

GLOCESTER LAND TRUST  
REGULAR MEETING  
April 11, 2017

The regular meeting of the Gloucester Land Trust took place on April 11, 2017 at the Gloucester Town Hall. Chair Stephen Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members in attendance: Stephen Mitchell, Russell K. Gross, Janine Pitocco, Steven St. Pierre, Roy Najecki, Gene Cavaliere and legal counsel John J. Bevilacqua, Jr.

Members Absent: Rebecca Schultz

Minutes: Judi Rix

Guests: Lew Pryeor, Kristy Bonoyer, Katie Steere, Robert Blackmer, Mark Tremblay, Russell G. Gross, Jessie Gross and approximately 7 more guests in attendance that did not sign in to speak.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

**Open Forum Agenda Items Only:** The four guests that signed in to speak about an agenda item would like to wait until the item is discussed. Liz Morris of Cranberry Ridge Road wanted to ask Chairman Mitchell if he had received her request to conduct a riding event on a GLT property. Mr. Mitchell indicated that he did receive the request and it would be placed on the agenda for May's meeting.

### **Approval of minutes of previous meetings**

a. Russell K. Gross made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 28, 2017 meeting; it was seconded by Gene Cavaliere and passed unanimously with Steven St. Pierre abstaining due to his absence at that meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Roy Najecki provided an updated treasurer's report to the board which reflected the bills approved at the last meeting. Mr. Najecki was questioning an entry from a donation back in 2005 from the Friends of the Gloucester Land Trust; the money was already in the account, so he is unsure of why the entry just recently appeared. Steven St. Pierre asked Roy Najecki if he had received any word on the open space bond, and Mr. Najecki responded that he had not heard anything yet. Chairman Mitchell would like to add a column to the report that shows only the monthly expenses. Gene Cavaliere made a motion to accept the treasurer's report as presented; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco and passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Bills**

a. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to pay the recording clerk Judi Rix \$178.00 for the March 28, 2017 meeting minutes and hyperlinking of two agendas (3/14 meeting cancelled and 3/28); Russell K. Gross seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

b. Russell K. Gross made a motion to pay John J. Bevilacqua \$1,000 for services for March 2017; Janine Pitocco seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

### **Old Business**

a. Joe Sweet Trailhead Grant Status and process to commence work: Chairman Mitchell created a draft "invitation to bid" for the trustees to review. This ad would be placed in the Bargain Buyer to open the bidding process. All of this needs to happen quickly because the grant is set to expire in late spring, all bids will need to be postmarked by May 5<sup>th</sup> so they can be opened for the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to accept the draft "invitation to bid" and allow Chairman Mitchell to place an ad in

the Bargain Buyer to open the bidding process for this project; Russell K. Gross seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

b. Hunting Regulations for 2017-2018: Chairman Mitchell provided an approved and reformatted copy of the regulations to the trustees. All future official GLT documents will have the date at the bottom that it was adopted/ revised. Once the D.E.M. provides the dates for hunting season this year, the document will be updated and the board will begin dispensing hunting licenses for the GLT properties.

c. Status of installation of GLT signs at Phillips Farm, Steere Hill, and Hawkins Pond: the Land trust is working on getting signage on those two properties in conjunction with FM Global volunteers. The materials have already been purchased and the signs should be erected in either May or June. Might need to rent an auger, and still need to determine exactly where the signs will be placed on each property.

### **New Business**

a. Submission for Property Use – Funds 4 Paws: Chairman Mitchell received an email from Danielle McFarlane asking to use the Steere Hill and Phillips Farm areas for a dog walk. The event will take place on May 13<sup>th</sup> at 11am with approximately 40 people in attendance. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to approve this event on the condition that the group provide proof of insurance and that they pick up after the dogs; Gene Cavaliere seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

b. GLT Conflict of Interest and Ethics Statement Signatures: Chairman Mitchell provided each trustee with a copy of the conflict of interest form and the ethics statement form and asked the trustees to sign them. This is done every year so the trustees are aware if what they are and aren't allowed to do. Rebecca Shultz was not present at the meeting to sign, so she will sign them at the next meeting she is present at.

c. Tree cutting project discussion: Chairman Mitchell invited consultant Mark Tremblay to the meeting to discuss possible land management options for going forward and to continue the tree cutting discussion. The board is responsible for the health of each property as well as the maintenance and use; the goal is to keep the land as viable and healthy for future generations as possible. In order ensure good/appropriate growth on the properties, selective cutting should be conducted periodically. Lack of sunlight on a forest floor is detrimental to the health of that forest.

