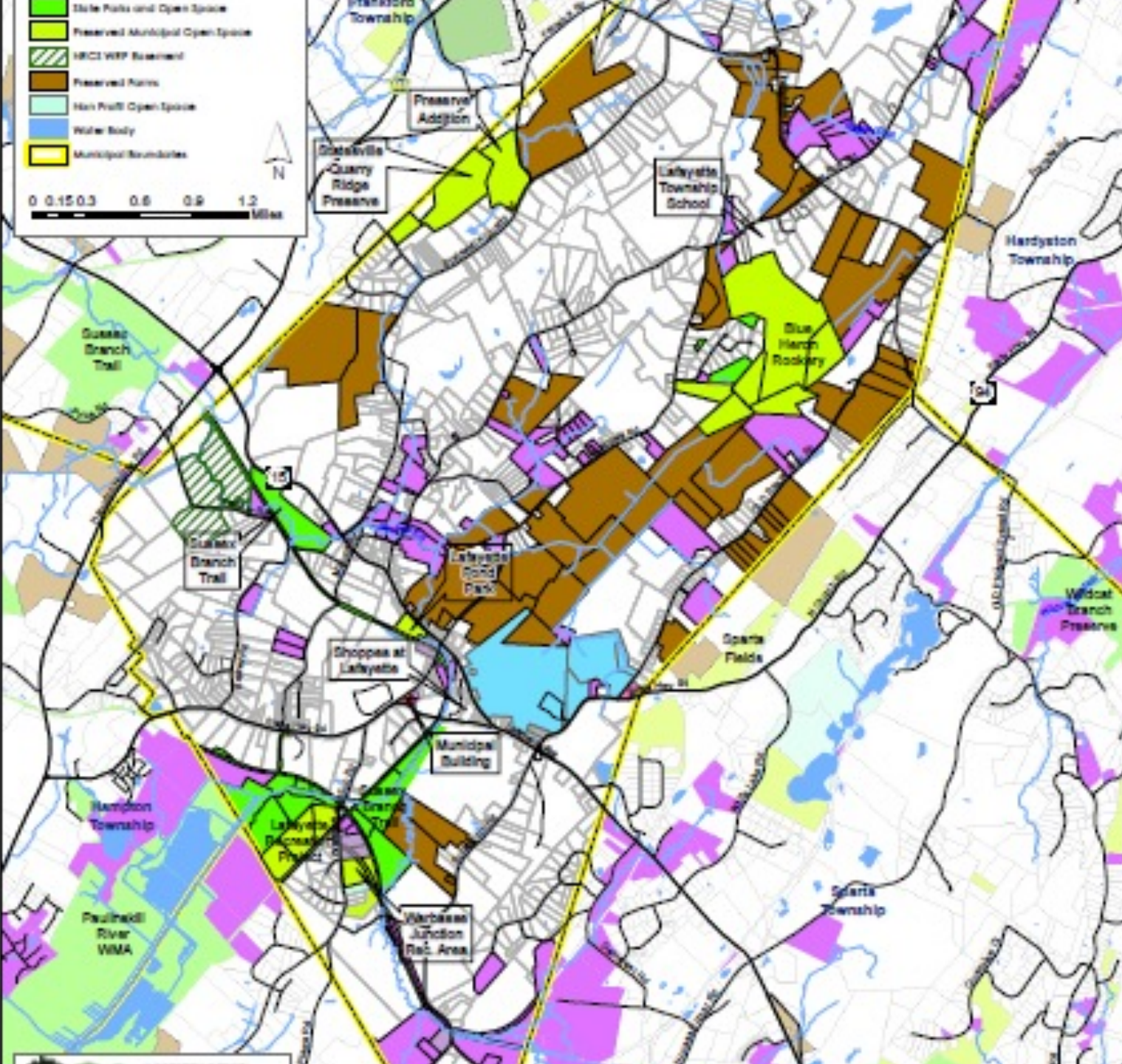
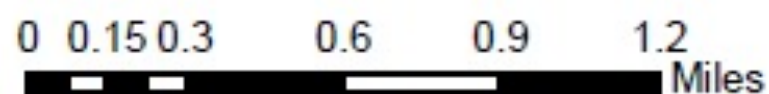
Morgan Farm: (Statesville-Quarry Ridge Preserve Addition)

