

Middletown to fund land acquisition for farm run by autism group, park

The Township Committee has voted to reappropriate more than \$1.5 million for the acquisition of a 26-acre property.

Middletown intends to partner with the Monmouth Conservation Foundation and NY/NJ Baykeepers to acquire the property, which would be used by Impact OASIS to benefit people with autism. The total cost is about \$2.9 million.

Middletown anticipates receiving \$650,000 from various sources, including state Green Acres funds, to offset the \$1.55 million it will float as a bond.

The money originally had been set aside for another land purchase that was never finalized.

Impact OASIS will use part of the land to create a farm where people with autism would work. The rest of the property could be developed into a municipal park.

Committeeman Patrick Short was the lone dissenter, saying that while the farm project is a worthy cause, he believes the money could have been better spent for other municipal uses, such as protecting Bayshore communities from flooding or repairing roadways.

Deputy Mayor Gerard Scharfenberger said he is glad Middletown was able to preserve open space and partner with Impact OASIS.

Kevin Penton. Asbury Park Press. May, 2009