Mr. Tremblay believes the best approach to take is to get an overview of the GLT properties and go through a process to prioritize which parcels should be considered based on the needs of each property. Each property is different, and what it is used for will help determine what the property needs to thrive. Steven St. Pierre believes this is a good opportunity to look at properties that are not being used by the public right now. Logging is a major disturbance to the forest; it mimics what nature would do over a 30 year time period and condenses it down into one year. It leaves a significant mess that will take a few years for the forest to recover from. Stephen Mitchell wants to do this in a measured way, not haphazardly. Mr. Tremblay is self-employed and would act as an agent for the GLT; he also offered some of his time and expertise at no cost to the board to review some management plans and maybe walk a property. The board has not decided if they will be going forward with any tree cutting, and will discuss it at a future meeting. Mr. Mitchell will send Mr. Tremblay an email if/when the board decides to proceed.

d. Storage Unit at Town Garage proposal: Russell K. Gross met with a representative of Morton's Steel Building Company, located in Lincoln, RI and also has a rendering of a stick building for consideration of the board. The board needs to have a more definitive conversation with the town as to where such a building could be located, and should not rule out the possibility of putting it on a GLT property. Once the trustees have a better idea of what they want in a building and where it would be located, they can invite a representative to a meeting for a discussion. Russell K. Gross estimates that the steel buildings run for approximately \$30/square foot. Roy Najecki indicated that right now there is \$15,000 in the budget set aside for the building, and Steven St. Pierre asked him to look to see if any more funds might be available to invest in the project. Chairman Mitchell will put this on a future agenda for a more in-depth discussion.

e. Proposed leasing of Phillips Farm field and top of Steere Hill Conservation Area for agricultural purposes: Four people signed up to speak on this agenda item, and Chairman Mitchell told them they

could have their say after the board conducted its discussion on the matter. Mr. Clayton Wright came before the board at the last GLT meeting on 3/28/17 to discuss the possibility of using Phillips Farm field and top of Steere Hill for planting of corn for his dairy cattle. Since that evening, there was an explosion of misinformation and accusations on social media regarding what was said at that meeting, and what the intentions of the GLT were regarding this proposal. Mr. Wright's proposal is still in the discussion stage with the board, and no decisions have yet been made by either party.

Mr. Wright sent soil samples to UCONN for analysis, and those have yet to come back. He also walked a few GLT properties, with trustee Russell K. Gross, to see if they would even serve the purpose he intended for them. Of the properties they walked, Kwandran was deemed too small and the top of Steere Hill was ruled out because Mr. Wright did not want consider it due to the bird sanctuary up there. Phillips Farm was the only property left for consideration, and Mr. Wright could see that the no-till approach would not work for this season. The field needs too much work and would need to be plowed and harrowed to even be used, this would provide nothing as a yield for this year. Steven St. Pierre thinks the board would need more information regarding the use of any chemicals on the land before deciding on how to move forward. If the board agrees to lease the land to Mr. Wright, the exact location of where the planting would be would need to be identified and marked off. Agricultural use of that land would be in line with the mission of the GLT to be good stewards of the property, and also what the original landowners had wanted it to continue to be. Chairman Mitchell will invite Mr. Wright to the May meeting to review the soil tests and see if he is interested in offering a concrete proposal. All property negotiations are conducted in a closed executive session. However, any contract the board would enter into would be considered a public document for anyone to view. Mr. Mitchell then invited each person that requested to speak up to the podium.

1) Kristy Bonoyer of Money Hill Road indicated that the board's discussion had answered her questions/concerns and she had no further comment at this time.

2) Katie Steere of John Steere Road had some questions, not really any comments at this time. Ms. Steere wanted to know if the board was open to hearing proposals from other young farmers. D.E.M. is starting a new program looking to link new farmers with land opportunities. Land for farming is difficult to come by in RI, and she knows of many young farmers that would jump at the chance to lease land. Roy Najecki indicated that maybe the Kwandran property might be a good fit for vegetable gardening. Steven St. Pierre also mentioned possibly working with the agricultural students at Ponaganset High School. Stephen Mitchell directed Ms. Steere to the GLT website to get in touch with the board, and said that the board would always entertain proposals for the properties. It is the board's mission to do what is best for the land and to maintain the properties for future generations to enjoy.