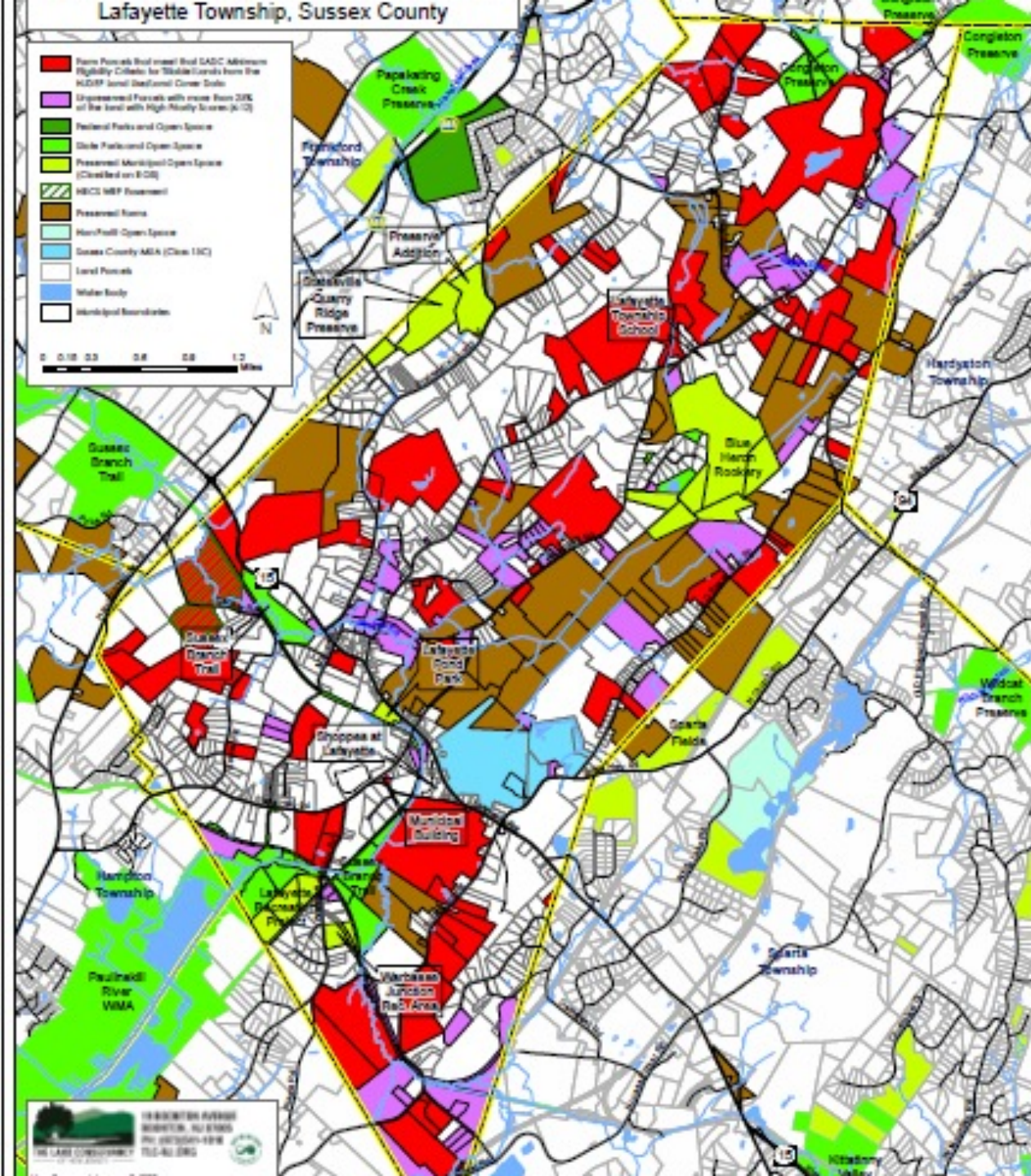
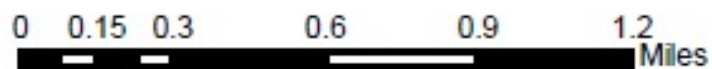
- 42.79 acres
- \$167,046.00 State Funding
- \$100,000.00 County Funding
- \$32,954.00 Municipal OSTF
- Total Cost: \$300,000.00



