



# **TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY**

## *Land Preservation & Open Space Acquisition Commission*

### **MINUTES**

**Land Preservation & Open Space Acquisition Commission Meeting**  
**Wednesday, June 7, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.**  
**In Person- Upstairs, Shepardson, Upstairs Dining Room**

**Present:** Malcolm Todt  
Paul Bialobreski  
George Gabrielson  
Ericka Carrington  
Jim Lawlor

**Also Present:** Katie Burdick, Recording Clerk

**Public:** None

**Absent:** Anne Paolino

#### **1. Call to Order with Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Mr. Gabrielson with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **2. Approval of May 3, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Bialobreski **MOTIONED** to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2023 meeting;  
**SECONDED** by Mr. Todt. Unanimous approval.

Mrs. Carrington abstained due to her absence.

#### **3. Old Business**

##### **a. Fenn's Farm Update:**

Mr. Gabrielson stated Robin Fenn is frustrated with the lack of progress of completing the pending list of the onsite projects. Mr. Gabrielson stated the barns needing painting is still a high priority project and needs immediate attention.

Mr. Gabrielson stated that he was going to reach out to the First Selectman and send a follow up email to hopefully gain some traction on moving forward with vendors and/or with the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Gabrielson discussed the remaining funds from the initial donation from Robin Fenn. A discussion ensued on the annual budget funds for the LPOS allocated by the town and the process of moving 'commission approved projects' into the next phase of approval and getting them completed in a timely manner. Mr. Gabrielson stated

this was another topic of concern to be discussed when he meets with the First Selectman. Mr. Gabrielson stated he wanted to receive a timeline on when the priority projects will be completed by the public works department.

Discussion ensued about the Mission of the LPOS Commission and the town's contract with Fenn's farm where it states the town is responsible for repairing and maintaining critical issues at the farm.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he was told that all of the 501(c)3 funds from the 'Friends of Fenn's Farm' have been expended on the cupola project. Mr. Gabrielson stated the horse barn has already received an engineer report and there are issues that need immediate repair and attention.

Mr. Gabrielson discussed the two failing beams in the cow barn. Stating these failing beams are unsafe and need to be addressed.

Mr. Gabrielson stated that Fenn's Farm is valuable asset to the town because of these three categories; past, present and future. Mr. Gabrielson continued to state that the past and history of the farm is very valuable and a large part of the Town's history. The present is important because this land could never be sold off to developers. The future of the Farm could be whatever the town decides to do with it. The town can preserve it for future town use in history or the town could potentially restore some areas of the farm to make it a working farm. Mr. Gabrielson stated the possibilities for the farms future are vast.

The Commission discussed proceeding with having the entire property evaluated for a timeline of urgency in the repairs and a potential budget the Town will need.

Mr. Lawlor **MOTIONED** to survey Fenn's Farm property for what items need to be addressed/repared and what priority level or urgency they need to be completed.

**SECONDED** by Mr. Bialobreski. Unanimous approval.

Commission agreed to inquire with Rob Fenn about an informal report of all the issues and repairs needed on Fenn's Farm as a starting point.

Mr. Gabrielson informed the commissioners that he did more research into the documents provided by Mr. Paolino at the meeting prior. After further investigation into the three types of grants available from the state Mr. Paolino mentioned, Mr. Gabrielson stated he could not find a type of grant that would allow flexibility with spending as general funds for multiple projects.

Discussion ensued about the grants with long term funding that would require the town to forfeit their rights, which didn't seem like a viable option for the Commissioners to suggest to the town. Mr. Gabrielson said that the research he did seemed to not relate to any options that would work for Fenn's Farm. Mr. Gabrielson stated that most of the grants require the work to be completed and inspected before reimbursement. Some requirements included that the farm would have to be an

active and working farm and extensive soil sampling would have to be conducted which is very involved. Mr. Gabrielson stated he would reach back out to Mr. Paolino to inquire if there was a type of grant or funding available that would be a lump sum of general funding to expend as needed to restore and repair the farm as recommended and discussed by the commission.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he will report back to the Commission at the next meeting and if the First Selectman and Commission agreed to apply for the funds that the towns attorney would be the contact for writing the grant application.

Mr. Gabrielson stated it's the towns duty to comply with the agreement with Fenn's Farm and complete the necessary restorations and repairs in reasonable timeframe ensure safety.

**4. New Business**

Commissioners thank Mr. Gabrielson for researching in depth the funding options provided by Mr. Armando Paolino at the previous meeting.

**5. Public Comments: NONE**

**6. Adjournment**

Mr. Bialobreski **MOTIONED** to ADJOURN the meeting at 8:10 p.m.; **SECONDED** by Mr. Todt. Unanimous approval.

These minutes are submitted subject to approval.

Respectfully submitted,

*Katie Burdick*

Katie Burdick  
Recording Clerk