

Friends Continues with Town Open Space Committee

Survey Planned for Town-wide Distribution

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space members continue to work with the town and as an independent group, bringing experience, expertise and ideas to the town forum. The town is working on constructing a mission statement. Friends hopes it will also include concrete steps to make Open Space Planning a reality as well as a guiding goal with such steps as zoning changes, funding sources, and a broad-based, long-range vision for both preserving open space and providing for its complement—healthy growth and development.

It is important that Open Space Goals include the tools necessary to make open space protection an equal force with positive development

One of the Town's goals is to distribute an **Open Space Survey** to all taxpayers. This initial survey will seek to both educate the public on various aspects of Open Space and to define public priorities and solicit suggestions. The survey is expected to be distributed in early November, so watch for it. We urge you to give it your attention and return it with your input!

The Town has also developed a **Fact Sheet** with Accomplishments and Timeline for achieving its goals. These include plans for workshops, design charrettes, fiscal analysis, more surveys and, of course, public hearings. Public participation in the process is essential. **Pay Attention** to what the town is doing—we will all benefit from it.

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



Municipalities Grapple With Open Space Issues

By Joan A'Hearn from Saratoga Business Journal

As early as the 1960's, the Sierra Club and other environmental groups were urging towns to set aside open spaces in an effort to preserve natural habitats and assure a continuing quality of life. At that time, population growth and development were problems with which many Saratoga County towns looked forward to dealing.

Today, however, with a population of over 200,000 and an employee base that has nearly doubled since 1985 to more than 60,000, achieving balance between growth and preserving open spaces has become a concern. Why? In addition to the strain on infrastructure that comes with commercial & residential growth, there's the question of maintaining a healthy environment.

Towns have either initiated or revised plans aimed at allocating resources to keep some lands free of development without jeopardizing the growth necessary to increase their tax base.

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For instance, Saratoga Springs has had an active Open Space Project since 1987. The not-for-profit project is funded through grants and the contributions of its 600-plus members, whose mission is to identify opportunities to preserve open space and to elevate the issue to a level of attention within the community. Alane Ball, Executive Director of the Open Space Project, works closely with city officials and other agencies to develop and implement plans that take advantage of nature resources. She and her volunteer staff were involved in providing data for the City's recent comprehensive plan which outlines land use policies and maps resources. The Open Space Project has made significant contributions in terms of preserving nature's resources and making them accessible to the public. The Bog Meadow Nature Trail and City Bike Trail are just two examples of their efforts.

Continued on page 2

Towns Grapple with Open Space

Continued from page 1.

The Town of Malta also plans to put an open space referendum before its voters this year. According to Supervisor David meager, the town will propose a bond issue to authorize a million dollars for the permanent preservation of specific properties. A county report has identified 90 plots of land, ranging from 20 to 200 acres in size, as potential open space opportunities. The owners of the sites will be given the option of selling the property outright or taking part in a PDR—Preservation Development Rights—program.

Landowners who opt for the PDR program will be paid to maintain their land as it now exists. “This program would be administered strictly on a voluntary basis,” Meager said. “We are not forcing anyone to take part. We have appointed an open spaces committee which will establish criteria to determine which sites are most desirable and then we will approach the owners of those parcels”

Meager told us, “We’re looking for a million dollars with a ten-year payback which will increase taxes about twenty-three cents per thousand. That’s less than we would eventually have to raise in school taxes and other associated infrastructure costs if that same land is developed, and it’s only for ten years.”

In addition to the PDR program, ...a County-wide initiative is

specifically targeting farms for preservation. The Agricultural Economic Development Program (AEDP), under the direction of Bill Higgins, is offering incentive to farm owners to maintain agricultural pursuits. His area covers both Saratoga and Washington Counties.

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“Farms are very much a part of the open space movement, but too often members of the younger generation aren’t interested in keeping the family farm going,” Higgins said. “Our job is to encourage them and provide inducements to continue the tradition or to find new owners in order to keep the land productive.”

Higgins noted that while many people don’t usually think of farms as major contributors to the economy, nothing could be further from reality. In addition to employees, farms need supplies, equipment and a way to get their product to market. The fact that farms, by their very existence, provide open spaces and natural environs is a bonus.

The AEDP office in Saratoga Springs can be reached at 587-0945, extension 217. ❖

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

Councilman Roy Speckhard Suggests Open Space Fund

Recently, Deputy Supervisor Roy Speckhard has asked for the establishment of a permanent fund to support the purchase of open space lands. Friends supports this initiative as a positive tool to help make open space protection a reality.

