

Minutes: Gardiner Open Space Commission Meeting, Monday January 14, 2019.

Attending: Members: Jean-Ann McGrane, Laura Wong-Pan, Rebecca Benner, Kay Hoiby, Linda Geary, Kellie George, Laura Rose. Guests: Cara Lee and Lynn Bowder.

Quotes: (Kay)

"Torture numbers, and they'll confess to anything."

- Greg Easterbrook, in *The New Republic*.

"Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them." - Bill Vaughan, American columnist and author.

Guests: Cara Lee and Lynn Bowder of the Town of New Paltz Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission. (NPCWOSPC)

Cara talked about the history of the New Paltz Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission, some of their challenges, and strategies that have helped achieve their successes to date.

- They started with public outreach, and raising the profile of the idea of preserving open space.
- Had a series of visioning sessions to which the community was invited, asking what people really wanted to see preserved.
- Teamed up with Gardiner and Marbletown in 2006 to put a bond for Open Space on each town's ballot. A two million dollar bond passed by a wide margin in New Paltz. A bond also passed in the town of Marbletown, by a lesser margin. A one million dollar bond passed by one vote in Gardiner. Gardiner didn't spend the bond, and it has expired.
- Of the 2 million, New Paltz has spent \$800,000 on three main projects.
- They worked with Behan Planning Associates (who also designed Gardiner's Open Space Plan) to help them decide what to preserve. They found the Natural Resources Inventory helpful. They separated the town into separate parts, and looked at a build out analysis. They decided that the section between the Wallkill and the Gunks was the most vulnerable, and also the most desirable for open space protection.
- Digital technology is very helpful in focusing on choosing specific parcels for preservation.
- They are updating their plans now with skilled volunteers.
- Their commission requires 11 members which can make it hard to achieve a quorum. They are considering downsizing the required number of members.

- Cara observes that in recent years, due to the tax cap and other factors, resources for preservation have shrunk. This makes it even more important to identify and develop working relationships with key partners.
- For all new easements, New Paltz is working with the Wallkill Valley Land Trust who cooperates with their building department person, and makes suggestions. Where possible, the land trust is deeded the easement, but even where not, they can do baseline documentation, monitoring, and can offer additional support.
- The NPCWOSPC works directly with their town's planning board and helped create designs for various town easements. Their budget includes money to pay WVLT. Monitoring is costing them approximately \$5,000 per year.
- The land trust uses a nationally accredited method for baseline docs and monitoring. They carry insurance from Terra Firma for unexpected enforcement costs.
- "Stewardship Endowment" funds are requested from developers, for ongoing monitoring and any challenging enforcement issues that might arise.
- We questioned whether or not the town of Gardiner has similar insurance, or can get it. (*Who should we follow this up with?*)
Terra Firma issues policies to non-governmental organizations.
- Cara suggested that our group review the town's easements, before they are accepted. She also recommended we involve WVLT if possible. She says it's much easier to work with easements if the monitoring etc., is planned out prior to them being accepted.
- New Paltz has a template that they use with developers, so they know what is expected in their easement. They think it's helpful to have an easy and transparent process, where expectations are made clear. They have forms for this, which they offered to share with us.
- They have a project rating process, so a projected easement scores X points for (ex.) riverfront and Y points for wetland... making it possible to rate the advantages of taking on the easement.
- We discussed DEC map overlays that help rate things like special soils.
- We discussed the importance of there being excitement around a project that's being protected, when fund raising.

- We discussed further familiarizing ourselves with the plans we already have before considering working on updates. Time has passed and it might ultimately make sense to do some updating.

Other Business:

-Minutes: Minutes from our last meeting approved; Linda Geary moved, Becca seconded. Minutes from all 2018 meetings were approved; Linda moved and Kelly George seconded.

Jean will give our minutes to the Town Supervisor so they can be put on the town's website.

-Database in Process:

Laura Rose shared the database of preserved lands and easements in Gardiner that she is working on; the group looked it over and gave constructive critique to help move it forward.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for February 11, 2019 at 5 PM in the Town Hall.