

# **Town of Saugerties**

## **Conservation Advisory Commission**

Meeting minutes for May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Present: B. Sawchuk; J. Randall; M. Wrolsen; E. Shafer; L. Thornton; J. Barbour, G. Marzec and S. Thorpe

Absent: None

Convened: 7:00 pm, Saugerties Town Hall.

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This meeting consisted of a presentation by John Winter of the Woodstock Land Conservancy (WLC), followed by other business of the CAC.

Mr. Winter gave an excellent presentation about the organization and how it goes about protecting open space.

- The WLC is a non-profit organization that started in 1988.
- They manage 20 properties – 10 are easement based and 10 are fee-owned parcels (they own it).
- The property sale is either market value or a “bargain sale”, for which the seller can take a tax deduction. This benefit can last 15 years since the deduction amount can be rolled over from year to year.
- A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement:
  - o The intention is to limit future development.
  - o The more restrictions included in the easement, the more the owner gives up and the higher their deductions.
- There are no tax deductions for terminal easements (i.e. those that have a term limit).
- On the State tax return, there are credits for the grantor of the easement of up to 25% of their local tax burden, up to \$5000/year.
- The value of the easement is determined by a third party to maintain neutrality.
- The WSL enforces the easement. Monitoring is usually done once per year, but can occur more often if necessary. This typically entails looking for something on the property that is not allowed in the easement.
- The property has to have open space, habitat, agricultural or cultural value to be considered.
- The general obligation law protects land conservancies in NY State.
- The WLC does help draft the easement document, but does not provide financial or legal assistance.
- There are several expenses that the WLC encounters:
  - o Creation of documents and Phase 1 EIS studies.
  - o Some land owners ask the land trust to create an endowment for long-term care.
  - o Monitoring and enforcement.
  - o Costs are offset with funding from donors, grants, etc.
- WLC works with the land owner to see who an appropriate holder might be (depending on the owner’s situation).

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- Conservation easements are considered private unless the owner wants to publicize their contribution.
- The WLC would be willing to work with Saugerties on easements, but they would have to have a formal invite to do so.

Other Business:

- J. Randall made a motion to approve the April 2011 minutes. Seconded and approved by all.
- Josh also provided a draft brochure of the Open Space, Goals & Strategies. He asked that we review it and send comments to him.
- Josh looked into a folding machine for the brochures, but it turned out to be less expensive to have them folded by an office supply store.
- Mike Campbell is taking over the position of Saugerties web master.
- S. Thorpe and M. Wrolsen asked G. Marzec to send a recent e-mail on Opus 40 to them.
- E. Shafer will draft a proposition to ban hydrofracking in the town. She will pass this on to the CAC members for review.

As there were no further topics for discussion, our meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.