



## SARATOGA SPRINGS OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

### MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 23, 2019

5:00 P.M.

### SARATOGA SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

#### **PRESENT:**

Tom Denny (Chair), Tim Holmes, Steve Samuell, John M. McMahon, and Maureen Roberts

#### **ABSENT:**

Dave Miller and Zuzia Kwasniewski.

#### **CITY STAFF:**

Tina Carton – Admin of Parks, Open Lands, Historic Preservation/Sustainability

#### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Amy Durland

#### **RECORDING OF PROCEEDING:**

The minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings.

#### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Tom Denny called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT-15 MINUTES**

No Public Comment

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Tom Denny asked that the minutes from the 9/25/19 meeting be revised to reflect that the OSAC had gone into executive session. There being no other revisions or changes proposed, the minutes were accepted as revised.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY (NRI) UPDATE AND DISCUSSION**

The committee first discussed a new map, #4C, the Mean Tree Cover by Census Block Group, which was received this week. The version the committee had previously seen had been based on six census tracts, but this new version breaks the data down for each Census Block Group, which



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is more refined and useful than a previous tree canopy map we looked at. A future addition will be the labelling of major streets.

The committee discussed a new map submitted by LaBella entitled the Public and Community Service Parcels map. Most committee members felt it was useful, although the question was raised that we need to decide what this map is supposed to communicate. Should the utilities be eliminated from the map? Should the coloration of the parcels be changed? Should the railroad north of Greenfield be added and highlighted, since it is owned by a public entity, namely the Town of Corinth.

There will be a map of the Saratoga Springs Lands Preserved from the 2002 Bond Act to the present, showing preserved lands and city acquisitions. Conservation easements will not be on it. The online map will have labels added that can be turned on and off.

A detailed Climate Change narrative that LaBella sent was discussed. It included climate change in New York State, as well as observed changes in Saratoga Springs. It drew heavily from the NYSERDA Climaid reports of 2011 and 2014. The narrative had a revealing section on climate change and its impacts on water resources. OSAC member should send any comments to Tina Carton.

The next discussion was on Section 9B, Dark Skies. Mr. John McMahon has put together a 19-page document summarizing dark skies. We discussed the averted vision observatory light pollution map. A map or two will be included in the NRI, showing categories of urban dark sky zones.

#### ACQUISITION CRITERIA

The committee continued discussing broad criteria for future land acquisitions by the city, reviewing several existing documents that offered different frameworks to help in this process. Criteria were as follows:

1. OSAC made a table from two years ago, with input from all committee members,
2. document from the city of New Paltz shows four different perspectives on how to prioritize lands,



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3. Rick Barnes document from the OSAC in 2008, or
4. Using the 2002 Open Space Plan map criteria.

This exercise has a larger purpose, to begin consideration of the framework and priorities that will emerge as the OSAC works on the revision to the Open Space Plan.

As the New Paltz system has different evaluation categories and points given to come up with a final score, the committee discussed the difficulty of deciding how to assign points to different types of lands.

The group discussed taking the categories listed in the Open Space Plan from 2002, “fleshing them out”, and then combining this information with the current Comprehensive Plan to come up with acquisition criteria that best suits Saratoga Springs in 2019.

Tina Carton gave an update on Pitney Farm, and a meeting with the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA). She discussed the recreational trails around the farm. This perimeter trail will be eight feet in width and have a stone dust surface. The trail will be ADA compliant and will be useful for walking, running, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. There will also be fishing areas at the farm for the public to enjoy. Pitney Farm is trying to acquire a parcel near the tracks that is currently owned by the railroad. This would eventually be a part of the Greenbelt Trail.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Amy Durland encouraged all the members to read the new Recreation Master Plan. Although there is some overlap between Rec and Open Space, she stated our focus should be different from strictly recreational interests.

She discussed the recent UN report on climate change, and even more importantly, biodiversity loss. This loss is just as crucial as climate change and has huge potential effects on humanity. Should we put water resources and biodiversity together in one category? Currently, wetlands need federal or state designation to be protected. She noted that exemptions for developers, etc. are very easy to come by. The importance of these wetlands was highlighted by Ms. Durland.

#### **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Tom Denny adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Tom Denny seconded.



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#### **NEXT MEETING:**

Because of Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, the next two meetings will be on November 20, 2019 and December 18, 2019. Both will be at 5 pm at Vanderbilt Recreation Center/City Council Chambers.