

TOWN OF GORHAM
CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES
JANUARY 8, 2008

The Town of Gorham Conservation Board met on Tuesday, January 8, 2008, at 7:00 PM at the Gorham Town Hall. Present were, Chairman Steve Horrocks, Andrew Hoover, Fred Lightfoote, John Frank, Gene Hermet, Bill Johnson, Maria Rudzinski, Supervisor Dick Calabrese and Nancy Hollenbeck.

Supervisor Calabrese thanked Board members for their dedication. This is a new committee. He will be visiting all three boards this month. There are things going on in the next year or two that are different from the previous ten years. You are doing a good job. I think the frustration in getting started is only natural. It is a process that will take a while longer. I read your minutes and get insight to what's going on. I will start with what I think will happen and discuss anything you like.

The Town of Gorham received a \$15,000 grant from NYS AG & Mkts for the agricultural portion of the Comprehensive Plan that I was just going to talk about. Maria Rudzinski wrote the grant. Thank you. The Town has allotted \$50,000 towards hiring a consultant to help us through the next two years of updating the Comprehensive Plan. The Request for Proposal for the consultant will be reviewed by the Town Board later this month. Hopefully the RFP's will be sent out in the near future and we can get this project underway. Supervisor Calabrese asked the Conservation Board, and he will also be asking the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals, if they would be interested in participating in some of the committees that may be formed during the Comprehensive Plan update. He encouraged everyone to give feedback to Fred Lightfoote and we will incorporate this when the consultant comes on board. We want to keep this project moving. Having said that, we should put out a newsletter with a couple of subjects such as this Board's work, and explaining what we will be doing through the Comprehensive Plan. We will need input from the community. There will be a survey. The last time we did a survey we had about 33% feedback which is amazingly good. People are interested in what the community is doing as far as growth. I understand you are in the midst of identifying parcels as far as scenic vistas and farmland preservation. I would encourage you to keep that going.

Supervisor Calabrese suggested for example the Board take \$250,000, this can be parlayed into about \$1 million with a grant. If you come up with different parcels you could have the development rights. This is one thing to look at. The grant process, once you identify these parcels, talk to the owner, send them a letter, explain what could happen and see if they have any interest in preservation, purchase of development rights, whatever tools are available. It is up the land owner if he wants to consider such options. We need to provide as much information as possible.

Supervisor Calabrese talked about Purchase of Development Rights. For example, a 40 acre site overlooking the lake. If the appraisal comes in at \$6,000 per acre, the total value would be \$240,000; 75% of that which is \$180,000 you would apply for a grant. That leaves \$60,000 to come from the Town of Gorham. Sometimes you can bargain with landowners to get that \$60,000 reduced. Say they are willing to donate a portion. These are things that should be negotiated throughout the process.

Supervisor Calabrese thought that this Board could be on track to be applying for grant funds in the 2009 round for scenic vistas, or ag preservation grants. Talked briefly about the availability of grants and submission dates. Also talked about working on public relations work for this board. Need to generate some interest and feedback. Everyone needs to realize that this process takes sometimes two to three years.

Have to be careful, some may disagree with me, we have a couple of hamlets and a village and some people say you want to preserve all the farm land you can. We also want to encourage developments on the edges of the villages and hamlets I believe. We have to be careful, there is certain land where we want to encourage development.

From what I've heard and read, this Board is on the right track. Has what I've said been beneficial for you?

Mr. Hermet stated that this is what we have been looking for. We had thought we would come to the Town Board to present this, but you are ahead of us.

Ms. Rudzinski added that she has been in contact with the Finger Lakes Land Trust and the process, updating the maps, outreach, letters, etc. Come to find out, the FLLT is getting ready to kick off the Canandaigua Lake Initiative, to look at and find out what they should be doing for Canandaigua Lake which dovetails right into this effort and if the Town would be interested in exploring a partnership role, which is very common. A landowner would maybe get a letter from the Town Supervisor but some landowners don't want to talk to government officials, it's personal information. They are more apt to talk to a rep from the FLLT. The Land Trust can suggest some other alternatives that a local government could not. They can get involved with the person's financial situation, they have certain expertise.

Supervisor Calabrese thought that sounded very encouraging. He is more than willing to do whatever is asked from this Board and FLLT to come up with the Town's portion.

Mr. Hermet asked if a letter should be written to agricultural landowners.

Supervisor Calabrese stated his opinion that you need to pinpoint the parcels you are interested in first. If you send everyone a letter that we are looking at land and his land isn't going to qualify what do you think his opinion would be. Maybe a newsletter to everyone first with information about forms of land preservation. After that, see if there is any feedback, then choose specific sites and write letters. You probably need to target the landowners who are experiencing development pressure.

Ms. Rudzinski explained some of the details of requirements for different types of grants. The roads that are still pretty green, we may want to look at purchase of frontage lots. This is a fairly new concept. Once we finish the ag element we will receive more points on grant applications. As we keep working on the ag element if something pops up between now and September, you can act. The purchase of frontage lots was briefly discussed, this is fairly new, there is no specific program for it, but it could be packaged effectively under the PDR program for grant consideration and there seems to be support at State level for use of such tools. A lot of really good farmland can be protected with this method. The Town of Gorham would be in a good position to do this.

We are at a point now where the public relations part should be started. In April we will do a newsletter to all residents and encourage feedback and also encourage residents to contact us if they are interested in any type of land preservation, etc. If this Board wants to do a separate mailing, the Town Board would support that.

Supervisor Calabrese also stated that the Town Board is very supportive of training efforts for all staff and board members and encourages attendance at training/educational sessions. The Town will pay registration fees, etc. Also, if there are any other resources needed by this Board, let us know.

Ms. Rudzinski stated that she is optimistic that there could be a report by the end of February on the Conservation Board, in time for a newsletter describing what you have been doing and sort of rolling it out and of course, landowners if you are interested contact the Town or if you have worked out a relationship with the FLLT, they can be included as a contact. This would not be a personal invitation that we have identified your property, but rather indicating what may be available.

Ms. Rudzinski brought two maps with her and explained what has been done. Much of the information came from the Open Space Plan, from the rankings that had been done previously, and now it is mapped. One showed the land cover with a list of cover types that had been done by Dr. Gilman. What needs to be done next is to visit with John Foust and Dr. Gilman to be sure that this makes sense, to verify the rankings, etc. Ms. Rudzinski indicated that she could do this. When the scenic overlook information is completed, that can also be mapped. When all of the mapping is done, we will be able to look at the map and the important or priority areas will become visible. We will know who the land owners are as well.

Communication and outreach were discussed at length. Ways to get information to the residents were discussed including the website, newsletter, letters, the possibility of a link from the Ontario County website, etc.

Ms. Rudzinski stated that we need to keep the ball rolling with the ag element, maybe form an Ag Committee.

The next meeting will be February 5th at 7:00 PM. Election of Chairperson.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 PM by a motion by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Hermenet.

Nancy Hollenbeck
Secretary

Note: Mr. Hermenet asked if the April meeting could be held on the second Tuesday instead of the first. He would be able to attend if on the 8th of April.