

**Harwinton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.
Annual Meeting
Harwinton Public Library, Harwinton, CT
March 26, 2015**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President, Bob Orciari at 7:00 p.m.

Attendees

Officers

Bob Orciari	President
Tamara Christensen	Vice President
Herb Etter	Treasurer
Karen Burnett	Secretary

Board of Directors

Larry Connors	Rob Lesniewski	Howard Rood
Tom Schoenemann		

General Membership

Dave Christensen	Karen Kelleher	Donna Potwin
Susan Rood	Joan Schoenemann	Elaine Sederquist
Franci Tartaglino	Fred Tullock	Janice Tullock

Introductions

Officers and members of the Board of Directors were introduced.

Secretary's Report

Minutes from the Annual Meeting on April 17, 2014 were available for anyone who wanted a copy. Minutes were distributed earlier by email to officers and directors. No corrections were offered. Tom Schoenemann moved that the minutes be accepted as presented. Larry Connors seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Herb Etter presented the treasurer's report noting that the figures were current. The Harwinton Land Trust (HLT) has \$17,634.10 in our checking account. During the year a CD was closed and a new account was opened which is a restricted land acquisition fund. The total value of all bank accounts, including CDs, is \$31,612.50. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes.

Chairman's Report

Larry Connors commended Bob Orciari and Herb Etter for implementing the new land acquisition fund. He also commended Tamara Christensen for maintaining our website. He thanked Bob Orciari for a superb year saying that Bob is hard working and takes the initiative to create and follow through on projects for the HLT. Bob has tracked volunteer hours and found that 128 volunteers worked 52 days for

a total of 343 man hours of labor. The biggest project this year was the Bull Pond trail system. This has attracted a lot of public usage.

Membership

Bob Orciari reported that we received \$8,085 which is an average of about \$49 per donation. That is about the same as most years and so far in 2015 the average donation is slightly higher. The mailing we did cost about \$2,000 and brought in about \$8,000 but the response rate was less than 7%. The annual mailer consisted of several pages of information with a list of contributors and a contribution/membership envelope. He wondered if there is too much information in one package and if we should send out the mailing in December to catch end of the tax year donations. We should look at how this affects our budget.

Thank you letters are currently done using a mail-merge form letter. We should speed this up to have letters sent closer to the time the donation is received. One suggestion is to have preprinted thank you cards so the person who does this spends less time with each response. That person would fill in the amount, name and then would sign which would be a nicer, personalized product. It would cost more than our current system. It would be good to have a membership chairman to do this.

Joan Schoenemann suggested that we hold an event similar to the art show fundraiser that was done in town. This would be a fundraiser and would get publicity.

Status of Website

Tamara Christensen spoke about the website. Over the winter Bob Orciari rewrote the pages about the properties. Menus were streamlined and page clutter was reduced. Tamara posts occasional articles and links to related web pages. People visit our page regularly and this increased in September when we had an article in the paper. Tamara also maintains a facebook page and posts here go to the Harwinton Town News facebook page run by Franci Tartaglino. We had an open house at Bull Pond in the fall. Super Saturday in Harwinton is coming up but we will skip it this year. The Eco Action Club Fair at Lewis S. Mills High School is April 4th and we will go to that. For communications Bob sends out emails regularly and they have considered starting a Mail Chimp account for more constant contact. Franci Tartaglino offered to share her account.

Overview of Properties and Stewardship

Stewards of our properties are usually neighbors who check regularly and suggest improvements

Prudden Easement

Tom Schoenemann visited in the fall and everything appears to be in order. Tom explained that we monitor an easement on the property formerly owned by the Pruddens to make sure the current owner is complying with the rules.

High Meadow

Herb Etter explained that this property is along Route 4 across from Tony's Package store. The property is all wetlands. The bridge on Route 4 next to our property is expected to be repaired over a weekend in the coming year.

Indian Meadow

Bill Tracy is the steward and Bob Orciari presented in Bill's absence. This property runs along Rock Brook which flows near White Oak Drive. Last summer the North and Northwest boundaries of the property were posted. The West boundary is the brook which was not posted. The East boundary remains to be done. The South boundary is along Route 4. We might want a sign at the White Oak entrance to the property but we should do some remediation of the steep grade at that location since the slope is very difficult. Tom said we should check whether a permit is needed for a sign.

