

**Clean Water and Open Space Preservation Commission
Town of New Paltz, NY
DRAFT minutes
February 5, 2008**

Present: Brad Barclay, Joan Barker, Lynn Bowdery, Jim DeLaune, Jim Hyland, Cara Lee, Seth McKee, Dennis Moore

Absent: Marion Dubois, Bob Gabrielli, David Jones, Fawn Tantillo, Sue Stegen

Also Present: Nikki Koenig Nielson, of Arcady Solutions

The meeting was called to order at 7:10PM.

The minutes from the meeting of January 9 were too problematical to review. Cara will try to help Mollie Correll learn how to take minutes.

Since Nikki Koenig Nielson was present, she was moved forward on the agenda so she could leave earlier in the evening.

Nikki explained how the NYS Ag. & Markets Farmland Protection Implementation Grants system worked. The grants are offered once, rarely twice, a year, and can be used to pay for up to 75% for the purchase of development rights of working farmland, as well as pay for some administrative costs of the transaction. Before an application goes to the state, it must go first to the Ulster County (Agriculture Committee?) for their endorsement. The deadline to get applications to the County is May 1. Nikki explained that the grants are sought on a farm by farm basis, and it is very competitive. The most important factors include likelihood of farm survival, quality of soils, natural habitat values, and development pressure. The conservation easements can be held by a variety of agencies, depending on the individual circumstances. Nikki was involved in winning the grants recently awarded for the Domino and Arrowhead farms.

Seth McKee said that we have at least two New Paltz farmers who have expressed great interest in applying for the FPIG grants, with the Open Space Bond Fund providing the remaining money necessary to purchase their development rights. We are still in the process of developing our application forms, ranking criteria, and procedures; can we somehow meet the County deadline to apply for these grants, since they will leverage our contribution so greatly?

Nikki does not think the county needs all the state application information in order to endorse a grant application, and we can go ahead for the County endorsement while we refine the applications for the State grants.

There followed a discussion of what justification the Commission had for starting applications for FPIG grants before we are ready to solicit interested parties from the town at large. The prime reasons are the time pressure of the County deadline, the fact that the owners of the farms in question have approached members of the Committee already, the lands to be preserved are

very qualified, the leverage the State money adds is very significant, and the applications can serve as pilot projects and could show prompt results from the Commission.

In order to submit applications for FPIG grants to the County, we will need affirmation from the Town Board that they will commit the amount of Open Space Bond money needed for the match if the grants are awarded.

The cost per acre of development rights could be a factor for getting a grant. If the cost is considered too high, that decreases the likelihood of getting a grant. The cost per acre of the Domino Farm was \$7,500, and \$5,000 for Arrowhead Farms. It would be useful to know what the cost per acre of the development rights for the Two Farms Project (bought by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust and the Open Space Institute) were. Previous efforts to use the state grants to purchase development rights were foiled by the rapid rise of land prices at the time, combined with the slowness of the grant process. Jim Hyland wondered if increasing our percent of the match would make our application more attractive to the state. Nikki said it would. Jim DeLaune (?) added that we should be sure to refer any applicant to their tax accountant during negotiations because the tax advantages of a bargain sale, in which the development rights are sold for less than their true market value, can be considerable.

There followed a discussion of how to proceed.

Seth suggested starting with a quick informal appraisal of the development rights of the farms to get a ballpark idea and then talk with the land owners to see if they were willing to go forward before investing substantial money in detailed appraisals.

Jim DeLaune works with an appraiser, Greg Langer of Valuation Consultants, and he will talk to him about getting ballpark appraisals to start with.

Nikki will do the initial steps toward the County application (we can get the County application form from Dennis Doyle); it should not take her more than two hours of work to do.

Cara will email or talk to Toni to tell her what the Commission is planning to do and get her on board, since the Town Board will have to commit to the matching money for the grant.

Nikki explained her proposal to work for the Commission. She charges \$75/hr for general consulting/writing/research; \$65/hr for administrative work; can make a variety of payment arrangements for specific grant developments; and copies, postage, and travel outside of Ulster County at cost. (Proposal document attached) She said the cost for doing a grant application ranges from \$3,000 to \$4,000, and a year's grant writing could be capped at \$10,000.

