



MINUTES OF THE EASEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

September 4, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Hutson, *Committee Chair*
Paul Gallay, *via Teams*
Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *via Teams*
Karl Gockel, *via Teams*
Fred Huneke
John Verhoeven, *via Teams*
Shilo Williams, *NYC DEP*

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*
Bill Martin, *Easement Program Acquisition Coordinator*
Mike Morales, *Easement Program Stewardship Coordinator*
Dennis Heinz, *Senior Land Stewardship Specialist, via Teams*
Brent McKeon, *Land Conservation Stewardship Specialist, via Teams*
Matt Schaefer, *Land Conservation Stewardship Specialist, via Teams*
Troy Bookhout, *Easement Program Conservation Planner*
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant, via Teams*
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP, via Teams*
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI, via Teams*
Paul Kacmarczyk, *NYS DOH, via Teams*
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH, via Teams*

PUBLIC ATTENDEES:

None

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the Minutes of the August 7, 2024 public meeting of the Easement Committee.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Bud Gladstone

Motion Carried

III. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None

IV. CHAIR'S REPORT/PROGRAM MOTIONS

None

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Staff-Level Approvals

Serena presented this discussion item. As a reminder to the Committee, she explained that there are a handful of Stewardship reserved rights requests that are permitted to be approved at the staff level under existing guidelines. She emphasized that in these instances, staff are following the same processing procedures as the requests that come before the Committee for approval. The memorandum for the request, with all necessary supporting documentation, is filed internally and a summary of the approval is presented to the Committee as a “Stewardship Update.”

On that note, Serena added that the subject of staff-level approvals will be further discussed as staff work through revisions to current guidelines. Since Forest Conservation Easement eligibility criteria has been a topic of discussion in recent meetings, she reported that some minor revisions to those guidelines will be presented at the October Committee meeting. In addition, she has begun the development of a program-specific Records Retention Policy - which will be presented for approval by the end of the year. From there, she anticipates tackling each stewardship guideline one by one. Serena asked for any questions or comments before moving into *Stewardship Motions*.

Ryan briefly touched on the history behind the creation of the initial guidelines. He explained that - through negotiations between DEP, WAC and other stakeholders - WAC Stewardship guidelines were developed in public meetings and were meant to provide transparency and procedures for the reserved rights that are contemplated in the Deed of Conservation Easement – not only for staff, but also for program participants. Because those guidelines were approved by unanimous consent, the original intent was for decision-making to be deferred to program staff, as explicitly detailed within the guidelines. On that note, he also cited recent Board Strong recommendations for better efficiency at the Board-level. He pointed out that deferring certain Stewardship decision-making to staff, as originally intended, would allow Committee members to have a better focus on Acquisitions and defining programmatic guidelines/procedures.

Subsequent discussions ensued regarding the roll-out of revisions.

VI. STEWARDSHIP MOTIONS

A. Argyle Farm & Properties, LLC (PID# 6059): Rural Enterprise Request, Commercial Wedding Venue

Troy presented this motion. He explained that he received a request from Argyle Farm to convert an existing barn and residence, currently under renovation, into a wedding venue.

Approximately 4,800 sq. ft. of the structure would be utilized as a rural enterprise – 2,400 sq. ft. for a dining area on the first floor and 2,400 sq. ft. for a dance floor on the second floor. He asked if there were any questions or comments on the information included in the memorandum.

Motion to approve a rural enterprise consisting of renovating an existing building with a footprint greater than 500 sq. ft. to be located within the Acceptable Development Area on the Argyle Farm & Properties, LLC WAC eased property PID# 6059 as described in the landowners' reserved right request letter dated June 13, 2024 and further detailed in the Memorandum from Easement Conservation Planner Troy Bookhout dated August 19, 2024.

Motion: John Verhoeven

Second: Karl Gockel

Motion Carried

B. Palmatier, Todd (PID# 6136): Right-of-Way (RoW) Request – Utility RoW

Mike presented this motion. Staff received a request from Todd Palmatier for the approval of a new NYSEG Utility Right-of-Way (RoW). He explained that NYSEG has an existing RoW on the Palmatier property, and is proposing the replacement of a utility pole within that existing RoW, in addition to the installation of a new 20 ft. x 10 ft. underground utility line – which would service a neighboring residence located to the west of the Palmatier property. As described in the memorandum to the Committee, the proposed RoW is located on the outskirts of the Easement's Resource Protection Area (RPA) and would not create any negative conservation impacts.

Motion to approve a Right-of-Way request on the Todd Palmatier conservation easement property (PID #6136) as described in the landowner's reserved right request letter dated August 2, 2024 and further detailed in the Memorandum from Land Conservation Stewardship Specialist Brent McKeon dated August 19, 2024.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Paul Gallay

Motion Carried

VII. STEWARDSHIP UPDATES

None

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IX-XI)

Motion at 10:22 a.m. to go into Executive Session to discuss Violations/Legal Updates, Acquisition Project Motions/Updates, and Other Business.

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Karl Gockel

Motion Carried

Motion at 10:40 a.m. to come out of Executive Session.

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Shilo Williams

Motion Carried

IX. VIOLATIONS/LEGAL UPDATES

None

X. ACQUISITION PROJECT MOTIONS/UPDATES (MOTIONS IN PUBLIC MEETING)

ACE Project Motions

- A. (PID #6319): Appraisal Approval, Offer Authorization, and Purchase & Sale Contract Execution

Motion to approve appraisal, authorize offer, and execute contract for the purchase and sale of an Agricultural Conservation Easement for PID #6319, encompassing approximately 81.5 acres, at the full easement value of \$1,500 per acre.

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Bud Gladstone

Motion Carried

- B. (PID #6320): Appraisal Approval, Offer Authorization, and Purchase & Sale Contract Execution

Motion to approve appraisal, authorize offer, and execute contract for the purchase and sale of an Agricultural Conservation Easement for PID #6320, encompassing approximately 187.22 acres, at the full easement value of \$1,000 per acre.

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Fred Huneke

Motion Carried

FCE Project Motions

None

Updates

None

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER BUSINESS

None

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m. by common consent.

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 10:00 a.m., via Teams**