

## **Open Space Commission Minutes, September 24, 2018.**

Attending: Jean Ann McGrane, Kellie George, Kay Hoiby, Linda Geary, Laura Rose, Rebecca Benner.

### ***Quotes of the Day, from Kellie:***

"We need the tonic of wildness.. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature."

-Henry David Thoreau

"The land is the only thing in the world worth working for, worth fighting for, worth dying for, because it's the only thing that lasts." -Gerald O'Hara, in *Gone with the Wind*, by Margaret Mitchell

### ***Jean's report on Budget Status***

- Our budget request went up a bit from what got sent out for comment
- Budget likely to be reduced
- Should we budget for drones to help identify potential easements?
  - Both Laura and Kay know local videographers who use drones.
  - The Nature Conservancy does all easement monitoring with drones
  - They offer a potential method for the town to use for monitoring easements
- Budget will be approved in the first town meeting in November

### ***Open Space Commission Requirements:***

- 1) Quarterly reports will be expected by the town
  - Jean asked the supervisor for a template for the report
- 2) Annual public information session
  - We can be ready to hold our first one in March 2019

### ***Announcements***

- Everyone must sign the new code of ethics acknowledgement.
- **Pace Land Use Leadership Alliance Fall Training** - will bring in leaders from across the state to learn about different sources of funding for land preservation. They will focus on sustainable development - 4 full-day sessions October 5, October 19, November 2, and November 9. Registration must be in this week. Kay planning to apply.

### ***Progress Reports***

#### **Conservation Easement Inventory**

- Kellie and Linda used Ulster County's electronic list of the 732 recorded Gardiner parcels to search for conservation easements.
- What they found:
  - Some but not all of the easements that we've already identified in Gardiner.
  - Several additional easements.
  - Laura Rose will cross check the list of easements we already have (those administered by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust) with the parcels identified. She'll work on figuring out the ones that are something else – Is there an organization in charge of each easement? What's the purpose of the easement?
    - LR will create a report including whatever info she can get on the town's various easements. We can add more if we uncover more, or create more easements.

#### **Kay's Report on the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets**

- Kay talked to David Behm – Farmland Protection Program Manager
- Ag and Markets offers a wide variety of funding opportunities, all related to working farms and promoting agriculture.
  - Available farmland protection grants – Sept 2018 was submission; 2020 is the next call
  - Their website has forms and information. Some of their projects include:

- o Dairy transitions farmland protection initiatives - \$30K available
  - Provides funding for a dairy farmer to transition partially or fully out of the dairy business to another farming operation (ie: change to raising beef cattle or diversify by adding a vegetable stand.)
- o Transaction costs for donated agricultural conservation easements - \$1 million available.
  - Covers up to \$50K for putting together a conservation easement – survey, appraisals.
- o Options project – if an approved organization or town wants to buy development rights, this grant pays for the cost of buying the option - \$5 million available
  - Also offers a grant option for purchasing development rights outright
- o Hudson Valley Agricultural Enhancement program - \$20 million allocated in 2016 – This was a one-time deal
  - 14 farms in NYS received funding – none in Ulster County.
- Applicant for grants from Ag and Markets must be: a town, SWCD (Soil & Water Conservation District), or a land trust
  
- o We then discussed what a SWCD does – it's a state agency active at the county level – boots on the ground help, support for a wide variety of things including riparian areas, culvert replacement, ag management
  - Tend to be underfunded and need is high
- Other orgs David Behm suggested we contact to continue our education and increase our networking:
  - o The Open Space Institute, The Nature Conservancy and The Land Trust Alliance.
- Challenge: Can we identify working farms in Gardiner that would be defined as “working farms” by NYS and therefore be farms NYS would be willing to help us conserve?