The money would be used to buy property similar to the Round Lake reservoir and other parcels of undeveloped lands—particularly in the western part of the town. Under consideration are parcels near the Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve and McElroy Park.

Mr. Speckhard is proposing a permanent fund—initially created from the town’s budget surplus, which currently stands at about \$3M. He suggests using a large portion of that surplus to establish an Open-Space Fund account in the 2002 budget. In subsequent years the fund could be supplemented through a permanent revenue source.

He prefers a plan that would generate revenues, rather than one that would require taxpayers to fund a referendum

“One idea that comes to mind is that our tax stabilization fund generates annual revenues. That could be used,” said Mr. Speckhard. He said he prefers a plan that would generate revenues, rather than one that would require taxpayers to fund a referendum.

This idea should compliment the new Open-Space Plan being developed by the town, and allow the town to purchase land as it fits within the framework of the plan, Speckhard said.

“It’s important because as we continue to grow, there’s going to be a great need to preserve open space and land for environmental reasons,” he said. “These things are just going to come along, and we need to be ready when they do with funds to address them.”

Friends has already started a process to identify special and endangered places which could also be considered if such an initiative becomes a reality. **We commend Deputy Supervisor Speckhard for his efforts to build an Open Space Fund.**

Historic Preservation Work Saluted

By Elysia Nest of Gazette Newspapers

The town’s Historic Preservation Commission recognized Margaret Kinonian, owner of the Jonesville Country Store at Main Street and Ushers Road, for her on-going restoration of the more than 150-year-old structure.

Donna and James Metzger were recognized for maintaining and beautifying the stone arch bridge that spans the Stony Creek Reservoir on Vischer Ferry Road, near its intersection with Crescent Road, in the Vischer Ferry Historic District. This landmark, erected in the 1840’s, is located next to the Metzger’s property.

Each year ... a commission recognizes one commercial property and one private residence in town. Repairs and restorations are typically sympathetic to the original designs and uses. To qualify, projects must be located within the town and structures are required to be at least 50 years olds. Nomination forms are available at the Clifton Park Town Hall and can be handed in at any time.

Kinonian, who rescued the 480-sq ft Jonesville Country Store in 1998 after “watching it deteriorate year after year,” ... As part of the restoration, the back part of the building’s foundation has been replaced, the floors strengthened and the exterior painted in its original shades of yellow and maroon. The building was originally built as a post-and-beam structure around 1850. Four layers of wallpaper were uncovered, samples of which have been preserved and will be displayed. “The Clifton Park Historic Preservation Commission has been very helpful in providing historic information and contacts,” Kinonian said.

The Ballston Lake resident said she plans to establish a natural foods store in the building by next year. She will eventually stock packaged foods, and sell fresh produce grown locally as well as organic produce. Upstairs she envisions a tearoom, chairs and displays of local crafts.

As far as the stone arch bridge is concerned, John Scherer, town historian, noted it is an example of the type of bridge that was built in the mid-1880’s. Most of these types of bridges, made for horse and buggy crossings, were replaced by bigger bridges as motor vehicles took over. But instead of replacing the stone arch bridge on Vischer Ferry, the road was rerouted and straightened out in the 1940’s. And so the bridge was merely abandoned.

Friends to Show Open Space Video

Join us for the movies.....

At their next meeting on November 15th, (see details to the right) Friends of Clifton Park Open Space plans to show the 18 minute video developed by the Town's Open Space Committee in conjunction with National Audubon Society-Audubon New York. This is the same video used at the town's recent Farm Fest event.

The video provide a visual layout of the eastern and western sections of town including the importance of critical open space areas like the Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve and our many orchards and farmlands. It includes historical features as well as maps of the many other attributes in this area. Most importantly, it includes some ideas about what the future could be like in our town if we plan, or if we do not.

Come join us for at least this initial part of our monthly meeting, and see what our town has to offer and what we have to protect.

Friends of Clifton Park Open space
P.O. Box 821
Clifton Park, New York 12065

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....

FCPOS GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS

Place: Shenendehowa United Methodist Church
Date: Thursday, November 15th, 2001
Time: 7:30 PM

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE VIDEO TO AIR

Place: FCPOS Monthly Meeting
Date: Thursday, November 15th, 2001
Time: 7:30 PM
Refreshments will be served

CANDIDATES NIGHT-CLIFTON PARK & HALFMOON

Place: Shenendehowa Public Library
Date: Thursday, October 25th, 2001
Time: 6:45-8:30 PM

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Saratoga County

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