

## **MINUTES, Gardiner Open Space Commission Zoom Meeting, Monday September 14, 2020.**

Meeting opened at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Jean McGrane, Laura Wong-Pan, Linda Geary, Kellie George, Kay Hoiby, Laura Rose, Rebecca Benner. Minutes taken by: Laura Rose.

### **Quote (Jean.)**

"Very little grows on jagged rock.

Be ground. Be crumbled, so wildflowers will come up where you are." - Rumi

### **Opening Business.**

August minutes approval: Motion made by Laura WP, Kay 2nded, all approved.

Special July meeting minutes also approved. Motion made by Jean, Linda 2nded, all approved.

Jean announced Laura WP as the acting chair for October.

### **Discussion Topics:**

#### ***Baseline review of the Heartwood Conservation Easements.***

Kelly Dobbins Morris completed her review of the baseline documentation that was done for the Town by the developers of Heartwood. She gave her recommendations for revisions.

We discussed that, while she was able to find the easement, she reported that the boundaries of these easements may not be easily located visually.

The GOSC has not been provided with the baseline documentation, so we did not have an opportunity to review it.

The group discussed that the Town Board will decide whether to adopt Ms. Morris's recommendations.

#### ***Shaft Road Baseline Documentation.***

As far as we know, this has yet to be completed.

GOSC recommended to the Town Board that baseline documentation be completed.

We will suggest again that Ms. Morris be hired to do this work. *Jean to follow up.*

#### ***NRI Update. (Jean and Laura R.)***

The DEC is working to schedule a date with the Planning Board for a workshop on the NRI which will also offer them credits they need.

It will be a training in potential uses of the maps in future planning efforts.

Work on the narrative section of the report is in process.

Laura R has committed to do a final edit of the full report.

We don't know yet if Roberta Clements will continue the work of NRI outreach for the Town, due to recent changes made to the ECC.

***Changes to Town Law for GOSC and the Environmental Conservation Commission. (Jean.)***

The missions of GOSC and the ECC are related, but are quite different.

We have discussed that Town Law around our responsibilities, and those of the ECC, are wide ranging and could be better focused through revision. For example, ours call for us to be spending a bond on preservation where the bond no longer exists.

At the moment, we are completing work in accordance with our mission, including pursuing the overall goal of preserving open space.

We've discussed what best practices in conservation are, helped the Town move in that direction, and have more work to do in this regard. We've catalogued permanent preservation within the Town. We are moving towards educational outreach and adopting an easement acquisition program for the Town of Gardiner.

Town Law is scheduled for review by January 12. Is there a working group?

Laura Walls is spearheading the effort.

*Linda Geary to reach out to Laura Walls; she is willing to represent us and participate in this effort.*

***Community Outreach. (Laura WP, Kay.)***

Laura and Kay were going to revise the plan based on our comments at the last meeting, but will hold this for a future meeting.

We again discussed educational outreach and seeking donations of conservation easements.

Laura WP has proposed developing a plan of acquiring conservation easement donations, as we don't have a bond and preserving land is in keeping with our mission. She proposed that our educational outreach include a call to action, and to offer our neighbors a path or program towards permanent preservation of priority properties.

Laura R said education without a call to action can help set the Town up for readiness. It takes time for ideas to percolate. She would like to offer education on what is currently preserved in Gardiner, and discuss methods of preservation as an introduction to the idea. In addition, inviting speakers from various active conservation agencies has already been discussed and agreed upon by our group.

Before a call to action, Laura R thinks we should be very clear about the costs. We don't have funding for legal fees, baseline documentation, surveys, boundary marking, monitoring or enforcement. Are we going to ask our neighbors to pay to have conservation easements created on their properties? If so, we should be able to give them a ballpark laundry list of costs at the outset.

Also: will we look for grants or other funding for this endeavor?  
Do we know yet if any funding for this exists?

All agreed that we should get information about tax benefits to those who preserve. And we should know the method by which we're asking them to preserve. Will we refer them to the Wallkill Valley Land Trust or will we work with them and the Town on conserving their properties?

Laura WP stated that she thought that GOSC would acquire easements to be held by the Town. Laura R said: we don't know if the Town is willing or able to take on more conservation easements. To date, Andy reports that he has not had enough time to make monitoring visits. He plans to start when the leaves come down. It is a fledgling monitoring program, and needs to be tested.

All agreed that the Town must be approached before we offer their service. Jean said maybe we could request funding to take some or all of the monitoring off of Andy's plate. *Jean to reach out to the Town to discuss whether or not there is an interest in, or funding for, taking on voluntary conservation easements that aren't part of larger-scale development proposals.*

Linda brought up that we can't be arbitrary. Laura WP said that's what the scoring criteria is for, and the NRI mapping. Discussion was held about whether we are ready to proceed and what the next steps are.

Laura R said she agrees about encouraging voluntary conservation, but that we need to educate ourselves further before doing so.

Jean said she thinks we have learned quite a bit and may be close. Jean said we could leave the education to specialists who can come in to talk to the public about this.

Laura R thinks we should have all of this information organized first before encouraging or screening applications, and that we don't have to postpone educational outreach because we aren't ready for a call to action.

We then talked about creating a system for fairness. The scoring criteria could be announced, sent out for public comment, and then voted on and adopted.

*Review scoring criteria at the next meeting.*

The NRI maps will be used in conjunction with the scoring criteria. The DEC and Climate Smart Gardiner both want the Town to commit to the NRI by adopting it, once it is completed.

This would be helpful for us in terms of having a transparent, fair and agreed upon scoring process to offer.

### ***Budget (Jean.)***

Jean said some of this can go into our budget request for next year.

She talked about the plan to hire a GIS consultant to stack the NRI data to be used interactively.

*Jean to contact Ingrid Haeckel and connect her with Linda so Linda will have more information on what to ask when shopping for a GIS consultant.*

### ***Blue Chip Farms (Kay.)***

Kay reached out to Shawangunk's Open Space Commission to offer our assistance in any upcoming plans for Blue Chip Farm. While we've heard a rumor it was sold, we have no further information (they are still listed as the owners in the County record) and Shawangunk's Open Space Commission also had no information about a sale.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

**Next Meeting:** Monday October 11, at 5PM

**Quotes:** Kay