

West Pikeland Land Trust

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MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 28, 2008

Attendance: Jim Rowan Mike Groman Sean O'Neill
 Suzanne Kaplan Tom Williams Curt Grogan
 Melinda Mercurio Teresa Wood

Lisa Lacroix, Darin Groff (visitors)

1. Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of previous Board of Directors Meeting March 24, 2008 were reviewed and unanimously approved.

2. Financial Report/ Membership Drive

Theresa Wood reviewed the quarterly financial report and balance sheet for the quarter ending 3/31/08. A copy of the approved Budget was included and it was noted that for financial statement purposes, income and expense had been allocated on a straight line basis over a 12 month period. The remaining balance in the NLT account was approximately \$36,000., which was anticipated to be spent in this fiscal year.

3. Committee Reports

Open Space: Curt advised that he was in the process of finalizing additional at-large appointees for the Open Space advisory Committee. WPLT members of that committee included Jim, Curt, Ann and Teresa. Sean O'Neill agreed to represent the Planning Commission. Darin Groff, from Parks & Rec. Roberta Rometch from the Historic Commission and Bob Haskell from Lower Pine Creek had also agreed to serve. One more at large member was needed to complete the Committee. Curt advised that he had 12 prospective projects and wanted to submit this Committee to the BOS for approval at the May 5 meeting as he was anxious to pursue these opportunities.

Trails: Lisa Lacroix reviewed a Trail Subcommittee Report, including Mission Statement, committee members and 2008 and Long Term Goals. She was interested in adding more potential volunteers. Jim Rowan suggested that Lisa try to attend the Planning Commission meeting to review opportunities (e.g. Anselma Crossing) for connectivity of potential trails. Lisa was to contact Jeri to arrange for Ed Theracauf of Tom Comitta Associates to provide a current copy of Trail map.

Communication: Melinda indicated that her next priority was going to be reconstructing the WPLT website which she hoped to start right away using the BNet platform. She would be looking to build up her committee and assign content responsibility to various Board members. Melinda also updated the board on the status of the Contact Data base. Although this is a work in progress, she currently has about 100 entries in the data base which will be expanded to include donation history, contact and property info. Some protocol needs to be developed around Board access and training as well as protection and security for use of this data by other committees, but this should be a very useful tool for recording the communications between landowners, members, committees and the Board.

Monitoring and Stewardship: Tom Williams reported the sale of the Brenner property had apparently fallen through and he will schedule the monitoring of this property with the Brenners. He indicated that he had a tentative date of May 17 to monitor the Adams' property and would confirm with Teresa and Mike Groman who indicated they would like to participate, if available. Tom contacted Jeri to get a complete inventory of township owned property and copies of any conservation easements on Township owned property, but information received from the township was incomplete. Bill Cracas suggested that it would be appropriate for WPLT to monitor these properties as well.

Finance, Development & Grants: No Report

Education: Mike Groman advised that he would begin contacting resources for a potential future event this fall. Teresa reviewed plans for the upcoming a plant sale May 10, in cooperation with the NLT event at Binky Lee. This would be a small scale event for the initial effort. Pickering Feed would provide plants at cost and WPLT would donate proceeds to Binky Lee. Teresa requested WPLT volunteer help to staff the plant sale and promote the Land Trust.

Strategic Planning: Suzanne submitted the committee chairs' quarterly reports to the supervisors for review at the April BOS meeting. The activities of WPLT were received positively by the public and BOS. Suzanne indicated the highest priority this year was the recruitment of additional Board and committee members as the terms of three Board members were scheduled to expire at the end of this year.

Governance and Compliance: Sean reviewed the draft of the current Operating Agreement between WPT and WPLT. He indicated that this agreement substantially overlaps the role of WPLT under the new ordinance, except that the funding mechanism under the old ordinance would be effectively replaced by the Open Space funding. Suzanne suggested she objected to the BOS appointment of WPLT Board and felt WPLT should be a more independent organization. Sean indicated that the WPLT role as advisor proposed and approved by the BOS makes WPLT more of a public entity and BOS appointments were required. The consensus was that the existing agreement should be discontinued in favor of the new provisions of the ordinance, if a viable funding mechanism could be replaced and it could be confirmed that WPLT retains its legal standing for indemnification and enforcement issues. Jim and Teresa agreed to evaluate the operational overhead that would be required to conduct the business of WPLT ahead of next year's TWP budget process. Sean agreed to review the Ordinance for any gaps in indemnification language that should be tightened up with the new WPLT role.

General & Administrative: Jim Rowan advised that he was expecting to receive a proposal from NALTA to assist WPLT with potential easement opportunities on the contiguous properties to the Bryn Coed farm. Andy Johnson of NALT was scheduled to attend tonight's WPLT meeting, but had to be rescheduled due to a conflict.

5. WPLT - Open Space Bond Ordinance approved by WPT

Jim Rowan advised that the Open Space Bond Ordinance was approved at the April 7 BOS meeting and the Ordinance was now effective. It was important to complete the appointments for the Open Space Advisory Committee for approval by the BOS next month and to schedule a meeting with the Open Space Advisory Committee and the BOS to begin reviewing conservation opportunities.

6. WPLT Board Member Guiding Principles

Suzanne Kaplan presented a revised draft document of WPLT Guiding Principles for Board members incorporating the feedback from the Board and including best practices from LTA's Standards and Practices. After review of this document, it was agreed to delete the word actively from item 5 and omit the section on the appeals process. It was felt that memorializing a dissenting vote in the minutes, which were a public record should be adequate to record a Board member's disagreement with a Board decision. Jim Rowan motioned to approve this document subject to edits Suzanne was directed to make. All voted in favor except Sean O'Neill who abstained.

7. Observations from PALTA Land Conservation Conference

Curt Grogan briefed the group on a recent conference that he attended titled "Determining Stewardship Costs and Raising and Managing Dedicated Funds". Ann Orth attended the workshop on "Whole Measures". Curt's observation was that WPLT presently does not have the resources to enforce conservation easements on a large scale contemplated by the Open Space funding. The conference suggested that volunteer monitoring does not work and that WPLT had neither the financial or volunteer resources necessary to monitor easements on a greater scale. Curt's recommendation was that WPLT should not hold easements as WPLT is not currently structured for this liability. He also recommended that WPLT seek appropriate partnering efforts with other groups which were better suited to handle this responsibility. This topic deserves further discussion as this strategy conflicts somewhat with WPLT's proposed role that was approved by the Township, but must be considered very carefully before approaching landowners and preparing easements in the future.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 7:00 pm at the Township Building. (Monday is Memorial Day)

Respectfully Submitted,
Thomas L. Williams
May 8, 2008