Laurel Marsh

This property is across Laurel Road from Wilson Pond. Tamara Christensen reported that a spring Eagle Scout project by Zak Magnoli will add a bench to the observation deck. Another bench will be added, looking out over Wilson Pond, near the sign. Some lower tree limbs will be cleared and the path will be improved.

Forever Forest

Bob Orciari spoke about this property which is about 12 acres along Whetstone Road. There are about 26 species of trees which is a very high level of diversity. There are also well developed trails and ledge overlooks. In the past year the Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut gave us funds for tree planting and we planted a scenic buffer along one side of the property. In June the Wilderness School, which is made of junior and senior high school students, cleaned up some marsh vistas. The Harwinton Garden Club did a planting near the sign. They also planted at Bull Pond and at Meadowview. We expect to have an Eagle Scout project to build a bench for viewing the furthest marsh.

Meadowview

Meadowview is about 20 acres of mixed woodlands, marsh and pond on Meadowview Road. There are lots of deer, birds and other wildlife. Some trail work has been done and more is planned for the coming year.

Bull Pond

Steve Courtright is the steward and Bob Orciari spoke in his absence. This is a large property and it could be a good idea to have two stewards; perhaps with one focusing on the pond and the other on the woodlands. Bob put together a slide presentation which was presented by Tamara.

In a little history, the dam for the pond broke over ten years ago and there was no resulting flooding. Currently beavers have rebuilt it and it is holding up fine. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) came out and said we need to repair the dam. Upon investigation we found that the cost estimate for repair was about \$300,000. The HLT does not have that much money. We had the property surveyed and found that we are not the sole owner of the dam. One of the other owners was subject to a tax sale. DEEP has said that nothing can be done until ownership is resolved so we are in a holding pattern.

In 2013 DEEP created a new rule that property owners must hire dam inspectors. The state will no longer do inspections. This is a hardship cost for us. Currently we are looking into changing the hazard risk from "moderate" to "negligible" which would mean we would not have to do inspections. The Trust sent DEEP a letter outlining that the dam previously broke without flooding, the beaver dam has kept the water level at a normal level for over ten years. DEEP does not regulate beaver dams. We anticipate this to be an ongoing issue.

Land Acquisition

Last year we made a new bank account just for land acquisition. It is a restricted fund and, unlike a CD, we can add to it as we receive dedicated donations. When people want to donate specifically for land acquisition the donation will go into this account where it is not available for operating expenses. This has the potential to increase grant possibilities. We have not added any property in 20 years. Some was offered to us but we turned it down because it was not significant for us and it was already protected under other rules.

We used to have a land acquisition committee and they wrote a plan which is now outdated. It is posted on our webpage. We should rewrite the plan. In the process we should look at potential properties with an eye toward grant writing and speaking to owners. We should also write a straightforward piece on the tax benefits of land donation.

Franci Tartaglino said that the Connecticut Northwest Conservation District is looking for property on which to build a new central campus. They are specifically looking at brown fields properties. Harwinton has one, which she owns and has offered, however they are looking for something closer to Torrington. Rob Lesniewski made a motion to say that we are in favor of the Connecticut Northwest Conservation District having an office in Harwinton. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Larry added that the president should write a letter to them saying that we support this.

Larry Connors talked about why we might refuse a property. The town planning commission says that developers need to set aside a certain percentage of land as open space. Developers want to donate wetlands which are already protected by wetlands regulations. This does not fulfill our mission. Developers can also offer cash to the town. Bob noted that we should be proactive and have plans in place to help make decisions.

Old Business

There was none.

New Business

Larry asked for volunteers for property steward positions.

Nominations for and Election of Board of Directors

Bill Tracy and Karen Burnett nominated the following people to serve one year terms as Directors of Harwinton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.: Elizabeth Brayboy, Lawrence Connors, Stephen Courtright, Cheryl Ganoë, Robert Lesniewski, Howard Rood, Tom Schoenemann, Elaine Sederquist and William Tracy. There were no nominations from the floor. Joan Schoenemann moved to accept the slate as presented. Dave Christensen seconded the motion. The slate passed unanimously.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Burnett, Secretary

