

Town of Gardiner Open Space Commission

February 21, 2022 6:00 PM

In attendance: Laura Rose (Acting Chair), Laura Wong-Pan, Tara Hoey, Kay Hoiby, Jean-Ann McGrane, Linda Geary. Absent: Kellie George

Quotes: (Laura R.)

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless."

-Sherry Anderson

"The freedoms that we cherish are meaningless without our commitments to one another: to civil discourse, to actively educating the next generation, to welcoming strangers, to loving our neighbors."

-Dana Horn.

Opening Business:

1. Motion by Kay to approve minutes from January 2022. Seconded by Jean. All in favor.
2. Next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2022 at 6pm.
3. Linda Geary: The NYS DOH is going to test 20-25 wells designated by the Ad Hoc committee based on responses from the public from the survey. Wells to be tested will be from various areas of the Town. Testing will probably happen in the spring. As per Steve Winkler from NYS Water Resources Group, they will be putting together a database about wells that have to report annually (farms with migrant workers, camps). , The Ad Hoc committee is going to ask for David Church to do a buildout analysis of the Hamlet if developed to maximum amount, so that it can be determined if there would be sufficient water.
4. Laura Rose: Various committees are asking us to weigh in and give our opinions about projects in the Town, and she raised the question of our appropriate role in offering those opinions.. Group discussed the Alexander subdivision proposal, and whether the GOSC should express an opinion on whether the applicant should be completing his own conservation analysis. Jean suggested we contact the Town Board to recommend that the Code be amended to require applicants to hire an external professional to complete the conservation analysis for all new projects, rather than weighing in directly on this particular project. Per Linda, Mr. Alexander has a BS in Forestry and asserts that he is qualified to do a conservation analysis and is familiar with the land. Laura Rose noted that he isn't arm's length from his transaction, and so his desire may color his analysis. The Planning Board meeting is tomorrow and the group's consensus is that if we have comments about this subdivision, we should make comments in our personal capacity.
5. Cell Phone Tower: Per Kay, the neighbors to the Highway Department property on South Mountain Road hired an attorney and presented letters challenging the cell phone tower, primarily because of disturbance to the viewshed and wetland. Applicant hired biologist who weighed in about why this is an appropriate place for a cell phone tower.

We again agreed as a group that individuals are welcome to participate but that the group wouldn't make a recommendation to the Planning Board or the Town on this issue.

6. Update on goals for 2022 that were discussed at last meeting:

Goal #1 – Support efforts to create a Community Preservation Plan. Per Linda Geary, Cara Lee came to their last meeting and explained New Paltz's strategy and timeline. It's a good group of 15 people. Consultant Ted Fink has been involved in 3 or 4 communities where it was passed. We are looking to have 3 local laws passed in November. Rodenhausen Shale has been hired to draft resolutions and the referendum and ensure that the Town complies with SEQRA. CPP will be working on education and outreach, with the goal of having a referendum by November.

Goal #2: Ensure the Town monitors its conservation easements and preserved lands. A recommendation was drafted about the best applicant to handle the monitoring work for the Town. Jean McGrane communicated the group's recommendation, along with the quotes received to Mary Beth Majestic and it will be on the Town Board's March agenda. If they vote in favor, WVLT will monitor for the coming year, with funds for this work coming from our budget.

Laura Rose will continue to update the list of Gardiner's protected land.

Goal #3: Educate and encourage voluntary conservation. Three members (Tara, Laura Rose, Kellie G) used the scoring criteria to see how workable it was when evaluating several parcels in the Town, as an exercise. It can be done, but it's cumbersome, and being able to do it automatically through the NRI maps and work being done for the CPP will be helpful in developing a Town-wide evaluation. Also, it was easiest to answer the questions that we'd put into our evaluation form that had answers available within the NRI maps. All agreed that this exercise would be too cumbersome for Gardiner Day. Laura Rose had proposed having an activity for families to use the maps and identify their properties and know the conservation values as reflected on the NRI maps. Tara proposed we simplify the task, asking just a few questions and using fewer maps for Gardiner Day. Jean proposed that this kind of activity be done through the library as well.

Jean discussed the upcoming NRI map presentation to the Planning Board, and questions already raised by the Planning Board about the sources of information for the NRI maps. Laura R pointed out that the sources are listed on each map.

Goal #4: Support the preservation of agricultural lands in Gardiner. Tara reported that Town of Gardiner is an eligible applicant for a State Grant to purchase development rights over farms. Subcommittee reviewed the potential of Whitecliff Farms as a parcel to preserve. Jean asked for Criteria for the grants and is concerned that we might be selecting a property without assessing other farms. We should get to know the criteria that Ag & Markets is looking for. Tara reported that it's an ongoing application but an application is time sensitive since we can still be considered for this round (Round 18). Ulster County has allocated a budget of \$5 million for the grant funds. Round 18 was initially delayed due to Covid. Tara noted that the criteria for vineyards is it needs to be

more than 25% as prime soils. Jean stated that we can consult with Roberta or Neil Curry on this. Our goal will be to understand the criteria and to evaluate those criteria and identify those farms that have the top scores according to that criteria. Tara will send out the criteria for the State Grant.

7. Kay's GOSC term is up in April 2022. She is evaluating whether or not she'll extend membership. Kellie and Linda's terms are up at the end of 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.