

Town of New Paltz
Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission (CWOSP)
Approved Minutes, Meeting of February 10, 2016, at the Community Center

Members Present: Kevin Borden, Lynn Bowdery, Marion DuBois, Richard Fiesel, John Gotto, Seth McKee

Town Officials: Marty Irwin, Town of New Paltz Board liaison to CWOSP Comm.

Public present: No member of the public was present.

Minutes taken by: Lynn Bowdery, CWOSP Commission member and Secretary.

1. Meeting called to order at: 7:10 PM by Vice-chairman Kevin Borden

2. Public comments: No public comments were made.

3. Review, amend & approve minutes: Seth McKee moved to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2015 meeting as corrected. Marion DuBois seconded the motion. All present voted in favor.

4. Discussion of Future Opportunities for CWOSP

- Discussion on Where We've Come, Where We Are, Where We Can Go

Lynn Bowdery mentioned that Open Space Institute has almost accomplished the town's Open Space Plan goal for the Shawangunk Mountains, Buttermilk-Canaan Foothills and Wallkill Flats and River Corridor character areas acreage goals. She noticed that the town's local law Article 44 "Agriculture and Open Space Preservation and Acquisition" in section 44-7 provides for the creation of a "New Paltz Preservation and Investment Fund." What does this section mean? Is there such a fund? Town Board member Marty Irwin said it sounds like the section was written by someone who didn't know how bonds work.

Kevin Borden asked what CWOSP should be doing? What does the Town Board want CWOSP to do? Marty Irwin said that the state-imposed municipal budget cap is preventing the use of the bond. Also the new town hall construction will push taxes up-- the tax increase will vary depending on what sort of building gets built. There are also escalator clauses in union contracts that will have to fit under the tax cap.

Kevin said we can still proceed with other parts of our powers and duties.

It was mentioned that the Town of New Paltz Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, while it was adopted by the town, was never approved by the state.

Due to confusion about authorizations, in 2015 none of the town's conservation easements were monitored. Marty Irwin will see that the voucher request for stewardship services gets to the Town Board meeting soon, so that monitoring work can be resumed.

At 7:45 Kevin Borden had to leave the meeting. Since no votes were to be made requiring a quorum, the discussion continued.

Seth McKee said that the CWOSP Commission needed to have a big picture meeting with Neil Bettez, the Town Supervisor, to go over the enabling legislation and progress so far.

Lynn Bowdery brought up how having a real estate transfer tax can make open space purchases possible without being hurt by the tax cap. Seth added that it is not easy to implement. It would require a local referendum, state approval with sponsorship by our state legislative representative. It would be worth floating the idea with the Supervisor and the Town Board.

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- New Access, Trail and Expansion Opportunities for Mill Brook Preserve (MBP)

There is an application before the Village that might offer a new access opportunity for the MBP, but it is too early in the process to know much yet.

5. CWOSP Budgeting Items

- Brainstorm on Ideas for yearly Budget Allotment

Discussion postponed.

-Discussion on Conservation Easement for Mill Brook Preserve

The inter-municipal agreement made when applying for the CFA grant for the MBP requires a conservation easement be placed on the properties if the CFA grant, which would have automatically caused them to be designated as parkland, is not awarded. Which it wasn't. Marty Irwin has met with the Wallkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT), which is willing to accept a conservation easement on the town-owned property, but it requires a stewardship endowment fee and a transaction fee. That would be about \$11,000 each from the town and village. Where does this money come from? CWOSP has only \$12,000 in its budget for 2016, to be used for expenses that go with acquisitions. Seth McKee said that having conservations held by WVLT would unify stewardship of a large chunk of land, not only MBP. He suggested that Friends of the Mill Brook Preserve (FOMBP) might be able to raise funds to endow a conservation easement.

6. Adjournment: Seth McKee moved that the meeting be adjourned. John Gotto seconded the motion. All present voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.