

**Minutes of New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission Regular Meeting
Monday, November 25, 2019 6:30 p.m., Sessions Conference Room, Town Hall**

Members present: Jean Cronauer (chairperson), Karen Griswold-Nelson, Caren Ross, Doug Roth (alternate), Madeline McClave, Jean Darlington (secretary). Guest: First Selectman Dan Jerram.
Jean C. called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and seated Doug as a regular member.

Approval of Minutes: Jean D. moved we approve the minutes of the 10/21/2019 special meeting. Doug seconded and the motion passed with two abstentions.

Tax Abatement Application: We discussed with Dan the information to be posted on the town website. Dan recommended that we coordinate the timing of applications with the town's annual budget season, which gets under way in January. Dan recommended and OSPC members discussed that the due date for formal applications be in the early part of the year so the OSPC can submit our recommendations to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) in time. He also recommended that we use our Open Space ranking criteria to help the BOS decide which applications to approve each year. We discussed issues such as (1) The possible templates to form the basis for conservation easements (CE's) to be tailored to each project; (2) the need to involve a Land Use Attorney such as Mark Branse for CE issues; (3) how CE's held by the Town will be monitored, enforced and defended; and (4) how CE's should be negotiated between property owners and the Town, as well as the division of labor between OSPC and BOS. Questions arose such as partial donation of a CE's value, determining the value of the donation versus the abatement, and whether the Town will sign IRS Forms 8283 for such landowner donors. It will be of critical importance for the OSPC and BOS to work closely together and be aligned in terms of open space preservation goals.

OSPC Meeting Schedule for 2020: Doug moved that we meet on the 2020 dates listed below, at 6:30 p.m. in Town Hall. Unless otherwise noted, all dates are the fourth Monday of the month. Madeline seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Jan. 27, Feb. 24, Mar. 23, Apr. 27, May 18 (3rd Monday), June 22,
July 27, Aug. 24, Sep. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 23, Dec. 21 (3rd Monday).

Goula-Phillips Farm Trail Linkage: Doug reported on plans for a bridge and a trail linkage. We need to remove a barrier to the trail in the woods near the hilltop, investigate the possibility of making a small opening in the stone wall across East Cotton Hill Road from the trail entrance, post a small sign indicating the location of the trail entrance, and post blazes to guide hikers along the trail. Madeline will give Doug contact information so he can follow up to set up a meeting between the point person for the farm's owners and OSPC representatives.

Brodie Park South (BPS) Preservation Values: Jean D. reported on plans for a springtime public walk to publicize the natural and historical values of BPS. She had walked the trail with town historian Anne Hall, who has agreed to lead such a walk, tentatively the last weekend in April. She had attended the Recreation Commission meeting on 11/13 to continue coordinating with them. She reported on presentations and workshops she has attended in the past month regarding the importance of forests, especially forests of large and/or old trees, for carbon capture, water quality protection, and habitat protection. We discussed a proposal for \$1800 +/- 20% we had received from botanist and ecological consultant Betsy Corrigan for a botanical survey. Madeline said she knew of an organization that might do similar work at no cost; she volunteered to send the contact information to Jean D. We also discussed the general need for up-to-date maps of the town for our NRI, the importance of preserving critical habitat linkages between parcels such as the woodlands in the northwestern part of town, and the importance of clarifying the specific roles of the various commissions that advise the BOS about land use.

Executive Session to Discuss Real Estate: none

Butler Conservation Easement: The 10/29/2019 Town Meeting unanimously approved the conservation easement to be placed on the riverfront parcel. Madeline reported that the NHLT had voted to accept it. She said First Selectman Dan Jerram will sign it during the week of 12/9. We discussed three new pipes that have now been constructed under the lower part of the hiking trail beside the river; Jean D. showed photos she had taken on Saturday 11/23. They are about a foot in interior diameter. They start just uphill from the trail and end close to the river's edge. We plan to check with Inland Wetlands to make sure proper measures are taken to prevent erosion around these pipes. Madeline reported that she is working on signage for the kiosk. She has received a several signs regarding fish regulations, etc. from the DEEP.

New Business:

1) Madeline and Jean D. reported on this morning's volunteer work party at Jones Mountain, to clear out drainage ditches and prevent culverts from becoming clogged. Jean reported that new selectman David Rosengren had participated in the work party, and that he had asked why volunteers were needed to do such work on town-owned property. Madeline and others said that the town has a history of volunteers who are willing to help at Jones Mountain and know how to use a light touch to protect sensitive natural areas. Such volunteerism helps the town by saving money and contributing to the open space values of protected land.

2) Long-time OSPC member and founding chairperson Caren Ross announced with great regret that she needs to resign from the OSPC because of increased work responsibilities, effective January, 2020. Commissioners tried unsuccessfully to convince her to stay because of her invaluable experience, level-headedness, careful consideration of issues, ability to remain focused on long-term goals, and facility in communicating effectively with a wide variety of people. We thanked her for her countless contributions over her many years of dedicated service to the OSPC, and to the Open Space Planning Committee before that.

Next regular meeting: Monday, December 16, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Darlington, Secretary