

MINUTES, Gardiner Open Space Commission, April 8, 2019

Present: Jean McGrane, Rebecca Benner, Linda Geary, Kay Hoiby, Kelly George, Laura Wong Pan, Laura Rose.

Opening Business.

- March meeting minutes approved: Becca moved, Kay seconded, all approved.
- Laura Rose has been reappointed for a 5-year term.
- Scheduling for next meetings; adding a second one this month: April 24, 2019 at 7:30 PM.

Outreach Reports:

1. Laura Rose attended the Environmental Conservation Commission's March meeting.

The ECC is working on updates to the Gardiner watercourse laws, meant to protect our wetlands and waterways, in addition to working on the aquifer laws, which are meant to protect our drinking water. Among other goals, they are looking to update the process of town review prior to approving development near waterways. They are focused on both named waterways and smaller ones, often without names.

They are understaffed and had David Dukler there to discuss changing the expected size of the group so they can more easily achieve a quorum, and be able to vote when needed.

2. Jean reached out to the NYS DEC.

She discussed scheduling a meeting with Nardi Cyrus soon to learn about grant options and discuss other ways our work may cross. The DEC has a newsletter with grant opportunities posted regularly in it which we should subscribe to.

3. Our memos to the Town re Heartwood.

To date, GOSC has not received acknowledgment or feedback about our comments sent to the Planning Board regarding the Conservation and Agricultural Easements for the Heartwood project. Laura WP to follow up with Paul Colucci.

4. Shaft Road.

Kay gave us a status report. She spoke with Paul Colucci. Trees are being cut for the subdivision. The conservation easement detail hasn't been finalized or accepted and it's unclear as to whether or not the monuments that mark the conservation easement have been placed yet. It is also unclear as to whether or not parkland fees will be paid, and if so, what the amount is. It would make sense to use some of that money to ensure that baseline monitoring is properly established for this conservation easement. Our group has additional important suggestions around this easement, and discussed how we can best communicate this with the town. We are scheduling to meet with Paul Colucci this month; we will invite him to our next meeting.

Other Work in Progress:

1. Field visits to Town-owned properties: Old Ford Road and Sand Hill Road.

Kellie and Jean took walks on each of these properties, seeking their Wallkill River access.

They were successful at finding a well-maintained fishing access point, accessible from Old Ford Road. There was limited parking.

Reaching the water on the Sand Hill Road property was extremely challenging. Extensive work would be needed to create a pathway from Sand Hill Road to the river. Kellie and Jean documented their visit with pictures, which they shared.

These are beautiful properties, and we all agree that it would be great to expand community access.

2. Database inventory development/ a day at the Assessor's Office.

Maureen Gallagher helped Laura R gain access to the deeds for many town-owned properties. Laura made copies and is using the information to both check and round out the database. She is confirming that many of the properties gifted to the town were meant to be permanently conserved, and many were also meant to be used as parkland.

Maureen also lent Laura the accepted map for the Jacqueline Estates subdivision, and the deed for the conservation easement. Maureen asked that our group have a single liaison person for the assessor's office.

3. Review of Gardiner Local Laws and Directives

Linda has pulled up all of the local laws about who has which responsibility for conservation easements in the town. She found some conflicting and duplicated laws and responsibilities. She created a chart, to map which group has which responsibility.

She found that the Town Board has already enacted a local law to adopt a standard template for both Ag and non-agricultural easements (section 165-11), which is one of our recommendations to the town. We hope to help the town fulfill this obligation, which to date has not been addressed.

Linda also reviewed the Gardiner Open Space Commission's responsibilities. According to Town law, GOSC is responsible for reviewing conservation easements annually. The monitoring is supposed to be done by either the Code Enforcement officer, or by any other entity the Commission chooses. That can mean hiring the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, or another non-profit. GOSC is supposed to file a written report on each parcel. And if there are violations, it's GOSC's responsibility to notify the owner of the infraction(s).

There is a need for outreach to the Code Enforcement Officer to determine whether he is monitoring any conservation easements at this time.

It was agreed that we should reach out again to the Environmental Conservation Commission. Our current work around conservation easements crosses into some of their responsibilities and we want to be sure we're all on the same page.

Additional Agenda Items:

We ran out of time and did not complete our agenda for this meeting.

Next Meeting: April 24, 2019 at 7:30 PM. Snacks: Becca.