

Minutes, Gardiner Open Space Commission Meeting

June 12, 2023 at 6-7:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting/ Town Hall and on Zoom

Attendance:

Present: Jean-Ann McGrane, Linda Geary, Tara Hooey.

Zoom: Laura Rose, Kellie George. Excused: Kay Hoiby and Laura Wong Pan

Quotes: "Land is the only thing in the world that amounts to anything, for it's the only thing in this world that lasts. It's the only thing worth working for, worth fighting for..."

- Margaret Mitchell, Gone with the Wind.

"The nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself." - *FDR*

"Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals & happiness."

- Thomas Jefferson in a letter to George Washington

Regular Business:

Approval of May Minutes: Linda made a motion to approve, seconded by Jean, unanimous approval, no objections.

Agenda is fine, no changes.

Next meeting scheduled for: July 10, 2023, 6-7:30 PM

Jean to offer quote next time.

Updates:

Conservation Easement Monitoring Program

Laura R, Tara, Jean

- WVLT has agreed to continue monitoring for the town in 2023. Contract has been drafted and agreed to; waiting on signature from Town Supervisor.

Discussed: 2023 monitoring should occur after violations from 2022 have been fully followed up on. No resolution on this. To be continued at next meeting.

- Marybeth has initiated followed up on three of the violations from 2022.
 - Clarke** is working to clean up
 - Wildflower Farms** said they have cleaned up
 - Shaft Road:** Marybeth is scheduling to walk the property with David Kiviat and Christie DeBoer to view and discuss violations.

Further action is needed.

There has been no outreach on any of the other violations or suspected violations. How should we assess if Wildflower Farms has in fact complied?

We discussed getting surveys on several properties. We are agreed that the Town Owned property on Guilford Schoolhouse Road should be surveyed first, due to the "butterfly fence" which WVLT flagged as encroaching on Town property.

Town Supervisor already said that there is money available and we can obtain prices to hire a surveyor.

We have established that there is no specific 'request for proposal' form the Town requires. We have a robust list of surveyors to reach out to.

Letter to surveyors for estimates to be drafted by Tara, edited by Laura R., approved by Jean, submitted to Supervisor for final approval and then sent out.

Outlook Farms: Linda Geary to review conservation easement irregularities flagged by WVLT. She will make a recommendation as to our next steps.

Agricultural Land Preservation

Kay, Tara

The **Ag and Markets Grant** Round 19 is now open.

Kay attended a webinar about how to apply for this grant.

One take away is they will review a site plan in advance to advise on eligibility.

4.5 million in funding is available for our region.

Farmers who have expressed interest: Old Ford Farm, Ginny Winkler.

Tara and Kay have been discussing the application process with Old Ford. Ginny Winkler is speaking with Wallkill Valley Land Trust about creating a conservation easement.

Seeking partners in the application process:
Tara is to reach out to Emily Hague from Scenic Hudson.
Kay is reaching out to WVLT.

CPF Funding Update

Jean

There is approximately 36K already that has accumulated via this initiative. The Town has set up a separate account into which the County deposits the funds on a monthly basis. Question was raised about whether or not this is an interest bearing.

Jean recommended to the Town that a spreadsheet with all of the information about how much has come in with each transaction should be easy to understand, easily available and made public.

Preservation Outreach

Jean, Laura R.

Discussed: There was discussion about the importance of preparing a community education and outreach plan that can be submitted to the new joint GOSC/CPF Commission when formed. Jean raised a concern about whether or not GOSC should go forward to reach out to the public prior to the formation of the new GOSC/CPF Commission. She proposed we develop an outreach plan that we could present to the Town Board as an update on where we are and present this to the new Commission when it is formed.

As the CPF has established a hierarchy of properties to be preserved using its funding (based on conservation values,) there was discussion about GOSC moving forward prior to the formation of the new Commission and reaching out to priority property owners to let them know of their preservation score and the status in the CPP and to ask if they have considered long term plans for the preservation of all or part of their properties. Laura Rose proposed reaching out to the top 1% of the property owners as a start.

Jean and Laura to draft an outreach plan and letter that could go out from GOSC to the top 1% . The group discussed the importance of reminding ourselves and the

public that preservation takes time; this initial outreach is about establishing contact and starting conversations.

Laura R and Jean to draft an outreach plan and letter.

2024 Budget

Jean

It's time to draft a new budget. Members were asked to submit ideas for budget items. Budget could be similar to this year's, should include money for monitoring, surveys, outreach and education.

Discussed including money for an ecological field consultant, (a professional who can be called in to help sort development projects) for hire by the Planning Board, the ECC and/or the Open Space Commission. Perhaps each group should carry some money for this professional in its budget. Jean to talk to Paul, will Planning Board support this initiative?

Also discussed finding and funding an environmentally oriented attorney for the Town.

Discussed the Town banking money for the enforcement of easements, including for attorney fees. Do any municipalities carry insurance similar to that carried by the land trusts? (Terra Firma is the firm used by WVLT.) No one chosen to follow up on exploring this question.

Ongoing Items

- Millbrook Meadows

Who, if not the GOSC, is responsible for proactive conservation initiatives, especially related to conservation easements? Discussed our role.

Jean shared an update on the reception of the memo that she submitted to the PB on behalf of the group. (We all contributed to this memo via email since our last meeting .)

The land owner is meeting with Christie DeBoer to further discuss conservation easements.

Several questions were raised including status of SEQR review.

Merging GOSC with a CPF Committee

David Church continues to work on this. He reports it should be done by the end of June, to be followed by Town review.

Conservation Easement Template

The Town has located the template GOSC developed and they approved; perhaps it will now be distributed with subdivision applications? Jean to speak with Paul Collucci about this.

Suggestion was made that we begin to work on the Agricultural Version and get this done (or at least closer to done) before the merger changes the composition of our group. Laura WP and Linda already worked on a draft of this. Linda to address. Template should be sent to farmers to review; discussed who to send it to.

Drinking Water Protection Committee

Nothing new to report.

Open Space Bond

Bond attorney suggested to review this for the Town has a conflict of interest; alternate firm will be chosen.

Rail Trail Easement

Discussed WVLT plans around the serious violation we discussed at our last meeting. Also discussed the need for education. Town is mowing during pollinator and bird breeding season thereby removing habitats that support bird nesting. There is a need to coordinate Rail Trail maintenance with habitat protection. Linda proposed planning a community meeting to discuss the Rail Trail in the fall. She will choose a few possible dates.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40.