

Town of Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

Meeting minutes for December 18th, 2008

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

Also present for this focus group: B. Benepe, T. Baldwin

Absent: A. Weeks, Melissa Barry (Behan Associates)

Convened: 7:00 pm, Saugerties Town Hall.

- This meeting served as the focus group for the Natural Resources options for the Open Space Plan.
- M. Barry was unable to attend the meeting due to personal circumstances.
- Todd Baldwin is a professional forester and was asked to attend this meeting by G. Marzec.
- L. Thornton provided handouts of the CPC minutes from a meeting held about mining, and an article on land preservation in the Pine Barrens.
- B. Sawchuk led the discussion of agenda topics that were provided by Melissa.
 - Leanne stated that the largest parcel in the Town is the Winston Farm and that a consortium is looking into development and open space potential of the property.
 - There was some discussion on the characteristics of natural areas. J. Barbour stated that the term “natural areas” can be ambiguous since habitats occur across a variety of systems and areas.
 - T. Baldwin stated that the areas of interest (or protection) need to be prioritized because each area (e.g. aquifer protection, habitat protection, aesthetics) requires a different management perspective.
 - Todd also mentioned that sustainable forestry will keep open space in the Town. There is a provision in the NYS law (480) that pertains to forestry.
 - The town’s comprehensive plan should promote sustainable forestry. Todd offered a note of caution here – “selective harvesting” is not a true forestry practice.
 - NYS has a “right-to forest” guidebook and Todd will provide a copy to the CAC.
 - The group felt it would be a good idea to get the parcels that are designated as tree farms on the map (which one?). i.e. what parcels fall under the 480 and 480A tax code designations. Todd stated that these designated parcels have to be > 50 acres.
 - Todd mentioned that there is a loophole in property assessments that is being used by some municipalities. The value of standing timber is being taxed. This could potentially be a disincentive to open space.
 - The CAC members generally agreed that we should consider parcels >10 acres in the Open Space Plan.
 - The next meeting is on January 15th, 2009 at 7:00 pm. G. Marzec will send these minutes to M. Barry to see if we need to reschedule the natural resources focus group to discuss additional topics.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at ca. 9 pm.