

Foster Land Trust minutes

August 4, 2015

Foster Land Trust (FLT)
Eddy Building
Foster, RI 02825

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

In attendance: Linda Los Tibbetts, Chair; Myra Mercier, Vice-Chair; Walter May, Treasurer; Kristen Cole, Secretary; Bill Fortier. Mike Carpenter and Chris Iozzi were absent.

Minutes: Minutes from the July meeting were unanimously approved with no changes; minutes from the executive session were unanimously approved.

Old Business: Ray Najecki from the Glocester Land Trust, RI LTC and RI DEM was in attendance. He spoke about the **DEM Trails Committee**, and how it disburses grants each quarter for up to \$3,000 (with a 20% match required from the applicant) for purchases and capital expenses related to trails and trails management. Covered purchases and expenses could include: acquisition of property; trail improvements; kiosks; port-a-johns; creating maps; purchasing and installing benches; enhancements to improve public access; and maintenance equipment; to name a few. He encouraged FLT to submit a request once we have identified what we need to improve the Hayfield trail. This grant program is underutilized and our chances of winning a grant would be good.

There were several people in attendance to talk about the **Murray property**: Gina M. Manfredi; Donna Mansolillo; Paula Mottshaw; Mantzo and Maritza Ganem; Michael Ganem. These people live near the property, and wanted to encourage FLT to purchase it as open space. There was a discussion where we explained that FLT did receive a grant to purchase the property, based on an understanding with the owner. But after several months, the FLT offer and counter-offer has been met with no response from the owner, and the owner's realtor. We voted on a deadline for response by July 15 – which has passed with no communication from the owner or realtor. At this point, we have no choice but to return the grant we were awarded to fund the purchase since we can't use those funds for any other purpose.

There is little FLT can do at this point if the owner and realtor do not want to respond to our offers. There is currently activity on the property, leading those in attendance to believe that the owner intends to sell the property to another buyer, a developer who will build houses on it. They would prefer the land be kept as open space if possible, and offered to contact the owner to see what can be done. They offered to contribute funding to the effort if the owner is looking for more money than FLT has to offer. They will get back to us to let us know what happens with the owner. We will hold onto the grant funds for now, to see what happens.

Stewardship: Dennis Therrien reports that he repaired the culvert at **Spencer** after the beaver damage. He will submit expenses for reimbursement. There are a couple of trees down at Spencer; the one near the gate has been cut up and taken away, and there is one more that Dennis is planning to remove. Dennis asked if there are any DEM requirements or standards that apply to creating or maintaining trails; standard widths, etc. There is nothing of this nature.

FLT has received correspondence from John MacPhee, whose family's property abuts the **Hayfield** property. He is complaining about blocks and barricades on the property line that prevent his family from having private access to the Hayfield property. There is nothing unlawful about placement of the blockades; the MacPhees and any other members of the public have access to the property using the designated public entrance.

At the **Hopkins** property, some of the concrete barriers that were placed have been moved and ATVs have again been seen on the property.

Regarding the **Dunbar** property; since the transfer is concluded we can record discussions in open session. The property is a ~17-acre parcel located at AP 1 / Lot 22 / Sub lot B at the intersection of Cucumber Hill Road and Plain Woods Road. The property has a large pond and dam. The property was accepted as a donation, with an appraised value of \$98,300. FLT paid outstanding taxes totaling \$2,105.59 and the deed has been registered to FLT with the Town. There is an existing survey on record.

FLT voted unanimously to accept the donation during the executive session held on June 24, with Myra Mercier, Walter May, Kristen Cole, Bill Fortier, and Mike Carpenter in attendance.

Financial: No updates at this time.

Liaison reports: No reports. We may need to find a new member of the Conservation Commission to serve on FLT soon, since Chris Iozzi has not attended any meetings.

Public relations: The date for the FLT / Rhode Island Land Trust Days guided walk at **Hayfield** is being changed to Sept. 20 (still at 10 a.m., and no rain date) so that Roy Najecki can lead it. Borders Farm has also changed the date of their activity to Sept. 20 (starting at 1 p.m.) so that people can attend both events on the same day. Roy is requesting to add a second hike at Hayfield on August 23; it will be a more challenging hike than the one planned for Sept. 20, going 3-4 miles and crossing the Ponaganset (hikers will get wet since there are no bridges). Roy will work with NWRISOS and the RI LTC to plan and promote both hikes.

Linda made a motion to approve the plans that Roy outlined, and Myra seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence: Ethan Zawatsky from URI sent an email to Linda about research he is conducting about how open space is purchased in RI. Linda will get back to him; his message indicates some misconceptions about how Town funds are used in this process (they are not used, in our case).

The Board discussed sending a sympathy card to Frances Grass on the passing of Walter Grass last month. Kristen will send the card ASAP.

There was no executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m. The next FLT meeting will be held on September 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Cole