

West Pikeland Land Trust

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MEETING MINUTES
MAY 27, 2008

Attendance: Jim Rowan Ann Orth Sean O'Neill
 Suzanne Kaplan Tom Williams Curt Grogan
 Melinda Mercurio Bill Cracas

Lisa Lacroix (visitor)

1. Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of previous Board of Directors Meeting April 28, 2008 were reviewed and unanimously approved, as amended.

2. Financial Report/ Membership Drive

No Report.

3. Committee Reports

Open Space: Curt advised that the OS Committee had their first meeting last week and he was in the process of appointing a Vice Chairman and Secretary. This committee will meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month. During the initial meeting the committee reviewed the founding ordinance, criteria and guiding principles. A copy of the revised criteria and evaluation form was distributed for review by the Board. Bill Cracas commented that some of the criteria were too broad and could possibly receive both a yes and no response. He wanted to ensure that there was some place on the form to explain both responses to better inform the BOS of divergent compliance objectives. Curt reviewed a draft of the Conservation Priority Mapping, prepared March 25, 2008, by Natural Lands Trust. Curt indicated that this was prepared using SmartConservation software process. Sean O'Neill questioned some of the methodology employed, which seemed to overlook some conservation resources (e.g. Agriculture) in favor of others and had some questions about the validity of this tool. Curt was unable to explain the technical questions raised, but volunteered to try and get the experts to attend the next OS Committee meeting on May 29 to better explain the process. All WPLT Board members were encouraged to attend. Curt advised that he now had 14 prospective projects and wanted to submit this Committee to the BOS for approval and he was frustrated with the bureaucratic process required to adopt the plan. Bill Cracas and Sean O'Neill indicated that this was standard municipal policy and with summer coming, this may take another 90 days to complete.

Trails: Lisa Lacroix reviewed the Trail Subcommittee Report, including Overview and Recommendation and Implementation Strategies. Bill Cracas emphasized that there was no “official” township Trail Map and Lisa indicated that a critical charge of her committee was to develop one from the various resources available, which was a slow process. Sean indicated that there was no new Trail protection Ordinance and developing one would be helpful for the Planning Commission in reviewing new applications. Ann Orth also recommended the County Trails program. Linking with regional trail networks would improve access to grant money. Lisa indicated that she would be meeting with the Horseshoe Trail Association to determine what information they had on existing trails in the township.

Communication: Melinda indicated the transfer of the WPLT domain name to the new server website had not gone smoothly and the WPLT website was temporarily under construction. Melinda reviewed the 2nd draft of the entire website design, site plan, outline and development plan, dated May 27, 2008. She will continue to build up her committee and assign content responsibility to various Board members. Melinda requested Tom Williams to forward any electronic minutes from 2007 and encouraged everyone to forward any photographs that they had. Bill Cracas volunteered to draft a description of the historical land uses in West Pikeland Township to be included on the website in the future.

Monitoring and Stewardship: Tom Williams reported that he Mike Groman and Teresa had completed the monitoring of the Adams’ property and Brenners’ property on May 17. A copy of Monitoring and Inspection Reports were circulated for review. Melinda requested copies of all reports for inclusion on the website. Tom had not followed up again with Jeri to get a complete inventory of township owned property and copies of any conservation easements on Township owned property. He was unsure if the newly formed EAC or WPLT should monitor these properties.

Finance, Development & Grants: Ann Orth again requested support for the LTA grant to complete the compliance audit for accreditation. She felt this should be a priority with all of the projects in the pipeline and the additional scrutiny associated with WPLT’s new advisory role. It was agreed that this was not an immediate priority and should be reviewed again in the September grant cycle as a 2009 project.

Education: Jim Rowan reported for Mike Groman and Teresa that the plant sale on May 10, in cooperation with the NLT event at Binky Lee had yielded \$250 net proceeds to WPLT. This was a small scale event for the initial effort but all felt that with a little more preparation and advertisement next year this could be a more significant fundraiser to promote the Land Trust.

Strategic Planning: 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. She requested that any nominations for Board memberships be forwarded to her. Jim Rowan suggested that next month’s meeting agenda should include a discussion on the existing Board member’s intentions on future service.

Governance and Compliance: Sean indicated that his committee has had a conference call regarding the proposed revisions to the existing Operating agreement between WPLT and the Township. Fundamental to this discussion would be the role of WPLT under the new ordinance and whether or not they would hold easements. Since there was an Operating Agreement in effect and a funding mechanism through the WPLT/NLT agreement that was projected to last through the year, it was agreed to request another 90 day extension from the BOS. This extension should allow the WPLT Board to clarify its' role as advisor and better understand it's legal standing for indemnification, enforcement issues and funding requirements to support 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 had included a discussion on the role of WPLT holding easements on the agenda but the meeting went overtime and this was a very important topic that deserved a more thorough discussion. WPLT's role in holding easements impacts the Operating agreement with the Township as well as the direction of the OS Committee and should be clarified soon. It was agreed to table this discussion until next meeting.

4. WPLT Board Member Guiding Principles

Suzanne Kaplan presented a second revised draft document of WPLT Guiding Principles for Board members dated May 13, 2008, incorporating the feedback from the Board and including best practices from LTA's Standards and Practices. After review of this document, Melinda motioned to approve this document. The motion was seconded by Tom and all Directors present voted in favor.

5. West Pikeland Township - Environmental Advisory Council

Jim Rowan distributed a copy of the proposed ordinance creating an Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) within the Township. Many of the proposed duties of this group seemed to overlap with the responsibilities of WPLT. It was the consensus of the Board that the EAC's responsibilities should be limited to environmental impact and not recommending uses. Sean agreed to submit a letter to the BOS suggesting the powers of the EAC be limited to environmental issues and delete those which overlap WPLT responsibilities. Tom Williams expressed concern about the available volunteer base to staff yet another Township Committee. Bill Cracas suggested that it would be desirable to have an EAC member on the WPLT Board and visa versa. Sean suggested that it would be valuable to contact other Townships which have an EAC and Land Trust (W. Vincent) to see how they interact.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Monday, June 23, 2008 at 7:00 pm at the Township Building.

Respectfully Submitted,
Thomas L. Williams
June 4, 2008

EXECUTIVE SESSION

An executive session was held to review two projects that the OS had surfaced as potential conservation easement opportunities.

Heilman Property

Curt presented a draft conservation plan of the Heilman Property, a 10.3 acre parcel surrounded by park land off Yellow Springs Road, including the draft document prepared by NLT May 22, 2008. This project was recommended by the OS committee and scored highly on the criteria evaluation, which was also reviewed. Sandy Heilman had approached NLT 30 years ago about a possible easement and her preference was that NLT would hold this easement.

Although the mechanism was not completed to recommend or finance this project from the Open space Funding, it was agreed this was a valuable property and worthy of continued effort to keep this project moving forward. There was some difference of opinion on the summary of Easement costs prepared by NLT and who should fund the endowment, it was agreed to proceed with obtaining an appraisal from the remaining NLT funds so a value could be established for further consideration.

White Property