

The regular meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by Hal Shute, Vice Committee Chair.

Present for this meeting were the following Committee members: Ernie Andreoli, Marla Ashton, Hal Shute (Vice Chair), Cathy Urbanski, George Fisher (Township Committee Liaison) and Christine Rosikiewicz (Committee Secretary). John Cronic (Committee Chair), Judith O'Brien and Alison Sommers-Sayre were absent.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Ms. Urbanski and Ms. Ashton commented favorable on the recent map that was created which includes the Township easements on it. Every resident will receive a copy in the mail.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 10, 2013:

This item was tabled until November as there was no quorum present to approve the minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

At this time Mr. Shute asked if the Ziegenfuss property could be moved up on the agenda as Ms. Ziegenfuss was present.

Ziegenfuss: Lynn Ziegenfuss explained to the Board that she has been in contact with Jay [Watson] regarding preserving her property. She would like to find out more about the procedure for preservation and noted that nearby properties were under consideration for preservation by the Committee as the property owners have expressed interest.

Mr. Shute went over the definition of "preserved" at Ms. Ziegenfuss' request. When a property is preserved the development rights are purchased. There are two paths to this; farmland preservation or Green Acres. Mr. Shute said that the Committee works with both types of preservation. If a property is under farmland preservation the property owner must continually actively farm it. Ms. Ziegenfuss inquired if horses count as farming. Mr. Shute said yes, but there is some discussion on this and it could change. Mr. Shute explained that there is an exception area around the house and outbuildings on the property which is not preserved.

Ms. Ziegenfuss inquired if horse breeding was considered agriculture. Mr. Shute replied that breeding is but he is unsure if boarding is.

Ms. Ziegenfuss said that 18-20 large lots could be developed on her eighty acre lot excluding the woodland and slopes. She has a second lot that is twenty acres. There is a right of way on the twenty acre lot.

Mr. Shute explained that two appraisals are done on a property then the State appraiser reviews them and determines the easement value.

Ms. Ziegenfuss inquired about a "ballpark" amount for the appraisal; Mr. Shute replied that it is very difficult to say. He explained that an option agreement must be signed which states that if the appraisal is over ten thousand dollars an acre the property owner will accept the offer.

The Committee and Ms. Ziegenfuss commented on the easement and access to the property.

Mr. Shute explained that Ms. Ziegenfuss would need to be willing to accept a minimum of ten thousand dollars an acre, still live in the home and not build houses. Barns, fences and run in sheds for agricultural use could be constructed. There would be no public access to the property if under farmland preservation. If preserved by Green Acres public access would be allowed. Ms. Ziegenfuss commented about being unsure of public access due to her animals. Mr. Shute commented that solar projects could not be built once the easement is recorded. He added that this property is not in the project area.

Mr. Shute said the process could be started by the Committee next year or Ms. Ziegenfuss could apply directly to the County. She inquired which the Committee would prefer. Mr. Shute explained that the Township cost is the same (twenty percent) either way and it is more "a matter of labor". The County application period is this month; Ms. Ziegenfuss can speak to the County about getting in this year or work with the Township next year.

Ms. Ziegenfuss said she is definitely interested as long as she can continue her horse farm and noted she is starting a breeding program. She provided Mr. Shute with her phone number for him to call her. She inquired about any charge to apply; Mr. Shute replied that there is none. She inquired if she needs to sign a contract at this time; Mr. Shute replied that she does not have to. Ms. Ziegenfuss inquired if the application is binding. Mr. Shute replied that the option agreement is binding. Ms. Ziegenfuss inquired if the easement can ever be revoked; Mr. Shute replied that it can't. Mr. Shute said the County process takes two years.

Mr. Fisher commented that not all properties are accepted. Mr. Shute explained that properties are ranked by the County and explained the process. Mr. Ziegenfuss inquired about Committee oversight of the process; Mr. Shute said the Committee will follow along the process.

Ms. Ziegenfuss inquired if the Committee would be interested in her property. Mr. Fisher commented that there would be "one big block" if preservation of the nearby properties came to fruition. He noted that the Township, County and State all "get a say" on preservation of the property. Mr. Shute commented that Ms. Ziegenfuss may want to consider farmland preservation for the front property. He said there is interest based on what is known today but cannot give any numbers as there aren't enough comps to look at.

Ms. Ziegenfuss left the meeting at this time.

Green Acres Projects

Wooden North: Mr. Shute reported that this farm closed in September. He has a draft management plan from D&R which will be distributed to the Committee via e-mail for their review. West Amwell has 63% ownership of the property but D&R will be managing it. D&R would like to manage this property as a nesting bird habitat and mow it later in the season.

Halper: Mr. Shute reported that Green Acres made Halper an offer which they have not accepted. JCP&L has shown interest in buying part of the property before Green Acres purchases the rest.

Farmland Preservation Projects

Toll North: Mr. Shute reported that Mr. Cronce attended the County meeting; there have been no changes.

Wooden South: This property will be taken off the agenda.

Lambert Farm: Mr. Shute reported that this property is moving very slowly; they are trying to submit the application for this year.

Fozman: Mr. Shute has not called Mr. Fozman yet.

Jingoli: Mr. Jingoli does not want to continue with Green Acres, Mr. Fisher is waiting for Mr. Jingoli to get back to him.

Other

County Grant: Mr. Shute reported that the application is ready to be submitted. It will go to the Township Committee for approval next. The grant will be applied to towards the Wooden property.

Easement Inspections: Ms. Urbanski reported that the map is complete and almost all the grant money has been spent.

At this time Ms. Urbanski inquired if the Zigenfuss property is developable. Comments were exchanged among Committee members regarding the possibility of development, easements and access to the property.

Prospective properties for preservation and the ADA were also briefly discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Shute commented that there are no PIG preservation projects that are moving; he is concerned about State grant funds. He briefly went over current projects and commented that the DEP would be a big project. Mr. Shute provided a map to the Committee members. He has contacted Mr. Fulper; who may be interested in selling some rights. The Committee discussed the map and possible development and preservation possibilities.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There was no public present.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be on November 12, 2013.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Urbanski made a motion, seconded by Ms. Ashton, to adjourn the meeting at 8:48p.m. All were in favor; the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine A. Rosikiewicz
Open Space Secretary