

## **Minutes: Gardiner Open Space Commission, October 15, 2018**

Attending: Jean-Ann McGrane, Kay Hoiby, Laura Wong Pan, Kellie George, Linda Geary, Laura Rose

### **Quotes of the Day (Jean.)**

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts." -Rachel Carson

"The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitable made up of some 20 or 30 farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Next Meetings:** November 5, 2018 5 - 6:30 PM at Jean's house.

December 10, 2018 5:30 - 7:30 PM at Town Hall

**Admin Items:** Kay is attending the PACE Land Use Conference.

OSI requested info from Town of Gardiner re Hess easement, Jean to follow up.

### **Strategic Planning Session:**

The purpose of this session was to develop a Strategic Action Plan which will assist the Commission in identifying priority goals, with specific action steps to move those goals forward.

Via email, each member wrote up a list of what she would be excited to have accomplished during her tenure on the Commission, looking back 5 years.

Becca used these to create a list of the commonalities in our goals. This list is attached to the minutes.

At the meeting, it was reviewed to identify any ideas that should be added.

Additions include:

- Encourage the Town to be active stewards of and leaders in conservation, starting with town owned properties
- Work, specifically in the hamlet, to create a trail by the river, new protections, and other public access.
- Be recognized as a "go-to" organization for finding resources and information on the best practices for land conservation. Be able to help our neighbors walk through this process.

4 categories were identified on the compilation list as having the support of 3 or more individuals. Of these, two were chosen to work on during this meeting:

- Education with concrete suggestions for what interested parties can do to protect land, and*
- Actively work to achieve new protection and public access.*

We then divided into two groups; each focused on one category and answering the following questions:

1. What are the steps needed to actualize this idea?
2. What resources would we need to execute this idea?
3. What should the immediate next steps be?

**Ideas that came from each group:***-Achieve new protection and public access:*

Linda Geary to find out from the town exactly what they own near the river.

Laura WP could look into donor interest for the property Rebecca Benner mentioned, including meeting the owners and walking it.

Group discussion held, and decision made not to speak with landowners yet, until we have a plan of action.

Group discussed specific farms that might be of interest to preserve.

*-Education with concrete suggestions for what interested parties can do to protect land:*

We need to get up to speed re what we will suggest.

We have learned quite a bit but have yet to codify specific courses of appropriate action.

We can list a full range of organizations that will partner with local landowners to help protect parcels.

We should know about funding options, and tax benefits.

We need to be able to communicate the benefits and costs associated with each choice.

We can develop educational talking points on the hows and whys of conservation.

**Educational outreach ideas:**

We discussed creating events and programs for the community around the idea of preserving open space. This could be a way for us to become more integrated with the whole community and may help us identify important properties to help preserve.

Discussion held about a potential winter forum. We would invite experts on land conservation to speak at a forum, giving advice to landowners, and information for the whole community.

We could also create excitement around the idea of preservation with a conservation awareness series, in which we invite speakers with expertise on plants, animals, rocks, waterways and special places within Gardiner.

We can invite local speakers who are doing conservation work and have them tell their stories.

Involving kids in a conservation awareness series would be fun, you'd involve hands on activities.

**End of Session Discussion:**

While there are some differences among our goals, in terms of where each of us wants to start, and where we'd most like to focus, there are also important commonalities among us.

- We need to find out if the town wants to hold or monitor new conservation easements.

-Linda Geary will create a memo with questions for the Town Supervisor and Board, to gather info we need in order to select a project and make recommendations.

-Laura WP, Jean and Laura R will have a conversation with Paul Colucci to get more information about the town accepting conservation easements while subdivisions are created. They will find out what guidance the town may need regarding this process. Then we can finalize our recommendations for their best practices for administering the easements they have, and any they acquire moving forward.

We need to be mindful of remaining neutral in our choices of properties to help conserve, especially if we are raising money for a PDR. What we choose should have positive conservation values, such as helping

preserve water aquifers, being part of contiguous parcels to aid in creating recreational pathways and wildlife corridors; etc. The pre-existing plan talks about areas of special interest.

We have more to discuss around all of our goals; to be continued at our next meeting.

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Attachment: Categories of Interest/ Compilation List.

Categories of interest

- Education with concrete suggestions for what interested parties can do to protect land (LR; KG, KH; JM)
  - Improve our own literacy and knowledge first
  - Field trips
  - Getting to know neighbors
  - Educating on value of open space and protection
- Influence current town landownerships to improve them for open space uses (LR; LG)
- Partner with a local non profit to help further their agenda or find resources to support shared interests (RB, LG, KH)
- Proactive vision for development (RB)
- Develop a database and conservation management plan for the towns easements (RB, LWP, KH)
- Develop a conservation easement program (LWP)
- Actively work to achieve new protection and public access (RB, LG; KH; JM; LR)
  - Create open space corridors using purchases and easements
  - Create green or blue way/greenway designation for Shawangunk and Walkill rivers
  - Conserve 17 acres on Albany post Rd
  - Protect at least one working farm
  - Preserving and protecting land along Shawangunkill and Walkill
  - Plattekill Gorge conservation
  - Conservation of Cliff and talus lands
- Active agricultural advisory committee (JM)

Ideas with 3 or more people interested

- Education with concrete suggestions for what interested parties can do to protect land (LR; KG, KH; JM)
- Actively work to achieve new protection and public access (RB, LG; KH; JM; LR)
- Partner with a local non profit to help further their agenda or find resources to support shared interests (RB, LG, KH)
- Develop a database and conservation management plan for the towns easements (RB, LWP, KH)