
FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE

April, 2001

Town Sets up Open Space Committee

FCPOS Members Invited to Participate

The Town of Clifton Park has established a new committee to outline an Open Space Planning Process for the town. Three members of Friends of Open Space have been invited to join the group. Other participants on the committee include Co-Chairs David Miller of National Audubon and Jim Romano of the Planning Board along with Kevin O'Brien, William Mackesey of the Trails Committee, Ray Seymour of the Saratoga Land Trust, Kevin Bowman and Isabel Prescott representing area farmers, Frank Berger for recreational soccer and Steven Marra for recreational baseball, and Michael Mendrick of the Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce. Jason Kemper, the Town Planner, and Allison Heaphy of the National Audubon Society will act as staff members for the committee. The group could also be expanded to include representatives of local builders or architects.

Supervisor Phil Barrett, accompanied by Sandy Roth, kicked off the first meeting which took place in March, urging the need to develop an Open Space Plan with broad public acceptance. He suggested a timeframe of 12-18 months to accomplish this task.

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Another Smart Growth Conference—April 23rd

National Audubon Sponsors 3rd Annual Meeting

The next Smart Growth Conference will take place on Monday, April 23rd at the Empire State Plaza in downtown Albany. Sponsored by National Audubon Society, the conference will be Co-Chaired by Secretary of State, Alexander F. Treadwell and Lieutenant Governor Mary Donohue.

Governor George Pataki has been invited to give the keynote address at 9:00. Then at 9:30 there will be a panelist discussion on the Quality Communities Task Force Report recommendations and how they can be implemented both legislatively and by local governments. The committee's report will be followed by workshops on specific areas of the recommendations with discussions and implementation ideas.

After lunch, speaker Tony Nelessen—President, A. Nelessen Associates—will address: "Creating A Community Vision". He will discuss the smart growth planning process with visioning, plan development, translation into codes and stream-lining of the approval process.

Later in the afternoon, concurrent sessions are available on "Collaborative Community Planning" and "Regional Planning—How Does it Fit?"

The session will end with a wrap up panel discussion on "Where Do We Go From Here" moderated by Fred LeBrun of the Albany Times Union.

Registration fees are:

- Public/nonprofit Sector: \$100
- Private Sector: \$150

If you are interested in registering, please contact:

- National Audubon Society-Smart Growth
- 200 Trillium Lane, Albany, New York 12203
- Telephone: 518-869-9731
- FAX: 518-869-0737
- Email: rmerritt@audubon.org

STEERING COMMITTEE

Frank Berlin, Friends of Veteran's Park

Margaret Catellier, Citizens Assn. for Reasonable Expansion

Gil Kortz, Clifton Park Zoning Bd, past Chair Clifton Park ECC

Ray Seymour, Land Trust of the Saratoga Region

Clark Wilson, Rexford Civic Association

Greg Sundik, Liaison to Town of Clifton Park, ECC

Considering a Town Center...

Some Clarification.....

Last issue we included a long article on the concept of a Town Center. Unfortunately, we did not properly credit the vast amount of work done by a new member to our group, Cory Trembath.

Cory is a resident of Clifton Park graduating from Shenendehowa in 1995. As part of her thesis in the RPI School of Architecture she developed the material included in our article.

In her words, "My research will focus on the ideas presented in countless texts that critically examine various movements, such as Smart Growth and New Urbanism, that deal with these issues—not to emulate them, rather to understand the effects and consequences of these efforts as they relate to my topic. I will analyze Clifton Park through many means, including the SNL Theory Analysis Method (Urban Location, Use and Land Value Theory)—a modeling technique developed by Professor Martin Geiger at the ETH in Zurich for understanding scientifically how and why a city or region developed as it did, and for seeing how an intervention could potentially influence an area. My research will span a wide range of scales, from theoretical work such as FarMax by MVRDV and NETZSTADT (Net City) by Prof. Franz Oswald from the ETH at the scale of towns and regions to the needs of an individual person.

While acknowledging the fact that this topic cannot be one of a clear cut problem to be solved, I wish to explore the possibilities for strategic intervention that will strengthen the community fabric by enabling a larger percentage of its population. My studies will ultimately result in an architectural intervention—or a series of them—which will serve to address the tasks I have set out for myself: to make Clifton Park a more socially and environmentally—as a result possibly economically—sustainable community."

