

MINUTES, Gardiner Open Space Commission Zoom Meeting, Monday November 16, 2020.

Meeting opened at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Laura Wong-Pan (Acting Chair,) Linda Geary, Kay Hoiby, Laura Rose, Rebecca Benner. Jean McGrane (Chair.) Excused: Kellie. Minutes taken by: Laura Rose.

Quotes (Kay)

Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.

-John Ruskin

Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine.

-Anthony J. D'Angelo

Opening Business.

Discussion of October minutes: one item needed update.

Motion made by Kay, Jean 2nded, all approved adoption of October minutes, with update.

No changes to agenda.

Next regular meeting planned for December 14th at 5 PM.

Sexual Harassment Training.

It is time to repeat this annual training. We have no information on any training that's available for us to take. Becca has already taken this year's training through her job. *Jean to check with Marybeth to see if there are training options available and if the training through work suffices for Becca.*

Moving ahead with a conservation easement acquisition program:

Jean McGrane and Laura Wong Pan spoke with Marybeth Majestic about our planning around moving ahead with this.

We agreed at the last meeting that we should have Town support and acknowledgement before moving ahead with any plan.

Marybeth's response was positive.

She would like to see a proposal from us about how it would work.

We talked about creating a proposal.

We agree that putting pen to paper will help flesh it out. Discussed categories to include.

Laura Wong Pan to prepare a proposal outline in Google Docs. Each member of this Commission to pick a section to work on once prepared.

Marybeth also expressed interest in learning more about a Community Preservation Fund (CPF) for Gardiner. This ballot item was warmly embraced by the voters in the Town of New Paltz election.

Becca said she'd heard from Neil Bettez, the NP Town Supervisor, who was advocating for a CPF for Gardiner. He connected her with Carter Strickland, a part-time Gardiner resident, who works with the Trust for Public Land. Carter is interested in meeting with our group to discuss pursuing a CPF for Gardiner.

Becca to contact Carter and introduce him to this Commission.

Review of Scoring Criteria for potential new conservation easements:

Jean had notes that we discussed. These included:

adding reference to the NRI maps in the corresponding scoring categories, and she wanted to understand the 5-acre size requirement in the wetlands score.

We decided to remove the size requirement and change the language to "Presence of wetlands."

Linda said that there's information in Chapter 165 of the local law that discusses how conservation easement applications shall be solicited by the Open Space Commission.
This law needs further review as part of preparing our proposal for the Town Supervisor.

Linda questioned whether or not this scoring criteria needs to be officially adopted by the Town, as the scoring could be interpreted as "regulatory" and "rule-making." The idea is to be transparent to the public; if someone wants something preserved and we rule against dedicating Town resources to it, we may have to be able to show why a different project was something we ruled in favor of.

She is wondering if the scoring criteria should be sent out to the public for review and comment, before we adopt it.

There is already scoring criteria in the adopted Open Space Plan.

The draft we are reviewing is an update.

Laura WP said that when we present our proposal, the new scoring criteria can be included as an attachment.

We agreed that the Town Attorney will need to provide guidance to the Town Board on the issue of adopting scoring criteria.

Jean's notes continued: she said Community Support may be too heavily weighted in the scoring, thus slighting Biodiversity and other physical features of a parcel.

Becca said each category was carefully scored, but score balance of the entire document has not been reviewed. This is worth looking at. *Laura Rose to review.*

Laura Rose would like the points to add up to a recognizable number, to assist in creating scores that make sense (like 75% or 90%.) We are currently at 180 points max; rounding it up to 200 would work.

Laura Rose to look at a way to do this that maintains the values already expressed in the current scoring draft.

Parcels we have been asked to review.

Referred by Andy Lewis: SBL 93.1-4-46 Pioneer Lane .39 acres

Referred by Supervisor Majestic: SBL 93.8 - 2-3 Forest Glen 1 acre

Laura Rose located these parcels using Ulster County Information Services mapping.

The parcel on Pioneer is at the end of the road, and appears to sit next to the river. The map doesn't put it right at the river, but there are some mistakes in where those lines sit in the County program, and there's no other property owner listed between this one and the river. A survey would be necessary to ascertain river frontage with certainty.

Laura R asked whether the property was being offered to the town as a gift or if we're being asked to evaluate it as a conservation easement. Jean McGrane said she wasn't given that information. *Jean to seek more information about the owner's goal.*

Kay has seen the property on Pioneer Lane and described it as a pretty spot. She took pictures, which she will circulate. From the physical look, the parcel does appear to border the river. We discussed whether the residents of the road would be happy with a public river access point there. We also discussed the quality of the road. It isn't paved.

Laura WP said the Forest Glen parcel is part of a development that hasn't been built out. She doesn't think there's a road that goes directly to the site; we don't see one on in the county's mapping. We discussed a site visit; she suggested we schedule an appointment before walking this site. It may require passing through private property.

Laura WP had proposed that the group try using the draft scoring criteria in conjunction with the NRI maps, to score each of these parcels and see where they landed. Time was short and this is a complicated thing to do, so we decided to add a special, second meeting next month to try to walk through this together.

Meeting is scheduled for November 30, at 7 PM.

Education Plan Update:

At our last meeting, we set tentative dates to offer educational presentations. We are going to table them for now, and work first on getting the conservation easement acquisition program off the ground. The educational programs will then directly support the acquisition program, helping to generate public understanding and interest.

Planned Town Updates to the responsibilities of the ECC; addition of a CAC.

Linda Geary prepared a memo of recommendations for changes. She stressed that the memo was not intended to represent the opinion of GOSC, but was her personal response to a request to advise Laura Walls in the development of proposed changes to the ECC.

In her memo, Linda focused on sorting out the differences between the responsibilities of the ECC, and GOSC.

She recommended that maintaining data and mapping on open space and existing conservation easements in the Town be moved to our group.

She recommended that the work of the ECC be clearly separated from the GOSC's work.

Linda has submitted the memo to Laura Walls, but hasn't heard back from her.

The Town has begun work on the addition of a new group, a Conservation Advisory Council, (CAC.) This is a council already approved for towns by NYS. It is meant to provide advisory support for conservation efforts and natural resource preservation. It is not clear to us how a "Council" would differ from the existing ECC form of "Commission," or if current, important responsibilities of the ECC would now be carried by the new CAC.

After the meeting, Becca shared a link with our group, so we could learn more about it:

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation_hudson_pdf/cacfsheet.pdf

Our understanding is that this council is being created to replace the ECC.

We discussed whether anything we recommend around updates remains relevant, since the Town's goal still seems to be to disband the ECC.

Becca said she's confused about what we're really being asked. A CAC, by definition, has some of the responsibilities that GOSC is already performing.

While we have not been approached about taking on any of the ECC's current responsibilities, we wonder if this might occur. Linda discussed this possibility in her memo, but no one from the Town has approached us about taking over any specific ECC duty.

As a group we agree that we do not want to take on the responsibility of deep review of site plans or the conservation analysis within upcoming development proposals.

Jean volunteered to draft a letter commenting on the proposed CAC. Becca to send her comments to Jean; whole group to put eyes on the draft when complete.

Budget 2021: (Jean.)

The Town's proposed 2021 budget included an increase from our requested amount.

They are allocating funds for baseline assessments.

It appears from a review of the Town Board meeting minutes that The Shaft Road baseline assessment will be completed before the end of the year. Funding for this will come from our budget.

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Next Meetings: Monday November 30, 2020 at 7 PM and Monday December 14 at 5 PM.