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PLACES

Livestock barn of traditional design to be built at Brook Farm in New Paltz

by SHARYN FLANAGAN on May 26, 2016 • 3:00 pm

No Comments



Glynwood has a proposal in place to build a new livestock barn on this site at Brook Farm in New Paltz.
(photo by Lauren Thomas)

The New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission held a public hearing on Wednesday, May 18 to offer residents the opportunity to comment on the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted to them on March 16 by Neal Tomann, property director for Glynwood. The nonprofit, Cold Spring-based organization that operates the Hudson Valley Farm Business Incubator at Brook Farm in New Paltz was vetting the design for a new livestock barn to be built at the site to accommodate the young farmers in its program. Brook Farm is located within 283 acres that Glynwood leases from the Mohonk Preserve.

The town Historic Preservation Commission requires a review of proposed work on properties designated as local historic landmarks before a building permit may be issued. If the design of a project meets with their approval after evaluation and a public hearing, the Commission issues a Certificate of Appropriateness that verifies the work to be done is appropriate for the historic property or district and that it meets local code criteria.

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New Paltz building inspector Stacy Delarede, who was present at the public hearing, previously reviewed the plans for the livestock barn at Brook Farm and determined that since the building is for agricultural use, a building permit was not required. But because the property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Commission's approval was still required.

Tomann gave a presentation to the small group assembled at the Community Center describing the project as a traditional barn measuring 90 by 55 feet, providing approximately 5,000 square feet of usable space (or as much as 6,000 if you count the loft area). "We're not reinventing the wheel here," he said. "We're going with basic ideas that have been around a long time. It's built on two levels, with equipment storage on the top and livestock down below. The hay goes in the top and gets dropped down into the lower section."

The post and beam construction features materials that were selected to satisfy bio-security protocols put in place for animal welfare. For example, explained Tomann, the structure will be stained a traditional barn red rather than painted, because paint can chip and cause harm to the animals. The siding to be used is called 'pattern 105' Dutch lap, or novelty siding, made of yellow pine, and there are six inch galvanized steel gutters, "which are not cheap," he added. The roof will be galvanized steel of a green color.

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Tomann said they've received a lot of advice from veterinarians and other experts on how to correctly build the barn to ensure things like proper air circulation for the animals. They changed the design along the way to "splay out" the roof line, he said, to lower its profile, so that people on Butternut Road "are not seeing a big massive acreage of roof." The cupolas were designed after some of the other barns on the Mohonk Preserve to create a structure that would fit in and suit the location.

"We've really gone through every detail trying to get these things right," Tomann told the group. "And I get it; it's an important vista. It's an important location. You don't want to look at something that is not right." And, not to be overly dramatic, he said, "but I don't want you to like it; I want you to love it. And I take feedback very seriously."

The new barn will be placed on the original footprint of a barn that burned down at the site in 1936. That barn once belonged to Albert Smiley and was the site of some colorful local history when a local man was dragged to safety in the course of the big fire that took down the barn, Tomann said. They plan to put a placard on the side of the structure to tell the story.

When it came time for public comment, a man who said he was a 37-year resident of Butternut Road said he thought that Glynwood was "trying to do the design appropriately," but given how long he's been looking at the old landscape beneath the iconic tower, he wasn't sure whether he liked the prospect of change. "I understand things change, but what it looks like on the outside is the concern for me; that it look aesthetically as much like the other buildings as possible." He asked if another site could have been chosen for the barn, but Tomann said it was really the only place. "If we go too far one way, we have wetlands issues, but too far the other way, the ground just won't support it. And we have access issues; we have to tie it into utilities and



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water. [The old barn] was there before for a reason.”

According to the bylaws of the Historic Preservation Commission, ownership of designated historic properties requires owners to act as responsible stewards of irreplaceable cultural heritage, but designation does not “freeze a property or historic district in time.” Alterations and new construction are allowed with Commission review that protects the historic integrity of the property or district.

Tomann was asked by another resident whose home neighbors Brook Farm whether this project means an overall expansion of livestock operations in the area. She was concerned, she said, with odors from the farm and the manner in which the byproducts of livestock interfered with her enjoyment of her neighborhood. Tomann noted that there is a cap on the amount of cattle and livestock the land at Brook Farm will support; a number they’re close to maxing out at now. The Butternut Road resident also said she was worried about the prevalent rumor that a slaughterhouse is slated to be built at the site. “We have no intention of putting a slaughterhouse there and we’re not even allowed to,” said Tomann. “No way we’re going to have a slaughterhouse on the property.”

Commission members pointed out that all discussion of farm operations was beyond their scope of authority as an organization charged with determining historic accuracy of design. “This is about historic preservation and the appropriateness of the design of the barn,” said commissioner Caryn Sobel.

After the public hearing was closed, the Historic Preservation Commission approved the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Construction of the barn is expected to begin this summer and take approximately six to seven weeks.

Update on activities at Brook Farm

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Glynwood inaugurated its Hudson Valley Farm Business Incubator program at Brook Farm in 2014, with its first cohort of agricultural entrepreneurs launching their businesses there in the spring of 2015. Created in collaboration with the Open Space Institute, the intensive program provides support, training and resources that enable young farmers to make a success of their agricultural businesses.

This spring, the Incubator welcomed two livestock-oriented businesses to the farmer training program. “Back Paddock” is the venture of Allison Toepp and Patrick Knapp, both former employees at Poughkeepsie’s Sprout Creek Farm. In addition to serving as a teaching farm, they’re running a poly-culture farming operation that includes cattle, dual-purpose ducks and mushrooms on 30 acres of pasture and forest. Their products will be sold at farmers’ markets and wholesale to restaurants. “Grass & Grit” was launched by two former Glynwood livestock apprentices (Benjamin Roberts and Madeleine Morley) in partnership with the farm’s current assistant livestock manager, James Walton. The trio are developing a multi-species, pasture-raised livestock and comprehensive rotational grazing business based on regenerative agricultural practices that will produce high-quality meat obtainable through summer and winter CSA membership as well as select retail and wholesale markets.

Such diversified practices are common to the new generation of farmers, says Dave

Llewellyn, director of farmer training at the Farm Business Incubator. “They share a commitment to revitalizing farmland, diversifying operations and adhering to sustainable and humane practices. They also exhibit a keen sense of the practical side of farming, with thorough plans for bringing products to market.”

Two of the original participants in the inaugural incubator program — Four Legs Farm, a CSA that offers pastured lamb and pork meat and Community Compost Company, a collection and composting company that produces high quality compost in conjunction with local farms — will graduate in 2017 and transition onto their own land.

Glynwood is now accepting applications for the 2017-2018 season of the Hudson Valley Farm Business Incubator. Three farm-based businesses will be selected in the fall for multi-year residencies. The services that are offered as part of this program provide access to land, housing, shared equipment, infrastructure, low-interest capital, business mentoring and training in regenerative farming practices. Proposals will be accepted for grass-based livestock production and other diverse farm businesses, including agro-forestry. Priority will be given to proposals that include pigs, sheep, goats or poultry, complementary to the current roster of businesses at the Incubator and suited to the property. The deadline to apply is August 31. More information is available at www.Glynwood.org.

In other news



Glynwood's farm incubator kicks off first year



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