

DRAFT

Town of Red Hook

Agriculture and Open Space Committee

Minutes of August 27, 2013

Attendance: Co-chairperson Pete Hubbell, Co-chairperson Norman Greig, Richard Biezynski, Ken Migliorelli, Michael Robertson, Marina Michahelles, Town Board Councilman William O’Neill (liaison) and Secretary Linda Keeling

Absent: John Hardeman and Mary Ann Johnson

Guests: Chris Klose, EDC rep.

Location: Red Hook Town Hall, meeting room.

Meeting Opened: Co-chairman Pete Hubbell opened the meeting at 7:07 pm.

Minutes: There was a quorum. Note: The July 23rd meeting was canceled.

Linda Keeling noted a correction on page 2: “Applications” should be “applicant proposals”.

MOTION: *Richard Biezynski* motioned to accept the minutes of June 25, 2013 as corrected, *Norman Greig* seconded and all agreed.

OLDBUSINESS:

1. Five Year Services Expenses: *Bill O’Neill* presented several copies of the expenses for the Planning Board, Attorney to the Town and Planner including a 30 page document. Various items were explained and discussed in detail. The Community Preservation Fund (CPF) has \$300,000 in its account now but has spent a lot. The sewer issue cost \$6,385. The Centers and Greenspace zoning changes cost \$16,248 with the Planner costing \$49,679. The related attorney fees were paid out of a \$50,000 grant and another one for \$15,000. The Intermunicipal Task Force (ITF) spent its most during 2008 and 2009 of just over \$38,000 and \$29,000, respectively. *Bill O’Neill* explained that the attorney consultation and engineering fees come from the applicant’s escrow account. The ITF has a 2012 grant for \$7,500.

Mike Robinson wanted to know about the attorney fee change from \$43,000 in 2011 to \$5,000 in 2012.

Bill O’Neill explained that the attorney fees can vary as the need arises to defend the town from lawsuits. The agreed retainer amount is \$4,900 per month. The Supervisor likes to have the advisement during town board meetings to get opinions to avoid legal conflicts. He further explained that a new demolition of historic properties section will require a zoning change so that is a separate charge. Business Manager, *Debbie Coons*, told him our town does not spend as much as other towns. Everything GreenPlan does needs to be justified in writing. *Richard Hanson* filed a lawsuit regarding the conservation easement benefit on his assessment. The Assessor works independently and increased his

assessment. The town prevailed. Common Fire recently filed an Article 78 related to school taxes as they did not receive an exemption so that litigation will have to be defended. Overall there was less billable work in 2012. The town considered petitioning Albany under “home rule” on the conservation easements but it would have been too expensive.

Norman Greig questioned the planning fees escrow increase from \$45,000 to \$107,000 per year. He would like to know how many applicants there are and what the average fee is.

Bill O’Neill explained that information should be available in Chris Kane’s annual Planning Board report.

Norman Greig expressed his concerns for farmers who compete both nationally and regionally. The playing field should be leveled.

Pete Hubbell stated a 12 lot subdivision is a whole lot different than a farmer building a barn.

Bill O’Neill explained that the Centers and Greenspace zoning needs some adjustments as the width of streets, curbing, etc. is not stated. Establishing a farmer’s market was addressed recently. Kirchhoff’s 90 units are within the Traditional Neighborhood District; he is asking for an incentivized higher density.

Some members felt a commercial subdivision whereby the developer makes a quick profit is not the same as a farmer working within the Agricultural Business District commercial operation. They felt, for example, a pole barn should not require an architect to sign off on which is prohibitively expensive.

Richard Biezynski stated Ag business properties shouldn’t have to put in curbs and asphalt for their farm operation as it is not equated to a commercial developer who is making big money quickly.

2. **Fencing Issue Update:** *Co-chairman Pete Hubbell* asked about the status of the fencing issue.

Bill O’Neill explained it is on Chairman Susan Simon’s Zoning Review Committee’s agenda when they meet. Steve Cole has made his opinion known.

Norman Greig questioned the ZRC & ZEO’s authority as he thought the Town Board had that sole responsibility. He suggested that if the ZRC can’t meet then perhaps there’s no need for the ZRC.

The Ag Committee is concerned about the length of time this issue is taking and would like it resolved more expeditiously.

3. **New Member Needed:** There was no new name put forward.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **AOSC 2014 Budget Request:** *Co-chairman Pete Hubbell* explained the need to get a budget request in to Rose Rider as soon as possible. He explained that last year’s budgeted amount was \$1098 and we only used \$428. It can be used for conferences and other related expenses. There was concern there be enough to pay the secretary. *Linda Keeling* explained that she thought there was a separate line item for

secretaries. The group decided to reduce the amount somewhat to \$1000 rather than the potential for \$1116.

Motion: *Ken Migliorelli motioned to budget for \$1,000; Marina Michahelles seconded and all agreed.*

Pete Hubbell will contact Rose Rider to let her know of the group's budget request.

2. **Speakers Next Month:**

A. *Co-chairman Pete Hubbell* will contact and invite Robert McKeon to speak about the real estate farm tax issue and the related activities in Albany.

B. *Co-chairman Norman Greig* will contact and invite Paul Fredricks to speak about the Feller farm property issue.

Bill O'Neill felt the Feller property was resolved with Scenic Hudson.

Pete Hubbell inquired if a letter was needed to be sent to the Planning Board. It was felt it was not necessary as a copy of our motion from the June meeting was sent to Paul Fredricks.

3. **Bonding Extension:** The CPF Committee will be making a decision on two properties: Kesicke and Klose.

Ken Migliorelli noted how important it is to protect the farmland through this funding means.

Bill O'Neill noted that the \$900,000 left over from the \$3.5 million bond can be extended for 6 months or more. The Supervisor would not like this bonding in the 2014 budget as other bonding (PDR and garage) is coming up and it will be a tight budget.

Ken Migliorelli noted that the CPF grows at about \$250,000 per year. It has proven to be a very worthwhile program. The bonding option should remain open as there are a few other farmers that want to participate in protecting their land.

Co-chairman Pete Hubbell suggested we make a motion.

MOTION: *Norman Greig made a motion that the Town Board extend the time on the \$900,000 bond remaining, Ken Migliorelli seconded, all agreed.*

Motion: *Michael Robinson* motioned to adjourn the meeting and *Rich Biezynski* seconded. All agreed.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Next meeting: The next regular meeting will be the **4th Tuesday, September 24, 2013 at 7:00 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling, Secretary