Besides the material in the article we usurped from Cory's work, she has also done a survey of Shenendehowa students, demographic graphs and statistics, density differences, more work on the Urban Growth Boundary concept, conservation design principles and included an extensive bibliography, case studies, and local information sources. She also included interesting work on "What is the difference between 'big boxes' and more traditional department stores", "What is the difference between shopping malls and pedestrian zones of cities", "How far is too far to walk"?

Work like Cory's underscore how much information is available to pursue planning with an arsenal of ideas, studies, tools and intellectual strength. ❖

FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE would like your **financial help** in sustaining our research and outreach efforts. If you would like to help in this way, please detach, complete and mail the form below with your check made out to: **FCPOS, P.O. Box 821, Clifton Park, New York 12065**

Thank you very much for your support!

Yes, I would like to help the Friends of Clifton Park Open Space in their work to preserve the "Park" in Clifton Park

I would like to contribute: \$10 \$20 \$30 \$40 \$50 \$75 \$100

Other \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Clifton Park Open Space—or—FCPOS

Contributions are not currently deductible as a charitable contribution

Wilton Sets Vote on Open-Space Borrowing

A public vote will be held in June on a town proposal to borrow an estimated \$3 million to preserve open space in this fast-growing Northway corridor community, town officials said Thursday.

Town Supervisor Roy J. McDonald said the money would be used to purchase or protect open spaces, wildlife habitats, agricultural land and water quality and to preserve “the quality of life” in Wilton. “There is a cost of action to protect this open space, but there is also a cost of inaction,” McDonald said at a news conference in Town Hall. He said the town of about 15,000 residents continues to grow and consume open space.

Ten years from now town officials don’t want people to say, “why didn’t they do something then” when good open space was available at a reasonable cost, McDonald said.

The referendum on June 12 is a way of getting town residents involved in improving the quality of life and property values in the town.

Raymond F. O’Conor, President of Saratoga National Bank and Wilton’s part-time economic development director, has been appointed chairman of the town’s open space task force. O’Conor pointed to a large, color-coded map of the town showing what areas have been developed with homes, businesses and light industry.

“We are looking at a broad open space plan,” O’Conor said. He said the task force hopes to have the open space plan finished in about a month and have a better idea of how much money the open space bond proposal will be. He said the money would be used to attract state matching grants for the protection of agricultural land, scenic views and vistas, wetlands and wildlife habitats.

“We need to take a stand, make a commitment to preserving these lands or they will be lost forever,” he said.

The open space initiative, which has been endorsed by the Town Board and The Nature Conservancy, will seek to protect land in all parts of the town, not just the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park located on the eastern side of the town.

Jeffrey Purner, an executive with Plug Power and on the board of the Wildlife Preserve and Park, has been named Chairman of the Citizens Action Committee, which will take the open space initiative to town residents. Purner said the committee would be holding informational meetings to explain and encourage residents to vote June 12.

Open Space Policy Recommended for Malta

The Saratoga County Planning Department is recommending the town use a variety of methods to preserve open space and scenic views, including purchase of development rights.

That’s the recommendation of a draft report aimed at telling the town how best to preserve its dwindling supply of open land.

Town Supervisor David R. Meager said preserving open space, including a referendum on buying development rights, will be the town’s top priority in 2001. “I would term this whole issue the number one priority for Malta for the next year,” Meager said.

The town and the county Planning Department have been working on an open space study since last spring in an effort to identify ways to maintain Malta’s open land in the face of Northway Corridor development pressure.

A draft now being circulated has identified 91 land parcels that may be worthy of preservation and about 1,000 acres—most of it farmland—for which the town should consider purchasing the development rights.

Other lands with lower priority could be considered for a tax abatement program that would lower the taxes if the land is kept open, or for special zoning that would require developers to build on small housing lots and preserve surrounding land as open space.

The draft recommendations will be reviewed by the town’s Agriculture and Open Space Committee, which has been working with the county.

“At this point in time I think we just plan to review it and may make some recommendations back to the county,” said Paul J. Sausville, Chairman of the committee. He said the report may be final within the next month. Sausville said purchase of development rights is a potentially costly solution and the committee wants to make clear other options are available.

In a purchase of development rights, a landowner gives up the right to develop the land in return for a payment. The payment is usually more than half the land’s total value. “It has the potential to be fairly controversial because of the cost involved,” Sausville said.