Dennis Moore moved that the CWOSP recommend to the Town Board entering into a contract with Arcady Solutions to prepare grant applications for the CWOSP Commission with a maximum expenditure of \$10,000 in 2008.

Jim DeLaune seconded the motion.

All members were in favor. Motion carried.

John Behan had intended to have a draft application form and refined criteria for rating parcels for us to review at this meeting. Cara informed us that he found when he consulted his staff that there was more to do than he had anticipated, and Behan Planning Associates will be doing more work and it would take a bit longer although they will not be charging more than initially agreed to. Melissa Barry (email attached) sent a Project Evaluation and Parcel Rating Process Summary and a New Paltz GIS Data Inventory which they will do for us (attached). They will come back at the February 27 meeting with more definite proposals and a draft application form, an outline/flow chart, and review rating criteria embodying a coarse filter/fine filter approach. We would like to get any documents at least a week before the meeting so that we can study them carefully.

For the March meeting, the Commission will review the application package and other materials, and work out the logistics for the public meeting planned for April 2 at Deyo Hall. It was decided that there should be a second meeting in March, closer to the public meeting. The meetings in March will be on Wednesday the 5th, and Wednesday the 26th.

Jim DeLaune informed the Commission members about the Land Trust Alliance Northeast Conference on April 10-12 at the Hotel Thayer, West Point, NY. The educational sessions would be very useful to Commission members who aren't already familiar with the land preservation movement, and he recommended we use our budget to help with the registration costs for people who want to go. Joan Barker and Dennis Moore are interested in going.

Jim Hyland also told us about an upcoming American Farmland Trust conference that would also be very educational.

Seth will email Toni regarding use of our budget for training opportunities for our members. We would like to send 2 people to the LTA conference and 1 to the AFT conference.

There followed a brief discussion of how to publicize the public meeting. As was done for the Open Space Committee meetings, the Assessor's Office can print up labels for all properties over 20 acres, we will write a letter of invitation, and Guy Visk can handle the mailing. A press release must also be prepared for the newspapers.

Cara reported that she called Warren Weigand, the Chairman of the Gardiner Open Space Commission, and it looks like we are proceeding in parallel. Warren has emailed Cara their materials and Cara will send them on to the rest of the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55PM.

Respectfully submitted by Lynn Bowdery

Attachments:

6 January 2008 January 2008

Cara Lee, Interim Co-Chair
Seth McKee, Interim Co-Chair
New Paltz Open Space Commission
New Paltz Town Hall
1 Veteran's Drive
New Paltz, NY 12561

Dear Ms. Lee, Mr. McKee, and Members of the Commission:

Congratulations on beginning the next phase of the Open Space Committee's work, implementation of Open Space Preservation in our community. I have been working on open space and farmland preservation projects since 2001 throughout Ulster County and the Mid Hudson Region, with an emphasis on securing funding to leverage local and private funding.

Having worked with the Open Space Committee on other projects, and served on the Bond Campaign Committee, I look forward to implementation in New Paltz and would like to offer my consulting services. My proposal concept is to work with the Commission and identified properties proactively - in anticipation of application due dates -to develop and secure strategy and documentation about each farm. This application management process would potentially work towards prioritization and long term implementation success, while mitigating as much as possible, the inherent risks in grant applications. In sum, the goal is to maximize efficiency and limit costs.

I have recently launched my own company providing freelance writing, research and grants development, with a focus on environment/ open space, education and economic development and would like to discuss the possibility of working with the Commission to design and implement this approach.

Sincerely,

Nikki Koenig Nielson

Enc.