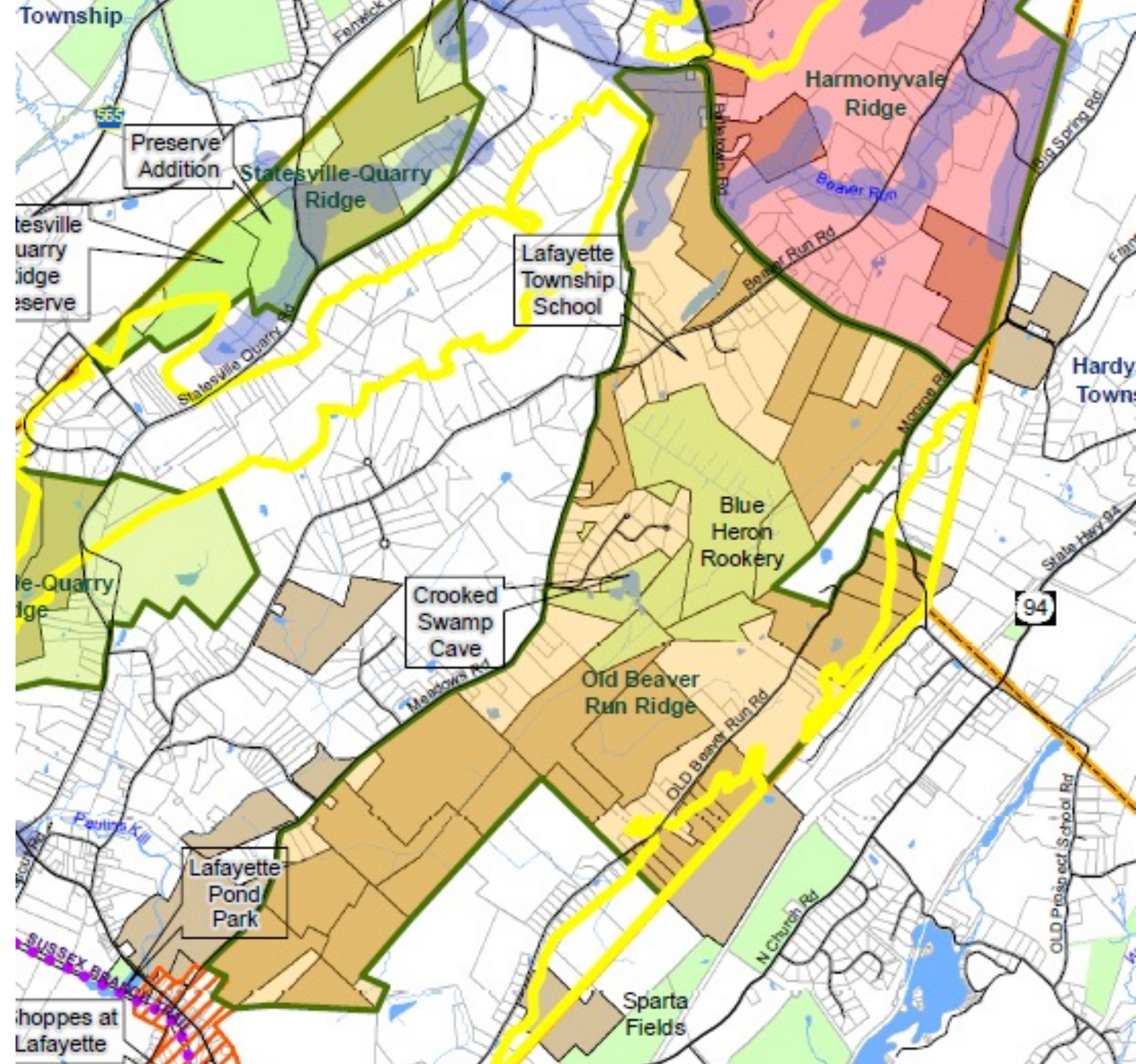
Percent of Parcel which scores 6-12:

- Unpreserved Parcels with more than 25% of the land with High Priority Scores (6-12)
- Federal Parks and Open Space
- State Parks and Open Space
- Preserved Municipal Open Space
- NRCS WRP Easement
- Preserved Farms
- Non Profit Open Space
- Water Body
- Municipal Boundaries