Meager sees the purchase of development rights as an effective way to preserve dwindling open space. He recently attended a meeting with a representative of the NYC based Trust for Public Land, a private advocacy group, which is willing to help the town organize a referendum to create a fund to purchase development rights.

WILTON OPEN-SPACE BORROWING, CONT....

"Over the next three months we will conduct a very aggressive campaign... We will make this an expression of democracy," Purner said.

Town officials were joined... by Andy Beers, Director of Conservation and Government Programs for The Nature Conservancy's New York Regional Office, and Sarah Clarkin, Executive Director of the Wilton Wildlife Preserve. Beers said Nature Conservancy... is looking forward to being a partner in the town's open space initiative.

Clarkin said the Wildlife Preserve, also created by the town in partnership with the Nature Conservancy has protected 1,000 acres between Ballard Road and Rt. 50 including habitat of the endangered Karner blue butterfly.

"We will have a long way to go," Clarkin said. The town wants to expand the park to about 3,000 acres protected and crisscrossed with nature trails.

"The new bond act is a great way to preserve more land in the town and in the town in general," Clarkin said.

By Lee Coleman of The Daily Gazette

MALTA OPEN SPACE PLANS, CONT...

Meager said it's too soon to suggest a dollar figure for a November, 2001 referendum. But he said he feels strongly the town should start its own fund rather than rely on the open space grant program the state offers.

"From what I've seen of the state program, the line is long and the money is short," Meager said. "It could be years and then the grant would be small. Meantime, development is continuing.

"I would term this whole issue (preserving open space) the number one priority for Malta for the next year." David Meager, Town Supervisor

Meager said town officials believe keeping some land open is cost-effective in the long term, because if land is developed there's a demand for road maintenance, sewer and water service and schools. "Open space doesn't make demands on services," Meager said.

"If you want preservation, the way to do it is to take the bull by the horns," he said. ❖

By Stephen Williams of The Daily Gazette

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Open Space Committee cont.

Members discussed the possible steps in outlining an Open Space Planning Process. These included issues like:

- public participation
- inventories and mapping
- surveys
- fiscal impact statements
- development, adoption and implementation of a plan with particular strategies

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space was asked to report on their activities accomplished so far. The Town gave an overview of its own resources. And two subcommittees were formed. One headed by Jason Kemper will finish the computer mapping of various resource areas of the town. The second, headed by Allison Heaphy, will consider various outreach activities the town could pursue.

We urge individuals to contact members of the Committee to offer their assistance with the Committee's tasks and/or to offer suggestions, ideas, or information. The more public participation in this planning process, the better the plan will be.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....

FCPOS GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS

Place: Shenendehowa United Methodist Church
Date: Thursday, April 26th, May 17th
Time: 7:30 PM

3RD ANNUAL SMART GROWTH CONFERENCE

Place: Empire State Plaza
Date: Monday, April 23rd
Time: 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM
Contact: Rich Merritt of National Audubon 869-9731

PUBLIC MEETING ON LAND USE—SPONSORED BY THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SARATOGA COUNTY

Place: Saratoga Spring Library, Community Room
Date: Monday, April 30th
Time: 7:00 to 9:00 PM
Contact: Susan Burton, VP, 371-4703

Representatives of the Towns of: Clifton Park, Halfmoon, Malta, Wilton and the City of Saratoga Springs will address the growth issues of their communities and how their towns are changing because of growth. A presentation will also be made by the Governor's Task Force on Quality Communities

Open Space Design Planning

Attached to this newsletter is a map which shows the current configuration of open space and development in the area called "Vischer Ferry Road Corridor" (V.F.R.C.). The gray areas on the map indicate preserved open space lands. The contiguous nature of these areas are the result of planning done when an environmental impact study was completed for the V.F.R.C. in the early 1990's and is a good example of what similar open space planning could accomplish if done for the rest of the western part of town.

Looking at the diagram, you can see the block development housing n developments like Park Lane and Peacock Glen. This contrasts to the cluster development across The Oaks, Summer Hill and Meadow Estates, (i.e. where houses are "clustered" closer together in order to preserve open space). You can also see how many large tracts of land remain undeveloped in the V.F.R.C. It is hoped that the town mapping of sensitive water and environmental areas, cultural resources, agricultural land, and historic sites in the rest of town will allow similar open space land use plans to be developed and implemented.