

MINUTES, Gardiner Open Space Commission Meeting, April 6, 2020.

Present: Jean McGrane, Laura Wong Pan, Linda Geary, Kellie George, Kay Hoiby, Laura Rose.

Excused: Rebecca Benner. Minutes taken by: Laura Rose.

Quotes: (Kay)

“It’s a funny thing about life, once you begin to take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack.”

— Germany Kent (American print and broadcast journalist)

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Opening Business.

This meeting took place via Zoom. We started by checking in with each other.

Discussion Topics:

Draft Resolution for the Town: Use a conservation easement template for all new projects.

Laura Wong Pan walked us through the Resolution she has drafted for the Town.

Our goal is to make it official that the Town will choose to: use the template recommended by our group for non-farm conservation easements, adapt it, or substitute that template where needed.

In essence, per our previous discussions on this topic, we would like a resolution passed by the Town that formalizes and affirms that a Town-friendly template will be used to shape all conservation easements going forward, rather than, as has been the case to date, allowing developers to draft their own easements.

In theory, the Town has already agreed to this idea.

The resolution is meant to formalize the change.

Jean recommended that all members of the group take time before the next meeting to review Laura WP's draft and send any comments to her on this.

Once Laura WP has had time to create a final draft, and the group has had time to review this too, we can vote on it.

If approved, we'll recommend the Town review it as well, and adopt it.

March Minutes: The March minutes will be voted on at the next meeting.

Baseline and Monitoring Recommendations: At our last meeting we agreed that we need more names of people who can offer baseline assessment and documentation services. The Land Trust Alliance had no recommendations beyond the names we have, but suggested reaching out to Mohonk Preserve. Laura R to reach out.

We are continuing to look for additional individuals or groups who can provide this service to the Town.

We discussed whether or not now is a right time to reach out to Marybeth Majestic to see if any progress has been made around the Shaft Road conservation easement's baseline assessment (which will be funded from GOSC's 2019 budget.) We are also interested to see if progress has been made towards the Heartwood baseline assessments.

Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) Update: The group is invited to join Jean and Laura R on the next Zoom call on April 13th in which we're meeting with the EEC and the DEC to review the maps that will be included in the NRI.

Prioritizing our Next Steps: Jean brought up the possibility of us breaking into small teams to accomplish specific goals. We talked about what our next steps should be. Education is on hold at this point, due to the pandemic.

However, we do have a point system in place from the Open Space Plan for choosing properties to target for conservation, and we need to review this to see if it's up-to-date and appropriate for us to use moving forward. We need to evaluate it as a group and see if we can either build consensus about its priorities or agree to specific changes.

There is also a longer memo Kay found in the Open Space files which goes into more depth and may focus differently than the point system we looked at from the plan.

In addition, we have New Paltz's point system to review, and discuss.

We agreed we can work on this as the full group at our next meeting, if we all read all three documents in advance, and take a few minutes to think about them.

Jean asked where the NRI maps come into conservation prioritization; Laura R said many of the maps that are being written correspond directly to the categories listed in the Gardiner Open Space Plan, and so will be very useful. You can see repeating areas of special interest just by looking through the series of maps. And once we have an agreed upon point system, the maps will make it easy tally most of the conservation values of specific parcels.

Files Update: Becca had volunteered to set up a Google Drive filing system for our group but her hands are way full right now. Kay will set up a file share.

Conservation Easement and Town-Owned Property Monitoring Program:

We agree it makes sense for us to work routinely with Andy Lewis on this program.

Future Planning:

Funding: Our group's mandate is somewhat problematic as there is no funding stream currently in place to help us preserve parcels. Is there funding out there for stewardship of voluntary easements, including for baselines, on-going monitoring and enforcement? This is something worth looking into/ putting the item here, but on hold for the moment.

Education: The DEC is eager to engage the Town in the NRI and we have discussed that we like the idea of using the maps as a form of engagement, to help introduce our group to the Town and get our neighbors to consider conserving their own properties, where appropriate. This item is also on hold.

Next Meeting: May 11, 2020, 6 - 7:30 PM

Quotes: Laura Wong Pan

Review of Action Items:

- All members: Review Laura WP's draft resolution.
- Laura R to contact Mohonk Preserve.
- Kay to work on a Google Drive folder for the group.
- Jean to be sure our full group has access to the DEC's NRI Google Drive.
- Group to discuss conservation prioritization ratings system at our next meeting.
HW: review three related documents.
- Jean to re-send the three documents to all members.