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Town of Vernon

Open Space Task Force

Minutes of Regular Meeting September 21, 2020

Meeting Location: The meeting was held in virtual video zoom format.

Call to order and seating:

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by acting chairman Ann Letendre. Present were members Tom Ouellette, Karl Hasel, Ginny Gingras, Ann Letendre; and staff liaison, George McGregor.

1.0 Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve draft minutes of March 18, 2019 with minor corrections was made by Ginny, second by Karl, all voted in favor. Motion to approve draft minutes of Sept 21, 2020, with correction to add Brian Motola in attendance was made by Tom, second by Karl, all voted in favor.

Ann asked for motion to add item to New Business to discuss former Golfland parcel, which is on the Open Space Plan. Motion by Karl, second by Tom, all voted in favor.

2.0 Old Business

2.1 Priority Parcel Preservation:

Farmland Preservation – Strong Farm: Ann reported that all legal matters had been completed last fall, the property has been preserved, and is now owned by the non-profit Strong Family Farm, Inc. Restoration work on the pastures was done in the spring 2020 using the generous donation from the MacLean Foundation. Action by the OSTF on this property is now complete.

Petrin property – Ann reported that the property was purchased by a willing buyer who wanted to temporarily keep it protected. The buyer's intent is to sell it eventually to an entity that will preserve the property. Discussion had been held with the Manchester Land Trust, who would like to take it on, but financially could not manage it now. Ann will contact the Bolton Land Trust.

Farmland Preservation - Clark Farm – The land has been placed in a family trust, Karl will look into finding the contact person. Previously, owners had not been interested in pursuing open space status.

2.2 Open Space & Farmland Preservation Funding - Update

Local Funding – Ann reported that the Town budget FY20-21 provided the annual \$10,000, per ordinance requirements.

State Funding - Ann reported that no problems are anticipated at this point with OSWA Program in 2021; applications are normally received in February. OSTF has no

projects anticipated for a 2021 application.

2.3 Merger of Conservation Commission and Open Space Task Force – status

On hold. The Task Force provided Mr. McGovern with background and why it has been considered. Ann will provide him with a rationale document that had been prepared by OSTF several years ago.

3.0 New Business –

3.1 POCD Discussion – OS Inventory, Map, update OSTF Goals, etc.

Ann noted that discussions and inputs to George will be ongoing throughout the year. She referred to the 2019 update of the open space plan, “Revision 4 – Proposed Open Space System” that incorporated an updated inventory and data analysis prepared for the Sustainable CT program. She commented that the OSTF goals and strategies were pretty well outlined in that document.

3.2 Added item – Goffland Parcel

Ann reported that she had recently been aware of an application on the site to make improvements to the property and enlarge the building. She noted the parcel is cited in the open space plan because it encompasses the confluence of the two rivers, and is environmentally unique and important. The intent was to preserve sensitive riparian areas along the two rivers where feasible, and if possible, by conservation easement. Ann also noted that the planned Hockanum River trail had been moved from the west side of the river to the east side of the river onto this parcel, and obtaining an easement for that purpose would be desired. Discussion ensued. Ann thought the application provided opportunity to discuss an easement, and, since discussion with owners had not taken place previously, these points could be raised at the upcoming hearings. Motion was made by Karl, second by Tom that Ann make a statement at upcoming IWC and P&Z hearings with these points: (1) the site is on the open space plan because of the confluence of the rivers, a sensitive area; (2) preserving riparian areas along the two rivers is a goal of the open space plan; (3) the site is also a proposed trail location for the Hockanum River trail, and a critical trail connection; (4) therefore, a conservation easement along the rivers would be desired.

4.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM. Motion by Karl, second by Tom, all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Letendre, acting Chairperson