Fee Structure:

General consulting/ writing/ research..... \$75/ hour

Administrative work..... \$65/ hour

Grants development for identified applications..... lump sum, not to exceed, identified prior to application development, dependent on specific application needs, and amount of prerequisite work completed; range of estimates available as well

Copies, postage and travel outside Ulster County..... at cost

From: Melissa Barry [mailto:mbarry@behanplanning.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2008 1:45 PM
To: Cara Lee
Subject: Tonight's Committee Meeting - materials attached

Cara,

For tonight's committee meeting, the following documents are attached:

- List of data
- Big picture process for rating/parcel evaluation
- Map of preserved lands/deed restrictions and publicly-owned lands (can you and the committee look at this to verify if there's anything missing?)

For next meeting – Feb. 27 – we are proposing the following:

- Review a draft pre-application form
- Review outline/flowchart of the application process for applicants
- Review revised rating criteria
- Review preliminary rating/map "clusters of resources"
- Review results of parcel rating – 12-15 parcels

For the March committee meeting (is there a date set yet?):

- Review application packet for public distribution (application form, application process, FAQs, abbreviated summary of rating criteria)
- Review revised rating criteria (based on feedback from Feb. meeting)
- Discussion of draft presentation for April public meeting
- Preparation/logistics for meeting

Melissa Barry

Associate

Behan Planning Associates, LLC

New Paltz Open Space Committee

Project Evaluation and Parcel Rating Process Summary

Step 1: Resource-based analysis (refinement of existing open space plan vision) (GIS)

We will look at clusters of resources to get a better sense of how parcels fit into the larger conservation context and identify opportunities for proactive outreach.

- Farmland core areas
- Unfragmented forest areas and other core habitat areas (based on forest and habitat cover, as available)
- Parcels of contiguous ownership
- Connecting corridors
- Existing protected lands

Step 2: Preliminary parcel rating based on resources (GIS)

We will rate 12-15 parcels based on the criteria in NPOSP (criteria will be revised slightly) in order to test the criteria and make any necessary modifications. Once we are all comfortable with the results, this rating system will become the standard for all applications received through the program.

Details related to the site, such as the presence of unique geological features or historic features may need to be verified with a site visit. This qualitative information will *not* be factored into the preliminary rating but will be included in the parcel rating criteria.

Step 3: Project viability analysis (qualitative)

Projects will also be scored based on their likelihood of success, and their anticipated costs and benefits to the community. Is there a land trusts to hold the easement? Is there community support for the project? Has the landowner signed a letter of intent? Is grant funding available for the project? What are the anticipated costs to the town? This type of rating must be done at a later date when projects are before the committee. We will set up the criteria (already started in the NPOSP but need to be revised). This level of detail will require additional follow-up with the landowner and potential conservation partners and funding agencies.

Step 4: Project distribution (qualitative)

For each round of grant applications, projects may also be distributed in such a way as to ensure that there is diversity in project types (natural resource/biodiversity protection, farmland protection, scenic resources, farmland protection, etc.) and also to ensure that there is geographic diversity throughout the town. Project distribution may also be weighted depending on grant funding cycles, land trust conservation activities, and other contributing factors. We will set up project distribution criteria to ensure that these goals are met.

From Behan Planning Associates

New Paltz GIS Data Inventory:

As of February 5, 2008

Existing:

Parcels (Oct 2007) – which includes agricultural exemptions
Roads
DEC wetlands
NWI wetlands
Elevation/slope (DEM 10-meter)
Break in slope
Streams/rivers
Surface water
Flood plain
Soils
DEC Natural Heritage Program habitat and species occurrences
Ag. districts
National register districts/sites
Green assets data for the ridge
Walkill Valley Rail Trail alignment
Scenic roads (AKRF)
Scenic view points (AKRF)

To be digitized:

New Paltz Open Space Plan areas
Forest cover (at ~2-meter resolution)
Core farm areas
Forest blocks/patches
Parcels of contiguous ownership

Needed (*if existing*):

Protected lands: PDR/other easements
Aquifers/ recharge areas
Local habitat mapping (Hudsonia mapping of SwarteKill area not available until Fall 2008)
Local wetland mapping (Hudsonia mapping of village wetlands has already been requested)
Vernal pools
Century farms
Farm stands/CSAs
Local historic sites
Watershed boundaries
Northern Walkill Study – biodiversity area boundaries