

MINUTES
Town of Gardiner Open Space Commission
May 10, 2021 5:30pm – 7:00pm
Format: Zoom videoconference

1. Opening – Quote - Jean-Ann

“If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere.” — Vincent van Gogh

“The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now.” — Chinese proverb

- Approval of March Minutes
Moved to approve by Kay, seconded Laura Rose. Approved by GOSC.
- Discussion of Agenda- no revisions
- Next Meeting – Regular Schedule – June 14, 2021 5pm
- Quote for next meeting: Kellie

2. Guest: Dennis Doyle – Director, Ulster County Department of Planning

Dennis provided information on open space planning, summarized below:

- Noted that planning for development in geographic areas within a town should be a corollary to open space planning.
- Discussed how to appraise lands for conservation easement (CE) or purchase of development rights (PDR) (Note: PDR is done by CE) first on the unencumbered land based on lot sizes allowed under zoning code and then with the development rights limited by a CE. Generally need 3 appraisals;
- Ulster County has a capital program for PDRs. This year’s allocation is \$500,000. Used for a 33% match of the costs of a PDR. The State Conservation Fund also used to match PDR. Generally land trusts will contribute. A recent example on a PDR purchase was Taliaferro Farms in New Paltz which did not win State Conservation Funds but Scenic Hudson, the Town, and the County each contributed one-third of the costs. Each party has an interest and enforcement rights in the easement with the land trust putting money aside for the enforcement costs in the cost of the easement. Use of County funds requires a two-thirds vote of the county legislature to approve.
- Agricultural preservation: In order to get State funding for agricultural preservation, an Agricultural Plan for the County is necessary. Ulster County adopted one in 1989. Soils are part of categorizing value and tax assessments of ag lands; orchards taxes are based in part upon the number of trees per acre. More trees equal more taxes as yields are higher. Dennis noted that old apple farming used to have about 90/trees per acre; now active apple farms have 1100/1200 trees per acre.

- Noted many new farmers are entering the area and making a go of farming.
- When critical farms go on the market, sometimes an open space land trust can get an option on the property which allows for a few years to come up with the purchase price.
- Identified several land trusts that will assist in the purchase and holding of a CE: Walkkill Valley Land Trust, Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Open Space Institute.
- Fundraising by a community is often effective when a land trust challenge grant is set up meaning, for example, OSI will commit a portion of funds and challenge the community to meet it through individual and business donations to the land trust for the identified purchase.
- Trend today is focusing on trails and recreational open space- preservation of open space for public use which reaches a goal of having a diverse public use promoting social equity rather than protecting view sheds.
- Noted paths along streams and connecting open space, such as connecting walking paths, or the River to Ridge project, are part of this trend.
- Discussed Community Protection Plans that impose a tax on property transfers over a certain limit which is now authorized under state law as a means to raise funds for towns to acquire open space lands. A local referendum is necessary for a Town to adopt this tax.
- Open Space Plans and Comprehensive Plans should coordinate and ask “who are we saving open space for.” Dennis stated that it should not just be for the wealthy but to strike a balance in order to improve social equity. Dennis posed the question that even though our charge is open space preservation how do we as a community, provide for housing and services in addition to preservation of open space?
- Mentioned contacts: Bob Andelburg from OSI lives in Ulster County (focusing on trails) and Dave Behm in the State Department of Ag and Markets was involved with the Kiernan Farm CE acquisition in Gardiner several years ago.

The Commission thanked Dennis for his presentation. We asked if he would be interested in presenting in the fall to a community forum sponsored by the GOSC. He agreed but added on the topic of land acquisition and farm preservation, if Scenic Hudson is presenting, they are the “gold standard” in this region on those issues.

3. GOSC – Public Outreach and Education Program - Kay discussed upcoming presentation for June 7, 2021 via zoom. Jean will facilitate the session; Laura Rose will send her proposed slide show and everyone can review; Nate will provide his slide show for group review.
4. Open Space Acquisition program, follow up to March 9 Town Board Presentation

Revised scoring criteria and response to Warren's comments will be sent to Warren to review; SEQRA review will be on the Town Board May 11 (subsequently moved to June 1, 2021 Town Board meeting); GOSC to review scoring criteria after Warren's review and intend to finalize and forward to Town Board for adoption.

5. Comprehensive Plan revisions: Dave Church, the Town's consultant on revising the Comprehensive Plan, will come to the next GOSC meeting.
6. NRI-GIS consultant Request for Qualifications (RFQ) –Jean-Ann reported no further progress at this time.
7. Shaft Road baseline documents on the CE: Laura WP reported the baseline documentation is almost completed by Kelly Dobbins.

Carrying Issues

Review of Proposals for donations of privately owned parcels
Referred by Andy Lewis:- SBL 93.1-4-46 Pioneer Lane .39 acres
Referred by Supervisor: SBL 93.8 - 2-3 Forest Glen 1 acre 5.