3) Lew Pryeor of Evergreen Road thought the ideas presented by Katie Steere were wonderful options to explore. He is concerned about the chemical Mr. Wright is proposing to use and what happens to the land and environment during the 40 days it is active. There is no proof the chemical is safe, and would like the public to be notified if it is used. Mr. Mitchell was glad Mr. Pryeor came to the meeting again this evening so he could convey how unhappy he was with him for spreading misinformation via social media before the last GLT meeting had even been adjourned, and believes Mr. Pryeor's actions were irresponsible. Mr. Mitchell said that Mr. Pryeor had only heard a portion of the conversation and then proceeded to start a firestorm that required a formal statement from the board regarding the matter. Mr. Pryeor disputed Mr. Mitchell's claim that he heard only a portion of the conversation, and stated that he heard the entire thing. Mr. Pryeor maintained that he had no intention of misleading the public and never identified Wright's Chicken Farm as the business Mr. Wright owned; he consistently identified the business as Wright's Dairy Farm. Mr. Mitchell stated again that the trustees of this board are also members of the Gloucester community and care deeply about what happens to it. The trustees have a love and commitment to this community and would never do anything harmful either in the short term, or long term, that would have negative consequences. Each trustee has their own passion as it relates to the environment and conservation, and the board will do its due diligence to make the appropriate decisions for the land they

are entrusted to oversee for the citizens of Gloucester. The board holds itself accountable to not put the public in jeopardy and finds the implication that they would do that to be offensive.

4) Robert Blackmer of Farnum Road is a young farmer who just moved to Chepachet from Coventry. Mr. Blackmer works for a pasture-based livestock farmer who leases all of his land, most of it from the East Greenwich Land Trust. While he did not want to provide names, he thought the trustees may want to reach out to the East Greenwich Land Trust to discuss the benefits of leasing their land to the farmers. He also would like to see the opportunity to farm the land go to Gloucester residents first and doesn't think the concern for lack of water available for livestock should outweigh the concern over use of chemicals on the land. Mr. Mitchell and the rest of the board would love to have Mr. Blackmer's expertise and directed him to the website to contact the board in the future.

**Correspondence:**

c. Pat Bowie – Signs at Steere Hill and Hawkins: Sent an email to Chairman Mitchell expressing her appreciation for Chairman Mitchell's formal statement disputing the claims on social media regarding the proposal Mr. Wright put before the board and what the board's intentions were.

d. RI Land Trust Council: Chairman Mitchell received multiple emails from the RI Land Trust and they were primarily focused on Land Trust Days activities. The GLT does not have anything planned this month for Land Trust Days, but Roy Najecki will work on something for next month.

e. Rebecca Schultz: Chairman Mitchell was copied on an email between Mrs. Schultz and Ted Burlingame of the Town Council regarding the discussion at the 3/28/17 GLT meeting between the board and Mr. Clayton Wright. Ms. Schultz is on vacation in Chile and is not present to elaborate on this agenda item.

**Trail Inspections:** Stephen St. Pierre completed inspections at Steere Hill, Roy Najecki completed inspections at Sprague Farm, and both Mr. Najecki and Gene Cavaliere removed the hazardous trees at the Sprague Farm property.

**Monthly GLT Activities – Reports:** Roy Najecki received an email from the Harmony Library to coordinate a walk at Steere Hill. Mr. Najecki will get more information and request it be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Open Forum:** Russell K. Gross would like to do soil testing at the top of Steere Hill to ensure there are no residual chemicals up there that may harm anyone since it is one of the most used properties by the public. Steven St. Pierre mentioned that there appears to be a trespassing issue on Steere Hill that will need to be addressed and he would like it to be placed on next month's agenda. Stephen Mitchell will be following up with Carol Trocki about the baseline documentation the board is still waiting for.

**Executive Session:** There was no executive session at this meeting.

There being no further business before the Land Trust, Russell K. Gross made a motion to adjourn at 9:07p.m. The motion was seconded by Janine Pitocco and it passed unanimously.

APPROVED AT MAY 9, 2017 MEETING.