



CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Thursday, November 2, 2023

5 PM In Person

Walnut Ridge Dairy, 100 Brown Hill Road, Lansing

MINUTES

1. Call Meeting to Order

Present: Ed Dubovi, Carrie Koplinka-Loehr, John Fleming, David Wolfe, Karen Edelstein, Todd Walter, Adam Buck. Tom Butler from the Planning Board and Ruth Groff from the Town Board.

Absent: Gabby Desnoes, Robyn Bailey

2. Approve minutes of October meeting

3. Discussion of the Open Space Conservation Plan Story Map provided online

The overall impression of the Story Map was that it was of high quality and very well done. A major sticking point still seems to be a clear understanding of how the properties were scored to arrive at their relative “conservation” value. Suggestions were made to come up with a simplified illustration of the scoring system with just several categories. This can be addressed at the public meeting on the 9th where John and Katie will be present to explain the system. Still a lingering question as to how the OSCP will be used in the future. Need more emphasis on the voluntary nature of the Plan. Some discussion of why farmlands received low priority scores.

4. Plans for the November 9th Meeting - 5:30 at the Town Hall

This will be an “in person” meeting only as no social media link will be available. Short presentations by John Zepko, John Steinmetz, Katie Darcy, and John Fleming. Multiple stations will be available emphasizing various aspects of the OSCP, which will permit attendees with the chance to get clarification on various aspects of the plan if needed.

Promotion of the meeting will be done on list serves, notices in various publications and with flyers in public spaces. The Story Map will be available on the Town website. There is a form at the end for comments.

5. Plans for final comments

Effort is being made to have a draft of the OSCP available to the Planning Board for a meeting at the end of November. Plans are to have a copy available by Nov 10. Changes suggested by the public meeting will be forwarded as an addendum prior to the November Planning Board meeting if necessary. Hopefully all comments will be available for the Dec 7 CAC meet so that that a final draft of the CAC can be generated in December.

5. Open meeting law and new member interviews

An opinion forwarded by the town attorney indicated that the CAC was subject to the OML. The December meeting will be held in person at the Town Hall. It is still not clear if the Town will provide administrative support for this meeting.

The CAC agreed that the new member search needed to be reopened (Ruth will check on this possibility) so that more candidates could apply and that advertising for new members should be stepped up; for example, at the Nov. 9 meeting, we should mention CAC openings and we should post the openings on listservs. Some CAC members do not think current members need to be interviewed for reappointment. Other members expressed concern that if the CAC were to become a Conservation Board, current members who are also members of the Ag Committee might need to step down.

6. Departmental and Committee Reports.

Ag and Farmland Preservation Committee. A meeting date has not been set for next week but the CAC reiterated its interest in meeting with the Ag Committee prior to the November 9th Open House about the Open Space Conservation Plan. John and Adam suggested that at the meeting, they could use Adam's farm as an example from the OSCP. The co-chair asked if a PowerPoint would be appropriate, like what was presented to the Planning Board, and the CAC decided no.

We discussed the Planning Board's question about whether parcels could be considered down to the 20-acre size, and the CAC's hope is that the tool(s) provided by Colliers will enable the Planning Department to apply the OSCP criteria to any parcel in the Town, and specifically those adjoining 70-acre parcels of interest, although coordination of different landowners could hamper conservation.