

Bridgeton moves forward on Bluffs preservation

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BRIDGETON — There's more than one front to the fight for preservation of the Bridgeton Bluffs. City council signed its support of preserving the 38-acre site at last week's meeting.

The resolution passed last Tuesday included a request that the county not reduce the one-cent preservation tax for the farmland preservation program.

Also, that the county consider using funds from the one-cent tax to match pending \$275,000 Green Acres grant to assist the American Littoral Society in securing the Bluffs.

The site is located off Grove Street along the Cohansey River.

Matt Blake, manager of the Littoral Society's Delaware Bay Program, said cooperation between entities is what will drive projects like this.

In this case; Bridgeton asks the county to keep the penny tax, the county applies revenue from that tax as matching funds for the state grant the Littoral Society receives and the state eventually acquire the land.

The Littoral Society said they would like to invest a large portion of the Green Acres grant in Cumberland County. Matching funds for the grant are required and the group would have to spend the money elsewhere without the one cent tax, according to Blake.

He said the county's open space plan has short and long term plans of action. In this short term case, they could act like a conduit for funding projects that other municipalities endorse.

Curt A. Gellerman, Green Acres southern team leader, said earlier "It would be terrific if county government would participate in this.
"We would like to see a level of local participation."

Blake said the \$30 million worth of projects between Gloucester and Cape May counties seeking Open Space funds creates competition.

Most of the projects that are being funded are the ones with non-profit, local or county support.

The Bluffs have been eyed by city entities since at least 2009 when the Bridgeton Municipal Port Authority submitted an application to sell it to the Green Acres program.

Blake attended last week's city council work session to explain to members why following through on this project is important.

"Residents are already using the site for fishing," he said. They are also using it for illegal dumping, although that issue is only found on up to three of the 38 acres.

Council members had previously expressed their favor of the project. At the work session, Mayor Albert Kelly said "the key question asked earlier is that preservation would not stall development at the port."

Blake left the city council work session to arrive at county Freeholders meeting on time. There, he was told by Freeholder Director Bill Whelan that the "penny was safe."