

Town of Lansing Conservation Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting 2-2-23

In Attendance: Carrie A. Koplinka-Loehr; Edward Dubovi; David Wolfe, Todd Walter; Karen Edelstein; Robin Bailey; John Fleming; Gabrielle Desnoes; Ruth Groff (town board rep)

Absent: Adam Buck

First item on the agenda was a report by John Steinmetz of Bergmann Associates as to progress on the Open Space Index work. John summarized the work of a CAC subcommittee that developed a list of criteria which could be used to rank the importance of open spaces for the purpose of future conservation efforts. Ranking systems can be complex and need to be tailored to each community with some subjective input into the process. Most of the criteria came from the town survey information collected from town residents in the fall of 2022. Three graphical representations were presented – one from the survey and two others with minor modifications. Water resources were split into two categories – stream corridors and Cayuga lakefront. The other significant change made by the committee was to adjust the ranking of recreational areas such that this criterion would be less impactful than agricultural land. The CAC voted to accept this change. Two other criteria were added to the ranking system – unique natural areas and vulnerability to development – the latter a more subjective criterion, but highly relevant to the process. It is fully recognized that some criteria may overlap in the assessment process such as stream corridors and steep slopes. It was recommended that the work done earlier on conservation easements be forwarded to John for comparison with the OSI ranking system.

After John's presentation, there followed a lengthy discussion centered on the concern that the residents of the Town may not be fully engaged in the OSI process due to a lack of understanding of an OSI. The low ranking of agricultural lands was of greatest concern as to the reason for this - low value placed on agricultural land or low participation of farm owners in the survey process. Some felt that "agriculture" was not a good category as it has economic connotations rather than the ecological aspects of the other categories. Would "farmland" have been a better choice? Should Ag land conservation be pursued in another venue? More public input is desired, but time and money limit a major push for more public forums. It was decided to take two initiatives – develop a FAQ document to try and address resident concerns and for CAC members to attend a future AG Committee meeting. Carrie, David and Ed will work on the FAQ documents and Carrie and Ed will attend the Ag Committee meeting. John and Adam are on this committee as well.

The second item on the agenda related to the change in the planning department staff and the support for live streaming the CAC meetings and recording CAC meetings. Until major changes occur in staffing, the CAC will be on its own to deal with meeting logistics.

Committee Report:

a. David forwarded a document that summarized his activities related to the county EMC. He has become a member of the Climate Action committee of the EMC and has also been appointed as the EMC representative to the TC Water Resources Committee. The Lansing CAC will be well informed of county efforts regarding the environment.

b. John Fleming reported on the activity of the Agriculture Committee. All recent efforts were directed to the new zoning changes. Main concern was the manner in which properties along Rte 34B were selected for the Ag zone.

c. Ruth Groff was welcomed as the Town Board liaison to the CAC. Staffing issues related to the Planning department were discussed. Ruth will also be the liaison to the Trails Committee

d. Planning board item is easement to Jonas Falls which has expired. Land owner wishes to continue even with development of the property. Planning Board mainly dealing with new zoning and Dandy Mart.