

TOWN OF GORHAM
CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES
APRIL 8, 2008

The Town of Gorham Conservation Board met on Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at 7:00 PM at the Gorham Town Hall. Present were, Gene Hermenet, Steve Horrocks, Andrew Hoover, Bob Brancato, John Foust, Fred Lightfoote, Bill Johnson, Betsy Landre and Nancy Hollenbeck.

The first order of business was election of officers. Steve Horrocks nominated Gene Hermenet to the position of Chairperson. Motion was seconded by Bill Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

John Frank had volunteered to be Vice Chairman at a previous meeting. All agreed.

The minutes of the March 4, 2008 meeting were approved by a motion from Bill Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

The Gathercole property was briefly discussed.

Bob Brancato emailed the newsletter to everyone for their input. The document was reviewed and discussed. A couple of minor changes were made. Nancy will contact Sue Irvine who has done Town Newsletters in the past and we will proceed. A final draft will be approved before the newsletter is sent out. Chairman Hermenet thanked everyone for their efforts with regard to the newsletter.

Bob Brancato has worked on a document: Managing Landowner's Conservation Request, managing the call, etc. This is hoped to be a guideline for any board member to use if they receive a call regarding land conservation, etc. Boardmembers reviewed the information and offered some suggestions. Bill Johnson thought that it might be good to set this up as a manual with sections, such as scenic vistas, agricultural, natural resources, etc. In each section would be steps to take and information to relay to the interested resident. Definitions need to be included in this information. Also need to know of any potential benefits to a resident for opting for conservation techniques. Federal and state tax benefits, etc. It is anticipated that when a call comes from a resident, that initial contact would determine the amount of interest. A packet of information could be sent to the person describing whatever they are interested in or they may be referred to another agency. If appropriate, a meeting with two board members would be set and then possibly a meeting with the full board. Any requests that come in should be reviewed against the criteria as outlined in the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan.

The following are areas that need work and those who have volunteered to work on them: potential benefits – John Foust; definitions – Steve Horrocks; better descriptions – Bob Brancato; landowner form and packet of information – Gene Hermenet and Bill Johnson. Everyone should send their information to Bob Brancato as it is developed.

Betsy Landre stated that there are fact sheets on the FLLT website about the many tools, options available. Many farmers are interested in PDR, purchase of development rights because they are still able to continue farming on their land. The PDR would restrict building on the land, but not farming practices.

Briefly talked about record keeping regarding contacts and informing the rest of the Board when a contact has been made. A form should be developed to help gather appropriate information.

Betsy Landre from the Finger Lakes Land Trust joined the meeting. She stated that there is much information on line at the following websites. LTA.org (Land Trust Alliance); FLLT.org (Finger Lakes Land Trust). The websites have fact sheets about the many tools, and options available. The FLLT continues to grow in its work, it now has over 58 conservation easements, families who own land privately around the region, twelve counties. We have 26 nature preserves which is land that the FLLT owns and for the most part these properties are open to the public. There is one area where there are sensitive plants, that area is closed to the public. Biomedical research is also done there. Basically the properties are for public enjoyment. They also have about the same number (26) cooperative projects with municipalities. Where we might buy the property and then resell it to the State or to the County, or sometimes it is donated. We try to work with municipalities, in your case, you have a plan, you are focused, we would be thrilled to work with the Town of Gorham, and already have with the Gathercole property. There is a little bit of selling to these ideas, the first step is to inform the public which is happening with the newsletter. There are some great tax benefits both federal and state for certain situations, such as Conservation Easements.

Ms.Landre mentioned two projects that are on going in the Town of Gorham right now. She could not identify them at this time because they are in negotiations, but there is some interest out there to conserve, preserve, etc.

When talking to residents who are interested, a map of the land should be obtained and compared to the criteria in the Open Space document. Any notable features should be noted such as streams, views, mature trees, proximity to other preserved lands, etc.

Chairman Hermenet thanked Ms. Landre for attending and sharing her wealth of knowledge. We look forward to working with her in the future.

Mr. Lightfoote stated that Maria Rudzinski would like to come back to wrap up some of the items she has been working on with this board.

The next meeting will be May 6, 2008 at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Hermenet expressed his extreme appreciation to Mr. Horrocks for his efforts as Chairman to date.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM by a motion by Mr. Horrocks, seconded by Mr. Foust.

Nancy Hollenbeck
Secretary