

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission of the Town of Saugerties was held September 26, 2005.

Present: Barry Benepe, Josh Randall, Michael Sullivan Smith, William H. Trumbour, Susan Walker, Leeanne Thornton, Karlyn Elia

Additional Attendees: Eliner Trumbour, Ken Snyder, Paul Comeau, Carolyn Specht, Letitia Smith, Eila Kokkinen, Gerard Lavallo, Gary Bischoff, Lanny Walter, Marti Randall, Jin Doerr, Doug Engel, Finley Schaef, Penelope Milford, Andrea Cunliffe, Susan Weeks

Barry opened the meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting of August 22, 2005, were read and approved.

2006 Budget

Barry presented the 2006 budget and passed out copies to the commission members. Josh said he didn't see any provision for lawyer's fees. Leeanne explained that any such fees would be contracted with the town attorney. As for funds for posting legal notices, etc., she offered to find out what fees would be appropriate to put in as a line item. Bill suggested that we let Leeanne follow through on this.

Access to Winston Farm

Leeanne said that George Redder had the letter ready and had presented it to the Town Board but that two commission members present asked that it be tabled until all commission members had seen it. Josh said he had been one of the two and had asked that the letter be tabled because he thought we shouldn't be wasting the town's money on having the town attorney pursue the matter, in light of Mr. Comeau's statement at the previous meeting that they would not allow us access to the property.

Public Hearing on Consideration of Designation of Winston and Snyder Farms

Michael gave a presentation, using maps, photographs, and other visuals, on the history of Winston Farm and its significance to the history of Saugerties. Included were a map showing the position of the aquifer under the property, the proposed casino plans overlaid on a map of the property, and photographs of Winston's bluestone mansion in its prime and in its current dilapidated condition.

Members of the public attending the hearing were invited to speak. Letitia Smith said she was horrified that something could happen [such as the proposed development] to the Saugerties landscape. Eila Kokkinen referred to the beautiful fields, and Gerard Lavallo said he had bought property adjacent to Winston Farm because of its beauty; to develop it as proposed would destroy the area. Gary Bischoff said he had been on the farm back when it was being considered as a possible dump site and again in connection with Woodstock '94. He referred to Bill Reinhardt's archeology study, which had identified

sites on the property of archeological significance. Lanny Walter said his family has been here since 1963; they used to own Solway House, which backs up to Winston Farm. He spoke about the importance of the site to his family and the anti-dump fight and all the businesses and organizations that worked together and joined the Winston Farm Alliance. Marti Randall noted that the farm sits over a huge aquifer that supplies the town; if the property were to become an Indian Sovereign Nation, the town would lose control of the aquifer.

Karlyn (also Town and County Historian) said she had spoken the previous week with Doug Mackie (the Historic Preservation Program Analyst in Archeology with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). He said that Winston Farm was eligible for the National Register of Historic Sites; 22 archeological sites were identified on both farms [Winston and Snyder] back when Woodstock '94 was being held. The archeological report wasn't written up because Michael Laing wasn't paid. Karlyn pointed out that the Winston Farm property lies at the corner of the old turnpike (now 212) and King's Highway; the earliest deeded tract of land in Saugerties was a portion of the current W. Farm along King's Highway. She also spoke about the historical significance of the W. Farm being the site of Woodstock '94 and the estate of J.O. Wilson, architect of the Ashokan Reservoir. ← 2

Barry said he had heard W. Farm referred to as a "model farm." He pointed out that Winston had built an extremely large house—why would he have done this?

Jin Doerr said that protecting the aquifer will be very important. Doug Engel said that the natural landscape is an incredibly important part of our heritage. Finley Schaefer said that he would like to see a study of the flora and fauna there done. Andrea Cunliffe spoke about the Paint Out that took place on the W. Farm (part of the fight against the dump); 118 artists participated, and 138 paintings were produced. She showed the painting that her brother Ron Narr (now deceased) had done that day. She is chair of the Winston Farm Alternatives Committee, which is looking for alternatives for use of the site. Susan Weeks said that the restoration of the Saugerties Lighthouse had awakened her interest in the history of Saugerties; she wondered if there might be a possibility of getting a grant to restore the bluestone mansion.

Michael said that a house constructed totally of bluestone was very unusual.

Someone suggested that the NYC water authority might be interested in the house because of its connection with the reservoir.

Ken Snyder pointed out that landowners have expenses in keeping their land. He said seven generations of his family had lived and worked on his farm; he would love to receive designation if it would benefit him (he has been told that his chickens can't run free because a neighbor complained).

Barry talked about Ken's arrowhead collection and read selections from Bill Reinhardt's archeological study of W. Farm and read descriptions of points found at one of the sites.

He spoke about the Wynkoop cemetery that is on the W. Farm, referring to the 1985 study (by Michael Sullivan Smith, then Town of Saugerties Historian) documenting the cemeteries there. Barry also said that he would like to keep the record open for one more month, to continue receiving documentation relating to the historical significance of the two farms.

Paul Comeau, one of the attorneys representing the owners of the W. Farm, then spoke. He reminded everyone that the hearing was not about a casino or other development but whether the properties should be designated as historic. The property is very large (850 acres), but the building is on a very small part of it. Mr. Schaller has been acquiring parcels during his ownership; why should these be considered historic? The aquifer runs through the site from the north and continues south of the site; are all the properties overlying it being designated? The property has been singled out because of community fear of a casino. The property has been owned for more than 40 years by the Schallers—longer than Winston. He asserted that the house was dilapidated when the Schallers acquired the property—it would cost millions to restore. He said that HPC designation would be a reversal of Eminent Domain. History is a process, from Native Americans to the present. He said that he hadn't seen some of the material that the commission has with respect to the casino. The property is already subject to adequate government protection—it doesn't need any more. Designation is inappropriate. Carolyn Specht said that she would send something in writing to the commission.

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Barry spoke about the roads and trails on the W. Farm property. Nigger/Savage/Buffalo Road was owned by the Town up to the 1920s. He said that if the property ends up being designated, the next step would be to develop Historic Property Guidelines. The Planning Board has no experience regarding landscape issues.

Bill said that being a farmer, his take is a little different. He said that W. Farm is historic; it is related to the early settlement of the town, the reservoir, and Woodstock '94. In addition, the preservation of open space is important.

Paul Comeau asked whether the commission was going to designate all the farms in Saugerties.

It was determined that the Hearing record would be kept open.

The next Commission meeting will be October 24, 2005.

The meeting was adjourned.

Susan B. Walker