

New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission (OSPC) Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 18, 2023, 6:30 p.m., Sessions Conference Room, New Hartford Town Hall

Members Present: Doug Roth (chairperson), Eva Barhan, Madeline McClave, Rusty Warner, Jean Darlington (secretary). Absent: Karen Griswold-Nelson, Bill Michaud, Mary Hoag (alternate). Doug called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Approval of 10/23/2023 minutes: Eva moved to approve the minutes of the 10/23/2023 meeting. Doug seconded and the motion passed 4-0 (Jean abstained). Note: Our November meeting was canceled.

Open Space Plan: no report

Updates on Current Open Space Preserves and Trails:

Jones Mountain: Doug and Madeline reported a good turnout at the annual Jones Mountain cleanup on 11/25 and a smaller work party on 11/30. Volunteers cleared leaves and debris out of the gutters and culverts along the carriage road and also pulled out some burning bush (winged euonymus). Another work party will be needed to work on removing this invasive plant (https://cipwg.uconn.edu/invasive_plant_list/). Rusty volunteered to post small, unobtrusive markers beside the culverts to make them easier to find in the future.

Helen Butler Riverfront Trail Preserve: Jean distributed the updated Management Plan, which has now been signed by representatives of the Town of New Hartford and the New Hartford Land Trust (NHLT). Eva reported that she had worked on using branches and brush to discourage people and dogs from using unauthorized river access points. We discussed the need for small posts with arrows to direct people toward a small number of river access points that will not lead to erosion of the riverbank. Madeline reported that a NHLT volunteer had walked the trail recently and found this fall's hole repairs to be holding up well. The annual NHLT stewardship visit is scheduled to occur before 12/31.

Goula Preserve and Phillips Farm: We discussed a draft management plan for the Goula Preserve to present to the Board of Selectmen. Doug recommended that we add a map that includes details of a proposed mowing schedule. We discussed asking people who walk there regularly to help report on trail conditions and any areas of concern. Rusty recommended that we create a short written guide for such volunteers. Eva, Doug, and Jean reported on new signage and small wooden arrows to help hikers find their way along the trail through both preserves. Doug reported on new trailhead signage at the Surdam Property parking area for the Goula-to-Antolini Traverse trail, which goes from Cotton Hill Road to Antolini Road. (Note: The Surdam and Antolini properties are Town-owned lands, but they are not preserved open space.) Additional possible trails were discussed for the Goula Preserve; members suggested we walk the property and gain consensus on best routing and trail marking. Doug distributed a draft of a proposed stewardship monitoring plan for Phillips Farm. He will email it to OSPC members to read and send back comments. Eva noted that the sign showing the trail as it passes through the Antolini property needs to be updated with colors that match the newly painted blazes. We also discussed moving the Phillips Farm trailhead sign that is on East Cotton Hill Road to the location directly across the road from the trailhead, to help hikers find the correct trail entrance. Doug volunteered to look into this.

Land Preservation Fund (LPF): Doug plans to talk to First Selectman Dan Jerram.

Agricultural Review: We discussed working with NHLT to speak with farmers about promoting agricultural opportunities in New Hartford, as well as federal grant money for farmers.

Other Business: none

Executive Session to Discuss Real Estate: At 7:55 p.m., Jean moved to enter executive session. Rusty seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Executive session ended at 8:16 p.m. Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Darlington, Secretary