- Paulinskill Valley Trail
- Sussex Branch Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Ridgeline Hillside Viewshed
- Harmonyvale Ridge Greenway
- Old Beaver Run Ridge Greenway
- Statesville-Quarry Ridge Greenway
- Sunrise Ridge Greenway
- 300 Feet Buffer of Category One Water
- Historical District
- NRCS WRP Easement
- Preserved & Nonprofit Lands
- Preserved Farms



Goals: 2020 Update

- Retain rural character
- Support the farming industry
- Preserve the historic character
- Ensure the diversity of flora and fauna
- Promote the stewardship of natural lands
- Create greenways and/or local trail systems
- Protect drinking water quality and quantity
- Support recreational facilities

**Stewardship of lands primary added element



Referendum Question for November 2020 Ballot

If passed, the municipal open space fund could be used for development projects on lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes.



Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are welcome: Include first and last name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Kindly keep letters under 200 words, and kindly only submit once every few months. We reserve the right to edit for punctuation, libel, civility, and grammar. (Topics do not have to be political). Send letters to Editor.ANS@StrausNews.com.

Lafayette residents urged to vote for Open Space Trust Fund Amendment

Lafayette residents approved the Township's initial Open Space referendum on Nov. 8, 2005, to establish a Municipal Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust that would be funded through the collection of an annual levy of between one (\$0.01) and three (\$0.03) cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. The Trust Fund revenue was targeted primarily to acquire and preserve open space, recreation, farmland, and/or historic properties.

Since that time, Lafayette has successfully acquired just shy of 169 acres for active and passive recreation opportunity. The collection of the local open space tax has allowed Lafayette to leverage both state and county grant funding to use toward the purchase of the lands acquired. Recently, the Open Space Advisory Committee completed an update to the Lafayette Open Space and Recreation Plan that was referred to the Land Use Board for adoption as an element of the Master Plan.

The new plan reports that Lafayette has spent \$928,634 to complete three preservation projects, but less than a third of that amount came from the local Open Space Trust fund as the township was able to leverage both



state and county grants to support those acquisitions. These projects consist of the Lawlor Farm acquisition envisioned for future active recreation and two others, Moose-Castimore and the Morgan Farm, that encompass the Statesville Quarry Ridge Preserve.

State statute regulates the purposes that funds from a local Open Space Trust can be used for. Although Lafayette previously focused its open space program upon acquiring property, Green Acres rules allow municipalities to revisit a previously approved proposition regarding open space conservation to add such things as development of township preserved properties.

This Nov. 3, Lafayette voters will see a referendum question on their ballots that asks whether township residents are in favor of granting the governing

body the discretion of allotting a maximum of 30% of the total funds held in the trust each year to be utilized for development of land acquired for recreation and conservation purposes. "Development" is defined as any improvement to land acquired for recreation and conservation purposes designed to expand and enhance its utilization for those purposes.

