

Gardiner Open Space Commission (GOSC) Minutes September 13, 2021

Attending: Jean-Ann McGrane, Linda Geary, Laura Rose, Laura Wong-Pan, Kellie George, Kay Hoiby, Tara Hoey (excused).

Next meeting: October 18, 2021 at 6 pm by Zoom.

Laura WP: quote next time

Follow up from June community outreach: Someone called Kay inquiring about a potential conservation easement for 150 acres adjacent to Minnewaska State Park but after the initial call, no further information. Laura WP reached out to 2 people about land donations; no response.

Future outreach session: Session #3 with the NRI maps will be postponed; Session #4 on agricultural conservation easement. Kay has tried to reach Seth McKee at Scenic Hudson but so far no response; she will reach out to Tanya Jurcic at Cornell Extension to see if someone there would be interested in speaking at this community session. She will also contact David Church to see if he knows an ag representative. Jean will reach out to the prior Executive Director of the Rondout Valley Farmers Association.

Easement monitoring: Jean reported that Andy Lewis, Gardiner Code Enforcement Officer, is retiring. We discussed and agreed that we recommend that Conservation Easement monitoring should be done through a town contract with a qualified consultant such as the Walkkill Valley Land Trust or Kelly Dobbins who has done work for the Town and the cost should be in the Town budget.

Costs were discussed. For the 2022 GOSC budget. Agreed to put \$3500 into the Town budget for a baseline assessment of easements and \$7,000 for easement monitoring. Unanimous vote in support of the budget request to the Town Board.

GIS: consultant needed to make the NRI maps interactive. A consultant could possibly oversee a Vassar College student and should know by the end of the week whether Vassar will commit.

Community Preservation Plan Update: Dave Dukler and Jean met with Cara Lee who laid out the process the New Paltz organizers followed and Cara will present it to the Gardiner Town Board in October. The Town will likely set up an ad-hoc committee to start the organizing for this provided the Town Board supports putting a Community Preservation Fund on a ballot in November 2022. The Town will consider hiring a consultant to develop conservation criteria and to write the Community Preservation Plan and submit a grant to the Hudson Valley Greenway which may allocate \$10,000 to develop plan.

New Paltz sent out a simple community “monkey survey” to get the feel in the community for a CPF vote; developed three local laws that are necessary for the referendum; and put together a referendum campaign.

Laura Rose and John Orfitelli, from the New Paltz effort, did an estimate of what Gardiner could net based on the Gardiner median sales price of \$281,000 for 2020 as the threshold for the purchaser tax to fund the CPF (at or below \$281,000 there would be no CPF tax). If the tax was 1.5% on house sales above \$281,000, in three years Gardiner would have \$781,000. Trust for Public Lands will do the monkey survey for free.

GOSC members will participate in creating the Community Preservation Plan.

Planning Board conservation analysis: GOSC discussed its concerns that an applicant for Planning Board approval performed his own conservation analysis. Recommendation for GOSC to submit language to the Planning Board to adopt a motion for its procedures to avoid what the GOSC considered a conflict in the future as follows “where a conservation analysis is required under Gardiner Local Laws the analysis professional and the property owner should have an arm’s length transaction, meaning that there is no close relationship between the property owner and the person doing the analysis, and further, that the property owner and conservation analysis professional are not the same person. This will provide the analysis is performed in an independent manner and consistent with good public policy.” Next step would be for a letter from GOSC to the Planning Board be prepared to outline the issue and propose the change.

County Tax auction: Tara sent information to the group regarding the county land auction list which are received by the Town Building Inspector. If the property owner does not pay the county tax, the land is auctioned off and some can be valuable open space lands.