

***Lancaster Open Space & Recreation Committee Minutes
Wednesday, March 30, 2016, 6:30 PM
Lancaster Town Hall***

In attendance: Noreen Piazza, David Koonce, Tom Christopher, Ted Manning, Tim Castner

Also in attendance: Larry Shoer, Frank Streeter, and Sarah Spencer from the Lancaster Land Trust
Janet Morrison, Independent Consultant on Land Preservation

Minutes

Review of the 1/27 minutes was tabled to the 5/25 OSRC meeting.

Update – Agricultural Land Preservation

Janet Morrison appeared once again to discuss agricultural land preservation opportunities in Lancaster. She presented an updated map of all the agricultural and Chapter 61 properties in Town. Again, she indicated that these properties should be prioritized as part of a parcel protection strategy.

Ms. Morrison then described a series of funding sources for either the purchase of ag properties, or the application of an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) to permanently protect these properties for farming. The following is a breakdown of these sources:

Funding Sources

State grants – LAND, PARC
Federal grants – Land and Water Conservation Fund
Community Preservation Act

Protection Resources

APR (Agricultural Preservation Restriction)
CR (Conservation Restriction)
TDR (Transfer of Development Rights)

Tax Resources

Chapter 61 – Forestry
Chapter 61A – Agriculture
Chapter 61B – Recreation
Conservation Tax Credit

Ms. Morrison felt that a good place to start is with working with the Chapter land owners. She cited some examples of properties that could be sold for residential development (George Hill Orchards, Poras, Kilbourn) unless something can be worked out with the owners.

She also pointed out that some larger properties just cannot be developed due to their wetland status. Examples include Bolton Flats/Mentor Flats Farm, Harper's Farm and the Quill property.

Janet also touched on use of the APR for farmland protection. It was noted that many of the farmers in Town are not in favor of this approach.

Lastly, she suggested that the Town consider implementing a Fiscal Impact Analysis or a Cost of Community Services Analysis whenever a farm property is being considered for residential development. This type of analysis can determine the cost to the Town for schooling, street maintenance, police, fire, etc. when turning one of these ag properties over for development.

The discussion was concluded with Noreen Piazza offering to draft a list of agricultural properties in Town, with the positives and negatives of each parcel for preservation.

Update – Parcel Protection

A tenth draft of the parcel protection list was circulated for review. There were no new updates since the 1/27 meeting.

Title work continues on Parcels 13-8, 14-15 and 19-11 by Kopelman & Paige. We are expecting to have this wrapped up very soon, at which time the settlement proposal will be finalized and sent to Attorney Tom Bovenzi for review.

Update – Land Acquisition

No new updates.

Noreen reported that the newly-formed Economic Development Team is reviewing all land acquisitions and parcel protections in order to make a determination on impact to the Town's tax assessments. They also would like to institute a Fiscal Impact Analysis of turning over land to Conservation or to the Land Trust. More will be discussed on this at the next ED Team and OSRC meetings.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the OSRC will be held on 5/25. An agenda is forthcoming.