- **Next Steps:**

- o Becca to send Kay website for ag stats
- o Kay to follow up on learning more about working farms
- o Kay to follow up with Mimi (possibly Hanley-Borin) from the Land Trust Alliance

***Creating a standardized method for managing information from outreach:***

- Purpose: To create a way to help us keep track of, and collate, the information we are gathering and sharing about organizations with goals related to those of our organization.
- We can end up with both a handy reference sheet and a more complete resource guide to use for networking and continued outreach as we move forward.
- Laura R. worked on this and came up with both a Word doc for taking notes when speaking with other organizations, and also Excel spreadsheet options.
- The forms created are not complete.
- Proposed:
  - o Enter information on the Word doc.
  - o Each completed page can be scanned in and added to a single electronic document/ workbook.
  - o Consolidate each entry into a table that can all be on one page (for easy reference)
- Digitally enter the information into Word, handwritten will be too hard to read.
- **Nest Steps: Goal is for the group: Review Laura's Word doc. Is any important question missing from the form? Get back to her with additions or comments. Same re the Excel table.**

**Mapping Possibilities:** Linda to follow up with Dennis Doyle

***Jean: Meeting with Seth McKee of Scenic Hudson, Director of Land Conservation.***

Scenic Hudson is one of the leading land conservation organizations in the Hudson Valley . Moving forward they are a potential partner in preserving priority landscapes and agricultural land within the town of Gardiner.

Three of Scenic Hudson's region-wide initiatives include:

A. Saving The Land That Matters Most (2007): a multi-year, collaborative effort with land trusts, governments, individuals and businesses to protect lands of the highest scenic, ecological and agricultural significance throughout the Hudson Valley.

B. The Hudson Valley Conservation Strategy (HVCS) (2017) is a rigorous framework for conservation in the region that meets multiple ecological objectives. It is a tool that transforms land protection efforts by identifying the most efficient and synergistic network of properties for conserving long-term climate resilience, biodiversity, and landscape connectivity across the Hudson Valley. Includes productive and scenic working farmland.

C. Securing Fresh, Local Food for New York City and the Hudson Valley: A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region (2013). Outlines a strategic approach to conserving the agricultural land that supplies fresh, local food to the people of the Hudson Valley and New York City.

**See their website for more info at: <https://www.scenichudson.org/ourwork/landpreservation>**

Seth would welcome the opportunity to attend one of our meetings to discuss their various land conservation initiatives and identify potential opportunities for working together in the future.

Seth is also a former member of the Town of New Paltz Open Space Commission. He encouraged us to meet with them.

He mentioned two Hudson Valley communities using an innovative land conservation strategy: Red Hook in Dutchess County, and Warwick in Orange County. Both towns have a Community Preservation Fund which comes from a real estate transfer tax (possibly 2%) on the purchase or sale of a home. This tax helps fund land conservation within each Town.

- Realtors have to be instrumental in moving this initiative forward.

This is possibly something for us to research in the future.

***B. Meeting with Sadell Cantor – a former member of the Gardiner Open Space Commission.***

She had records of the early work of the Commission. Her notebooks have been given to Jean, who will, with the other members of our group, be searching for a central, secure place for storing the Gardiner Open Space Commission records.

## All – Start to enter data into the form LR created after talking to someone

### ***Develop a proposal for Gardiner's Town Board for managing Conservation Easements***

- Mark Moran drafted a proposal a few years ago that has potential.
- New Paltz and Shawangunk both have easement procedures that have been in place for several years.
- We could propose that the town adopt a procedure to manage its easements
- We can help create the full list of easements in the Town
- Then can propose how to manage both current and potential conservation easements to the Town Board
  - **Next Steps: Becca to follow up - Don't have baseline conservation easement reports – contact New Paltz and Shawangunk**
    - **What are they currently doing to manage conservation easements – and determine how effective their program is**
- Problem with management of easements – if easements get violated then town needs to follow through on legal matters – towns don't budget for this and are not prepared
  - Who could own the town easements if the town doesn't want to do monitoring?
  - Who would we feel good about recommending?
- Should lay out the considerations for the Town
  - Costs of monitoring
  - Legal issues
  - E.g. Argyle farms – agricultural easement – had to go to court and lost it
  - Modifying or extinguishing an easement requires legal action.

### ***Our Next Meeting: Planning Session***

- Do pre-work
  - What excites you? What would you look back on and be proud of? What are your goals for the open space commission? What do you think we should accomplish?
  - **Write this down and email to the group by the 8<sup>th</sup>**
  - **Becca will consolidate the brainstorm**
  - **Proposed 4:30-6:30 PM for next meeting Oct 15 – Check with Laura W-P**

*Becca to do quote for next meeting, Linda will do snacks for next meeting*