



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY

Land Preservation & Open Space Acquisition Commission

MINUTES

Land Preservation & Open Space Acquisition Commission Meeting
Wednesday February 7, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.
In Person- Downstairs in Shepardson, ROOM 7

Present: Malcolm Todt
Paul Bialobreski
George Gabrielson
Dawn Andonellis
Anne Paolino

Also Present: Katie Burdick, Recording Clerk

Public: Marjorie Needham,
Middlebury Bee
Intelligencer

Absent: Jim Lawlor
Ericka Carrington

1. Call to Order with Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Mr. Gabrielson with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of January 3, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Bialobreski **MOTIONED** to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2024 meeting with the following noted corrections; **SECONDED** by Mr. Todt. Unanimous approval.

Typing corrections including:

- Slide doors “track” needs replacement

3. Approval of January 24, 2024 SPECIAL Meeting Minutes

Mr. Bialobreski **MOTIONED** to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2024 meeting with the following noted corrections; **SECONDED** by Mr. Todt. Unanimous approval.

Typing errors including:

- Correction of spelling of Dr. Rafford’s last name, President of Historical Society
- Correction of spelling of Mrs. DeMartino’s last name, Secretary of Historical Society

4. Chairman's Comments

Mr. Gabrielson stated he reviewed the terms of the Town of Middlebury's Charter & mission statement that mandates the responsibility of the Land Preservation & Open Space Acquisition Commission. Mr. Gabrielson stated that the Town Charter mandates double the responsibility the commission originally expected. Mr. Gabrielson continued to discuss the information on procedures and planning for land preservation and open space acquisitions.

Mr. Gabrielson disseminated a copy of the Middlebury's Town Charter 'Item P.' Land Preservation and Open Space Acquisition Commission (page 28) to the Commissioners that states the Commission should have a minimum of (7) seven members and the 5 main purposes of the Commission. Mr. Gabrielson stated they should request another member be appointed to the Commission to help with the work load or the new found responsibilities.

Mr. Gabrielson also disseminated a copy of the Town of Middlebury, Connecticut By-Laws for the Land Preservation and Open Space Acquisition Commission.

Commissioners reviewed the by-laws, mission statement of the Commission and office of the elected Officers of the Commission.

Mr. Todt stated that the mission statements mentions management of other open space town owned properties. Mr. Todt stated that the commission should get a copy of all the properties that the Commission is responsible for from the Town. Other Commissioners and Mr. Gabrielson agreed and stated he would request a copy from the First Selectman's office.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he hopes to have a copy to disseminate at the next meeting.

5. Election of Office- Secretary

Mr. Todt **MOTIONED** to appoint Mr. Bialobreski as the Secretary of the LPOS Commission for a (1) one-year term; **SECONDED** by Mr. Gabrielson. Unanimous approval.

6. Old Business

A. Brookdale Farm Repairs & Maintenance Funding:

Mr. Gabrielson stated he met with Mr. Fenn earlier in the week and Mr. Fenn presented him a list of items that still need to be addressed at Fenn's Farm.

Commissioners sympathized with Mr. Fenn and his frustrations about the list of items that still need to be addressed by the town. Mr. Gabrielson stated the sewer light still needs attention.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he will continue to present the list to the First Selectman's Office. Mr. Gabrielson stated he will continue to submit the pending items list and will also present the quote he received for painting of the barns (approximately fifty-three thousand dollars). Commissioners agreed all the painting does not need to be completed as once, but as an ongoing project to spread the cost out. However, the Commissioners also agreed that the painting is something that will need continuous upkeep.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he had a discussion with Mr. Norton from the Public Works Department about the line item budget for the Land Preservation Commission, which was noted to be around twenty thousand dollars, funded annually by the town.

Mr. Gabrielson stated that he did some research and that it seems to be standard practice to budget approximately 4% of the value of historic structures for annual repairs and maintenance and believes the budget should be approximately forty thousand dollars and funded annually.

Mr. Todt took a moment to thank Mr. Gabrielson for his time, efforts and commitment to meeting and talking with Rob Fenn. Mr. Todt stated it's a large commitment for LPOS Chairman and very time consuming and he wanted to recognize Mr. Gabrielson for doing a great job and thanked him for his efforts. Other Commissioners also expressed thanks to Mr. Gabrielson for his great leadership and commitment to the commission. Mr. Gabrielson thanked everyone for their support.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he requested Mr. Fenn to journal all items he is keeping up and maintaining himself on the property. Mr. Fenn was asked to keep records of projects, time and costs associated with the items he takes care of. Commissioners discussed that he takes care of a lot of items that may not be "seen" by anyone but still are time consuming projects that need to be noted. Commissioners stated that they will be able to see a "seasonal" picture of all the annual projects that need to be upkeep at the property. Mr. Gabrielson stated that the contract with Fenn's Farm and deed the town is responsible for the 'to-do list' of items that need to be addressed and ongoing maintenance.

Mrs. Andonellis inquired why the Town's Public Works Department couldn't help more at Fenn's Farm with routine maintenance they are already doing at other town owned properties. Discussion ensued about the roles and duties of the public works department in correlation to Fenn's Farm. Commissioners discussed and agreed that eventually the Public Works Department or hired town vendors will have to take on more projects and ongoing maintenance projects at Fenn's Farm.

B. LPOS Mandate & Responsibilities

Discussion ensued with the mandates of the responsibilities of the Commission of how the Commissioners could be more prepared and proactive in their roles on the Commission. Mr. Gabrielson suggested the commissioners educate themselves and network with other similar groups and/or individuals whom have the same objectives. Mr. Gabrielson suggested attending a meeting, lecture, or presentation to learn more about the acquisition of land and the reasons to preserve land. Mr. Gabrielson stated he was going to reach out for more information and update the commissioners at the next meeting.

Mr. Gabrielson stated he was going to follow up with First Selectman St. John about the 20% of open space that the LPOS is responsible for. Mr. Gabrielson is going to request a list of the properties from the first Selectman's office. Mr. Gabrielson is hoping the Town Assessor will have a map or list of the open space properties that make up the counted items of the 20%. Mr. Gabrielson will also inquire about the responsibilities linked to these properties, use of the properties (i.e. Recreation space), or if it is passive land.

7. **New Business**

None

8. **Public Comments:** NONE

9. **Adjournment**

Mr. Todt **MOTIONED** to ADJOURN the meeting at 8:08 p.m.; **SECONDED** by Mr. Bialobreski.
Unanimous approval.

These minutes are submitted subject to approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Burdick

Katie Burdick
Recording Clerk