

Harwinton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.
Annual Meeting
Harwinton Public Library
April 5, 2018

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President, Bob Orciari at 7:02 p.m.

Attendees

Officers

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

Board of Directors

Liz Brayboy	Larry Connors	Steve Craig
Karen Kelleher	Rob Lesniewski	Tom Schoenemann
Elaine Sederquist	Bill Tracy	

General Membership & Guests

18

Introductions

Officers and members of the board were introduced.

Review of 2017 membership and year-end financials

Herb said that we brought in more money than we spent in 2017. The number of contributors in 2015 was 143, in 2016 it was 146, and in 2017 it was 176. There is a Land Acquisition Fund which is separate from the general funds and it currently holds \$13,735. We had grants for a land survey, removal of a dangerous tree and for shrubs. Grants were from the Northwest CT Community Foundation and Thomaston Savings Bank. We have 3 CDs. One has about \$24,000; one is for Prudden property easement maintenance and holds \$2,434; and the third is for Prudden easement legal expenses and holds \$6,703. Bob added that financial support is very important for us to achieve our goals of land conservation and public access.

Nominations

Karen Burnett read the following nominations slate for members of the board of directors:

Liz Brayboy	Lawrence Connors	Steve Craig
Karen Kelleher	Bob Orciari	Howard Rood
Tom Schoenemann	Elaine Sederquist	William Tracy.

There were no further nominations. Liz moved to accept the nominees. Eric Rahn seconded this. It was approved unanimously.

Review of accomplishments in 2017 and plans for 2018

Bob reported that at Bull Pond, several years ago, the area near the road suffered from a storm that blew down nearly all the trees. These were cleared out but now it is necessary to mow to control invasive plants. We had work parties to plant new trees and shrubs to improve that area. Also at Bull Pond, last summer we had our first Trails Day Program and this summer we will have another one. Trails Day is June 2nd and the program will be at 1:30 at Bull Pond. Tamara will lead the program. Last year the Wilderness School, which is run by the CT Department of Children and Families, helped us by spreading gravel on trails. In the winter a large leaning tree was removed along the trail. In the back section of the property there is an Eagle Scout project in progress. Joe Sefcik is building a viewing platform with great views of the west section of the pond.

Forever Forest, on Whetstone Road, features tree ID markers along the trails. Last year we worked to restore the water levels at the pond. The Wilderness School helped with sandbags for that project.

Meadowview features long boardwalks by the pond and an old charcoal making site. Last year we had a work party to improve the trails and to plant blueberry, hemlock and other plants. We plan to have another work party in 2018.

Laurel Marsh has a short walk with benches and views of both the marsh and Wilson Pond. Last year we had a dangerous tree removed.

Indian Meadow is off of Route 4 and does not yet have a trail. We needed to wait until a property survey was completed. A trail is planned and we estimate it will require nine footbridges so it will be a lot of work. We have a work party planned for April 28th which will be primarily to plant hemlocks as a privacy screen for the neighbors.

This year marks 10 years since the Harwinton Land Trust's 2008 Art Show which was a very important fundraiser. Many thanks to the organizers: Joan Schoenemann (who was the leader), Merrill French, Susan Rood, Tamara Christensen and Elaine Sederquist.

Door prize drawing

Larry made several wooden items; bud vases, cutting board and spatulas which were given to the winning card holders.

Program: Presentation of Prudden clearcut restoration plan

Tom reported that in 1999, before selling their house, Betsy and Peter Prudden had a conservation easement on all of their property except the 5 acres near and including the house. The Harwinton Land Conservation Trust accepted the responsibility to enforce the terms of the easement.

Bill explained that a conservation easement is a voluntary restriction of the uses of the land. It varies with each individual property easement depending on the intent and what is the target to be preserved, for example wildlife, farm land or something else. It is designed to meet conservation goals. The holder of the easement has the responsibility to make sure the land owner honors the easement. An

easement can also be used for a tax deduction if the easement is donated to a 501(c)3 entity. In our case the breach was not the landowner but a neighbor. Connecticut state law provides means to remediate in this kind of case.

Bob said that this incident started innocently with a request by the neighbor to cut three dead trees on the landowner's property which is also covered by the easement. On October 20, 2017 Bob got a call from the town's land use coordinator. Bob went out that day and met with the neighbor who said he was cutting to get a better view from his house. He added that many of the trees were dead or dying ash. Bob notified the owner by email. The next day Bob talked to the owner and the neighbor who admitted he had cut the trees. The Harwinton Land Trust does have a responsibility to enforce the easement. A total of 1.95 acres, as measured by a surveyor, was clear-cut. This area already has invasive plants and simple reforestation would require a lot of work and a long time commitment to avoid having the invasives take over. Other options were considered. One option is to do nothing which would ensure that invasive plants would take over. The other option is to clear and maintain the area. Agriculture would be acceptable to the easement and might consist of orchard, vineyard, hay field, low cut field or pollinator field. All of these options would be high maintenance. This would be a problem because it would require extra effort on the part of the land owner or on the part of the land trust. If the land trust were to take on the maintenance there would be the issue of volunteers coming on to property that is not ours.

Bill said that the agreement, as it stands now, is for the neighbor to create pasture by clearing the wood chips, providing erosion control, seeding the land and ensuring establishment of the seeds. Hemlocks are to be planted in staggered groups along the road. Mowing will keep invasives at bay. Maples will be added in the field. Witness posts will be added on the property line to replace those removed by the neighbor. All costs are to be borne by the neighbor. The owner will take on the responsibility of mowing once everything is established. A split rail fence will be put in along the road. The neighbor will work with the town to clean up in the right-of-way. The time table is still open and weather is a factor. There will be a formal written agreement.

At this point the floor was opened for audience questions.

Q. Will the neighbor provide a checklist of work done and dollars spent?

A. Bill said we will track results but not necessarily costs.

Q. What is the problem with planting trees, they seem to grow well there?

A. Bill said the problem is that everything else also grows, especially invasive plants.

Andy said that cutting is the only way to curb invasives.

Q. What is being done with supplemental drainage? Last week's rain flooded the catch basin with wood chips.

A. Bill said we've asked the neighbor to work with the town. Lots of water comes from further up the hill and washes over the wood chips. Bob added that we have been to the Inland Wetlands Commission and we will ask the town to review.

Q. There was concern that the neighbor might not do a good job.

A. Bill answered that we will be monitoring this.

Q. There was concern about public access and ATVs.

A. Bill replied that both are prohibited.

Q. If the neighbor moves is he still required to do the work?

A. Bill said yes.

Q. What happens if the neighbor does not do the work?

A. Bill said that we are still working on an agreement that will have teeth to take him to court.

We have some money to start court proceedings and the agreement would require him to pay our legal fees.

Q. Will stumps be removed or ground down?

A. Bill replied that they would be removed.

There was a discussion that this spot was probably farm fields if you go back far enough.

Bill thanked everyone for coming saying we appreciate comments and ideas about this problem.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Burnett, Secretary