

**Minutes, Gardiner Open Space Commission Meeting
April 10, 2023 at 6-7:30 PM**

Hybrid Meeting/ Town Hall and on Zoom

Attendance:

Present: Jean-Ann McGrane, Kay Hoiby, Linda Geary, Laura Rose, Laura Wong Pan. Zoom: Tara Hoey.

Quotes: (Jean)

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

“I believe in God only I spell it Nature” - Frank Lloyd Wright.

Regular Business

Approval of March Minutes: Kay asked to update one section/ section updated. Kay made a motion to approve, seconded by Linda, unanimous approval, no objections.

Next meeting scheduled for: May 8, 2023, 6-7:30 PM

Quote to be offered by: Linda

Group Communication and Process Jean.

Jean spoke about protocol, methods for outreach, and the flow of information from the group to others outside of the group. Communication with the Town Supervisor needs to flow through the Chair; reimbursements for any cash outlays also flow through the Chair.

Also discussed WVLT's size and capacity.

They have not been paid yet for their 2022 monitoring work.

New contract for 2023 monitoring has been agreed upon, except price, (which will be less than last year.)

Status Updates

Jean, Linda, Laura WP

- **Town Law Update:** David Church is continuing his update on Town Law and is presenting to the Town Board this month. He says a June completion date is possible.

- Status of 2007 Open Space Bond

Laura WP looked into this question: Since the Bond wasn't rescinded, does it still exist? Is it a tool we can still use? Should it be included in David Church's update? He thinks not, however, after a close look, Laura doesn't have enough information to fully answer the question and agree with him. Jean is going to request this go to a bond attorney for review.

- Tree Cutting on the Rail Trail

Linda showed us photos of clear cutting that has been done on a 75-foot swath of the Rail Trail near Majestic Park. Word has it that it was done by a neighbor "to clear a view." There are many trees involved, including some old and large ones (55" diameter.) All are within the Rail Trail conservation easement, and owned by the Town.

Linda emailed Christie DeBoer about this. Group discussed whether financial penalties and/or replanting would be pursued. WVLT carries insurance to help cover legal action when violations of their easements are found, to be used as needed. Gardiner doesn't carry similar insurance, but does have a new code enforcement officer; will the violation be followed up on? We are still waiting to find out if the Town followed up on the violations that were found during our 2022 monitoring visits.

Group will continue to track this.

Letter of Support for Parks and Rec Grant

Tara

Tara shared information about the Ulster County Municipal Parks and Recreation Grant being sought by the Gardiner Parks and Rec Committee before the meeting via email; we discussed their plan. Kay made a motion, Jean seconded and all voted in favor of writing a letter of support for this effort.

Millbrook Subdivision update

Jean

The ECC has sent a letter to the Planning Board about this project. Jean has reached out directly to the landowner to educate him further on the value of conservation easements. Christie of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust expressed a willingness to walk the property with him too, to discuss this option further, and a meeting is being scheduled.

Agricultural Land Preservation

Kay, Tara

- Planned to discuss the March 13th educational session. We had good attendance and robust interest. Kay and Tara each sent out thank you notes to the Kiernans and Willow Farms for their participation. Further discussion of this agenda item was tabled to leave time for next items.

Community Preservation Plan Update

Laura R

We have worksheets in place now that are in good shape to help us rank Gardiner's most sensitive and crucial parcels, so we can know what's most important to preserve first, and aim our efforts accordingly. We also have maps to help us see patterns, ex. parts of Town that have connected, sizeable high-ranking parcels. Preservation with this in mind could lead to a wider swath of preserved land and greater conservation outcomes, especially for wildlife.

The originals were prepared for Gardiner with the assistance of Neil Curri, of Vassar College, (with student interns,) and funded by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Neil also works on GIS projects for PVE-LLC (an engineering firm,) and The Open Space Commission has hired him through his firm to help us complete additional maps for the purpose of making the ranking very clear, and also to add clarifying data to the work sheets. Neil and Laura Rose have been working together to complete this project. Progress is steady (and slow) and they are nearing completion of the updates.

Laura R said we have science-based rankings in place, that has been approved by the Town, in the Community Preservation Plan. We know which properties have scored the very highest, and Laura advocated for

reaching out to those at the top first to see if we can begin conversations that may lead to preservation of top ranked properties first, in the future.

Outreach and Education around Future Preservation Jean

Jean asked about principles we wish to embody in our outreach efforts.

The list of responses included:

- Fair, transparent, science-based procedures
- Emphasize pursuing properties at the top of the list in the Community Preservation Plan (the creation of which included many sets of local eyes and careful agreements around ranking; the Plan has been approved by the Town)
- Minor modification of the ranking may be needed to pursue properties that will attract additional outside funding, including a property that will qualify for the Ag and Markets Grant.
- Also need an interested property owner.
- Properties at imminent risk for development should also be considered.

Laura R shared the Community Preservation Plan's ranked worksheets. In addition, we have a list of all of the Town's ag exempt parcels, in CPP rank order.

Plan:

As the Ag and Markets grant opens in May, we will send a letter to everyone in town who has an ag deduction, informing them of the upcoming Ag and Markets grant opportunity, and see if we get responses. If there are multiple responses, we can use the CPP ranking, along with other criteria found in the NRI such as presence of prime soils, (which we know to be important to the Ag and Markets grant reviewers,) and size of the potential project (Ag and Markets funding tops out at 1 million) to choose who to work with first.

Discussed what should be in the letter.

Laura WP to compose the letter, Laura R to edit, Tara to work on the mailing. Assessor can print out labels.

Also discussed starting at the top of the list for more personalized outreach, and working our way down.

No plan for follow through completed in this discussion.

More planning is needed here, around a script for the discussions.

Tara to develop bullet points, so we can start this planning.

Are we going to send out letters? Make phone calls? Invite for coffee?

Kay suggested we create an outreach subcommittee.

Jean suggested we speak with Cara Lee for an update on New Paltz's outreach efforts.

All other agenda items held to next meeting.

Meeting ended at 7:49 PM.