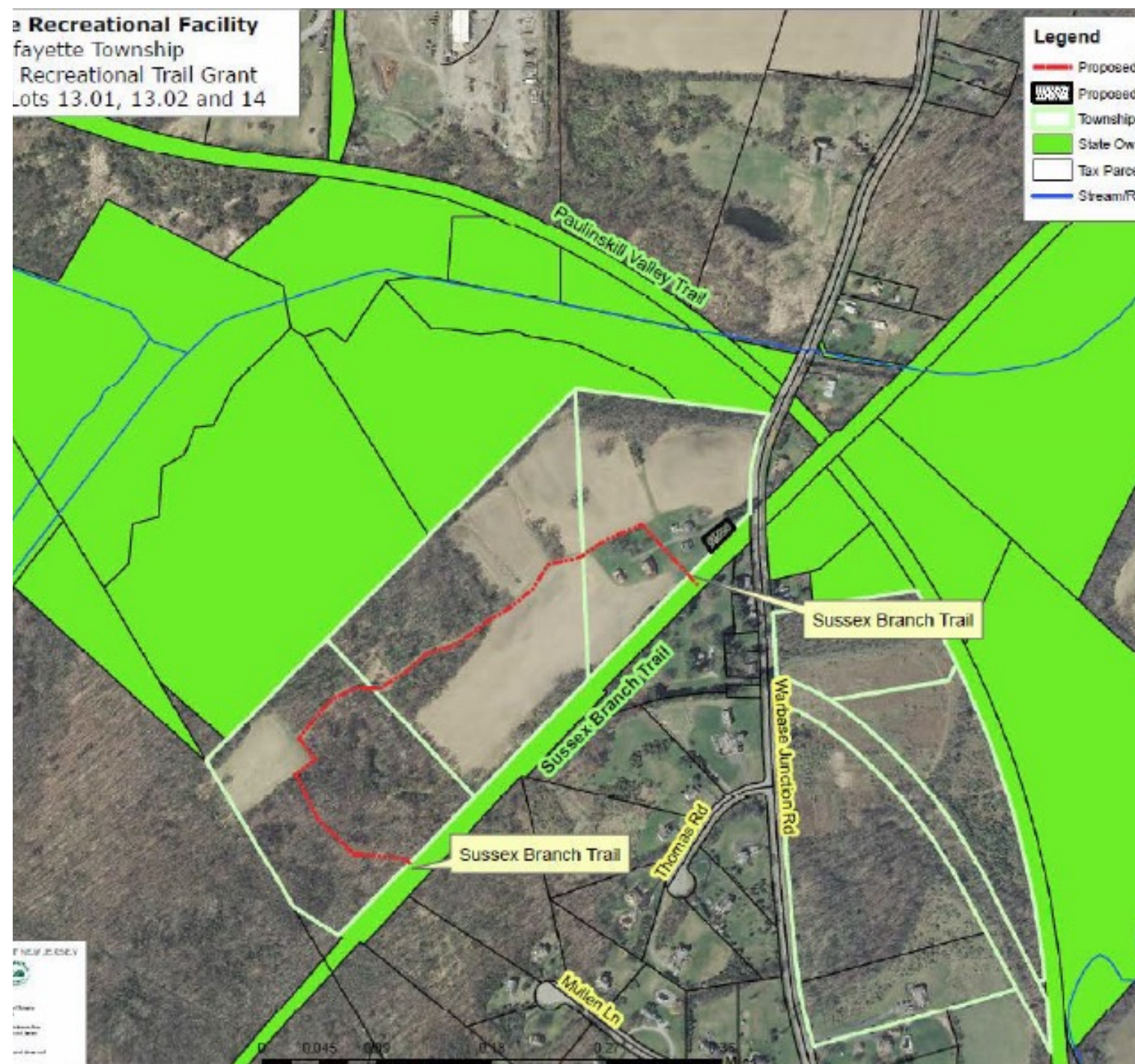
A "yes" vote on this referendum question will mean that the voters are in favor of an option that up to 30% of the balance of the "Lafayette Township Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund" may be utilized for development costs to improve township preserved properties. The Open Space Advisory Committee recommended that the Township Committee place this issue on the ballot to determine if Lafayette is in favor of adding another purpose that the trust fund proceeds may be used for. Several Sussex County towns, as well as the county, have taken similar action to add development as a potential use of these trust funds.

Please look for this question on your ballots in November.

Kevin O'Leary
Lafayette Open Space Advisory
Committee

2021 Proposed Trail Project

- Sussex County adopted stewardship element to its Open Space Trust- November 2017 referendum
- Sussex County Open Space has just approved funding for trail projects as priority
- Lafayette has met with County Open Space representatives about the program and plan on pursuing funding to develop trail at the Lawlor preserved tract to link up to State trails
- May develop parking lot to accommodate larger equestrian trailers to facilitate riding activity



Moose- Castimore Acquisition

Preserved- March 25, 2015

Farm fields approx. 11 acres

Mature forested acres 62 acres



Lafayette use of Farm lease to maintain Township preserved tracts

- Green Acres approved form of lease
- Goal of farm lease to prevent invasive species, reduce maintenance responsibility cost to Twp. as provisions in lease delegates maintenance to farmer
- Farm lease income goes back into the Lafayette Open Space Trust to support the preservation program
- Current leases on Lafayette Recreation project (Lawlor), Statesville Quarry Ridge Preserve (Moose Castimore) and Warbasse Junction Recreation site
- Allows farming pending potential development of sites

Lafayette, New Jersey
Sussex County

Contact our Open Space
Advisory Committee with
any questions-
kevinkoleary@gmail.com

