

Town of New Paltz
Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission (CWOSP)
Approved Minutes, Meeting of Wednesday, February 23, 2022 via Zoom

Members present: Lynn Bowdery, Rich Fiesel, John Gotto, Mike Knutson, Tom Weiner

Town Officials: None

Public present: None

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

1. Meeting called to order at: 7:10 PM by Chairman John Gotto

2. Public comments: None

3. Approval of Minutes of December 22 meeting: John Gotto had offered some corrections to the draft minutes that had been circulated, and the revised draft was reviewed by the members. Richard Fiesel moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mike Knutson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

4. Review and approval of draft letter to Town Board and CPF Board (see attached): Rich suggested that we add something about agriculture to the protection of open space goals of both the Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board and the CWOSP Commission by adding the words “and farmland” after the words “open space” in two places in the letter. Mike suggested deleting the word “seek” from line four of the second paragraph. There was agreement to make both changes. Mike said he thinks that this letter clarifying the role of the CWOSP Commission with relation to the CPFAB is helpful both to us as well as others. John added that it reflects that we thought about it and are not stepping on anyone’s toes.

Mike Knutson made a motion that John Gotto send this letter as amended to the New Paltz Town Board and the CPFAB.

Lynn Bowdery seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The amended letter is attached to these minutes.

Rich suggested that we send the letter to Cara Lee first, since she is absent from this meeting and is the Chair of the CPFAB, to see if she has any changes to suggest, before sending it on to the Town Board and the CPFAB. We agreed that this was a good idea.

Mike wondered if CWOSP might be asked to come to the CPFAB meeting to explain anything. John thought probably not, since John and Cara are on both boards, and he reminded everyone that CPFAB meetings are public and CWOSP members would always be welcome.

5. Report on CPF activities: John reported that the CPF has some properties of interest that it is exploring. There was a general discussion about working with other partners, landowners’ expectations, sorts of approaches, etc. John said that outreach is a problem. He has an idea to produce an information package to send to every real estate agent to explain the benefits of conservation easements to potential buyers. Mike suggested running the idea past Walkkill Valley Land Trust. The wording needs to be carefully done; not every parcel of land qualifies to be accepted for a conservation easement. More discussion followed about the value of outreach and better informing real estate agents; it would be worth developing something to do that.

Mike explained that he had been contacted by the CPF regarding conservation databases and provided information on those he was familiar with. John said that the CPF Advisory Board is setting up a tutorial to tryout one of the conservation databases. The software is fairly complicated for new users and would require some growing int. Lynn asked if it is expensive. John said the cost isn’t too bad.

John asked if there were other things to discuss; nothing was mentioned.

John Gotto moved that the meeting be adjourned. Tom Weiner seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM

Town of New Paltz
Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission (CWOSP)
Approved Minutes, Meeting of Wednesday, February 23, 2022 via Zoom

The next meeting will be on April 27, 2022, the fourth Wednesday of April.

Draft CWOSP Memorandum as amended:

DRAFT CWOSP MEMORANDUM

This memorandum is intended to clarify the mission and operations of the Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission (CWOSP) in light of the Town's adoption of a Community Preservation Plan and Fund in 2020 and a Real Estate Transfer Tax Law, effective February 1, 2021. The new Law institutes a Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) on real estate transactions in the Town and Village of New Paltz, providing revenue to a fund that is dedicated solely to the acquisition of property rights for the purpose of protecting and preserving open space and farmland as defined in the Community Preservation Plan. The fund is administered by a volunteer Community Preservation Fund (CPF) Advisory Board.

CWOSP has the understanding that its own mission and operations are completely complementary to those of the new CPF Advisory Board, and that the two groups share the same basic mission of open space and farmland preservation. CWOSP retains its authority to recommend the issuance of bonds by the Town as a source of funding, and will continue to evaluate opportunities for various mechanisms of protecting properties with willing owners, according to its established operations. However, we welcome the addition of a new source of funding through the RETT, which would not add a burden of debt service to Town taxpayers, and we envision that the RETT would be the preferred source of funding for deserving projects. Accordingly, CWOSP will not actively initiate or pursue any type of property rights acquisition without consultation with the CPF Advisory Board. CWOSP regular meetings will now take place every two months rather than monthly.

It is the intention of CWOSP to keep abreast of the activities of the CPF Advisory Board and to support their work in evaluation of potential protection projects. We offer to assist the CPF Advisory Board through our efforts and expertise in identifying and evaluating preservation opportunities, and to consult with them when opportunities become known to CWOSP. Furthermore, CWOSP would stand ready to utilize its bond issuance mechanism to add funds wherever needed in order to facilitate the completion of projects, in the event that the CPF may be unable to do so with its available funds at a particular point in time.

Chairman John Gotto sent this memorandum as amended and approved to the New Paltz Town Board and the Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board and its receipt was acknowledged with appreciation on March 17, 2022.