

MINUTES, Gardiner Open Space Commission, January 6, 2020, 7-8:30 PM.

Present: Jean McGrane, Laura Wong Pan, Linda Geary, Kay Hoiby, Rebecca Benner, Laura Rose.

Guests: Andrew Lewis and Lynn Bowdery. Absent: Kellie George.

Quotes: (Becca)

"In nature nothing exists alone." -Rachel Carson

"In nature nothing is perfect and everything is perfect.

Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they're still beautiful." - Alice Walker

Opening Business.

Motion made by Becca to approve November 11, 2019 minutes. Kay seconded, all approved.

Town-Held Conservation Easement and Town-Owned Property Monitoring:

- Lynn Bowdery, of New Paltz's Clean Water Open Space Preservation Commission and Andy Lewis, Gardiner's Code Enforcement Officer, joined us.
- Lynn was a Land Steward for the Wallkill Valley Land Trust. She has valuable experience and documents to use in the monitoring process, that she came to share.
- The Town has agreed to commit Andy to monitoring, and GOSC is facilitating the process.

- After introductions, Andy's first question was about finding the boundaries of properties that aren't clearly marked.
Lynn suggested using the metes and bounds descriptions in the deeds, along with surveys where available, rather than relying on GPS data.
- Laura Rose will electronically forward deeds and whatever maps we have for each property to Andy.
- Laura Wong Pan is developing a binder for him to work with as well.

- Andy already uses the Ulster County Parcel Viewer, and Lynn suggested this is a very useful tool.
- Lynn also suggested looking for old aerial photos. She talked about the role of photography in the process of monitoring. She then talked about: some of what she looks for when monitoring, re-marking found stakes, and the value of sending positive letters to property owners who are doing a good job of stewardship.
- We talked about making appointments prior to walking properties.

- Andy asked Lynn about enforcement; they agreed he could speak with Mark Jaffee about how New Paltz handles this.
- Lynn talked about how satisfying this work can be, especially when you find obscure markers. We also briefly discussed tools to use, and then drones.

- Laura Rose to connect Andy with Ed Pestone of Mohonk Preserve, for one-on-one field training.

Laura R gave Andy an up-to-date hard copy of parcels to monitor, and will also email the list.

- We thanked Andy and Lynn for coming, and after they left, discussed that we were pleased that this is going well.

Activities Since Our Last Meeting:

- *Hess Easement*: Jean has been reaching out to Dawn Haight of OSI for a status update as to whether or not OSI is still planning to transfer stewardship to the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, but she has not made contact. Further follow-up is in order.

- *New Agricultural and Conservation Easements*: We believe the Wallkill Valley Land Trust has been hired and is now involved in the development of the two Heartwood easements.

- Jean will follow up to find out the status.

- There is no movement yet on the development of a baseline assessment for the Shaft Road conservation easement.

- Laura Wong Pan has been working on a filing system to coordinate with the *Preserved in Gardiner Database*. She brought in her initial work for feedback.

- Kay has gone through and reorganized old files of the Gardiner Open Space Commission with the help of Laura WP's daughter Emily, who will be getting credit for this as volunteer work completed for her Participation in Government class requirement.

The files have been relocated to a drawer in Town Hall behind Michelle Mosher's desk.

- Kay is continuing work on the files. Jean to bring Kay additional files.

- Kay also talked about how a tax advantage of having a conservation easement in place is structured: you can write off the difference between the full market value of the property with and without it.

News Item:

- *The Community Preservation Act*: The Governor has signed the Community Preservation Act, allowing Ulster County municipalities to create a real estate transfer tax to be used for preservation, subject to the Town signing off on it via referendum.

We discussed what it might take to get Gardiner residents to agree to this, and came up with: time, and education. Jean to reach out to Marybeth to discuss this legislation.

Natural Resources Inventory Project:

- The DEC has agreed to help Gardiner complete an updated inventory, if the Town will sign a resolution of support. The vote is scheduled for tomorrow's Town Board meeting, and an affirmative response is expected.
- Our group is already involved in this project, along with the Environmental Conservation Commission. The ECC will be the lead group on the project. Jean and Becca have already been in a phone meeting with all the parties involved.
- A second phone meeting is scheduled for January 13th. Laura Rose to join the meeting.

- Becca said that Ingrid Haeckel, of the DEC will be helping us generate updated mapping for the NRI, which we need anyway to move forward with preservation project prioritization. Nate Nardi-Cyrus of the DEC will also be involved. They are bringing on an intern who will help complete this piece of the NRI. All of this assistance will be at no cost to the Town.

- The DEC intern will be pulling map data from a variety of sources, including the 2006 Open Space Plan. Completion of this phase of the project is anticipated for May 2020.

- Jean and Becca suggested that it might be prudent for us to follow the work completed with the DEC with hiring a consultant to help us digitize the organized, up-to-date mapping data. The DEC estimated the cost at \$2,000-3,000, which is within our 2020 budget.

Setting Priorities for Future Conservation Efforts

- Brief discussion of the tools at our disposal.
- Discussed: As the budget is limited, voluntary conservation might make a good starting point. This will require our getting better organized around how to rate a parcel, and also educational outreach.
- We continued the discussion of the value of mapping and our available mapping resources.
- We talked about matching the point system in the Open Space Plan with a specific parcel on a Gardiner map or series of up-to-date maps, that highlight rivers, soils, endangered species, etc., to determine its rating.
- We discussed the possibility of hiring a consultant to help with this step.

Next Meeting: February 10, 2020, 7- 8:30 PM

Quotes: Linda **Snacks:** Becca