

Trails & Open Space Committee Minutes
February 3, 2021 – 2:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Kevin Tollisen; Committee Members Phil Barrett, Ed Kinowski, Jack Lawler, Tom Richardson, Mo Wright, Benny Zlotnick; Supervisor Tara Gaston; Matt Rose, Audra Hedden, County Administrator; Jason Kemper, Jeff Williams, Planning.

Chairman Tollisen called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Zlotnick, the minutes of the 10/6/2020 Trails Committee and 9/2/2020 Land Preservation meetings were approved unanimously.

Mr. Tollisen announced the appointment of Mr. Richardson as committee Vice Chair.

Mr. Kemper said that this was normally a two committee process, both Trails and Open Space. For this first meeting, he will update on the items from both committees. Mr. Kemper said that memos were attached as back up to today's agenda.

County Farmland and Open Space Program.

Since its inception, we have protected 4,813 acres of open space and farmland combined, that's 2,968 acres of farmland 1,845 acres of open space. Total county funding to date in this program has been a little over \$5M, which has leveraged over \$26M in total project costs. Mr. Kemper said that this is a great program, was initiated a local match to the State's programs, we have done a lot of great projects. The challenges with this program is the are complex land deals, and sometimes several years in the making, so that's the reason for some of the delays. Last year, this program was held back due to budgetary concerns. So any remaining funds from last year are rolled into the Open Space Reserve Account. For this year, we have \$100K in the budget for the project. Mr. Kemper previously distributed the draft application for committee review. The application is identical to previous years. Previously approval was through the Trails or Open Space Committee, then to Economic Development, and then to Law & Finance. Now all that comes to this committee initially. The timeline this year is to have applications due by August 6th, this will give enough time to review the applications and prepare summaries for Supervisors for action in September. Mr. Wright asked if there were any issues in the past with this particular application form. Mr. Kemper said that any issues were corrected in the past. The committee agreed that to move forward with the proposed application. Mr. Wright questioned how much was remaining in the Open Space Reserve fund. Mr. Kemper referred to the report attached to the agenda and said there is \$535K in in the reserve however, \$36,128 will be added. Currently there is approximately \$109K not committed to other projects that can be used if need be and \$100K in this year's budget.

County Trails Grant Program.

Mr. Kemper said that this program has been ongoing for several years. The application is the same as has been in the past. The summary provided lists the number of projects done from 2015 until now. Mr. Tollisen confirmed with Mr. Kemper that there is \$75K budgeted this year for this program. The reserve account was used up last year. The program is open to all the municipalities in the County. We have not had any issues with the application. Each year, the Trails Committee

has reviewed it, approved it. On this program, they are proposing a July 9 application deadline, which will allow the projects to be presented to this committee on August 4th. Mr. Kemper said that his office will assist the municipalities with any assistance they need during the application process.

Mr. Kemper referred to the summary of outstanding projects. That summary is attached to these minutes. Some of the open space projects are tied to State Ag & Markets CFA funding, numerous different facets to each of those applications. Mr. Kemper said that sometimes we may work two or three years on these projects, to get them to the point where they are ready for closing. Some projects are applied for contingent on Ag & Markets approval, when we receive final denial of that letter, our project goes away because we are a small portion of those projects. Once we get official notification that it's not funded by Ag & Markets, it comes off the chart and that money would be available.

Mr. Kemper said that he had a very brief discussion with Supervisor Richardson and Supervisor Lawler. Yesterday, he was notified by the Hudson River Valley Greenway of the possibility of additional funding for the trail the county did behind Momentive in the Town of Waterford and in Halfmoon. Basically, three years ago, Hudson River Valley Greenway provided us with a lump sum of funds and we were charged with administering that project. We went out to design and ultimately constructed the project. They are now looking for us to do exactly that same thing as before. Because of budgetary constraints, we were only able to do stone dust and gravel. They are now offering for the 210,000, if we could take on the process, with their funding, go out for engineering design and pave that section that we did with stone dust last year. It will be 100% funded. Mr. Kemper said that at this point he is just making the committee aware of it. If the committee is in agreement with this, within the next month, Mr. Kemper will get an engineering spec. proposal. Mr. Kemper said that he will have all the necessary information to move this project forward for committee and Board approval. Mr. Richardson expressed great enthusiasm for the project and thanked Mr. Kemper for doing a great job. Mr. Kemper said that it's a 1.2 mile stretch. The numbers still need to be verified but are approximately \$175K for blacktop, and \$30K - \$35K to draw up the plans, bid specs and construction inspection. This is part of the Champlain Canalway Trail which connects to the Zim Smith and Mechanicville. Mr. Kemper said that per Andy from the Hudson River Valley Greenway, we can use the same consultant who did it last time, and get a proposal from them. We would authorize the contract, and then they will reimburse us 100% of all of our costs, up to the \$210K. Anything over the \$210K is not the County's responsibility. The committee was in agreement with moving forward. A formal vote of the committee can take place when all of the specs, proposed contracts are prepared.

Mr. Wright asked what the next steps with the Zim Smith trail is. Mr. Kemper said that we have some funds leftover from the construction, we ended up not using additional change orders. We have entered into a minor contract to do a feasibility study from Oak Street up to Saratoga Springs. That was our first step that got us started in the Town of Halfmoon. His goal is to get that completed this Spring, then we will be able to start applying for CFA or any other funding. Ultimately, the decision will be up to the Board of Supervisors if we front the money for design, which really helped us in the last round of funding. Mr. Kemper is hoping that by mid-summer to have a proposal for Board of Supervisors to decide if they would like to move forward on this. Mr.

Kemper said that the ability to have it designed and all the right of way in hand was absolutely crucial in receiving funding in the past. We received over \$4.9 million for that project.

Mr. Richardson suggested that Mr. Kemper have a conversation with the Mayor of the Village of Ballston Spa. They are in the process of doing some signage, taking the Zim Smith trail up through the Village to Route 50. Mr. Kemper said that he was just responding to an email prior to this meeting. Working with their design team as well. Mr. Kemper said that the village wanted to be able to connect to the Zim Smith. That will be part of our design, and there's currently a feasibility study in the Village underway as well to make that connection.

On a motion made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Barrett, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board