

# Trails & Open Space Transcript

2/3/2022

## **SPEAKERS**

Steve Bulger, Bill Peck, Jason Kemper, Matt Veitch, Joe Grasso, Kevin Tollisen, Several Supervisors, Eric Connolly, Bridget Rider

### **Joe Grasso**

I'd like to welcome everybody to the Feb 3rd meeting of the Trails and Open Space committee. Bridget, attendance has been taken?

### **Bridget Rider**

Yes, it has.

### **Joe Grasso**

Everybody in attendance?

### **Bridget Rider**

Everyone except for Supervisor Kinowski.

### **Joe Grasso**

Okay. I'd like to thank everybody for being willing to serve on the Trails and Open Space committee this year, my fellow Supervisors, and thank you to the Chairman for offering me the opportunity to Chair the committee, my first chairmanship of a committee.

### **Joe Grasso**

So the first item under, on the agenda is approval of the minutes of the December 1, 2021, Trails and Open Space committee meeting. Do I have a motion for approval?

### **Kevin Tollisen**

So moved.

### **Joe Grasso**

Moved by Supervisor Tollisen. Do I have a second?

### **Eric Connolly**

Second.

### **Joe Grasso**

Seconded by Supervisor Connolly. Any questions on the minutes? All in favor say aye.

**Joe Grasso**

Ayes have it. Motion carried. Next on the agenda is the appointment of the Vice Chair. I asked supervisor Matt Veitch from Saratoga Springs to serve as vice chair of the committee due to his extensive experience with this committee in the past and Supervisor Veitch has graciously accepted that nomination. Thank you, Matt, for your willingness to serve. Next on the agenda is amending the boundaries of agricultural districts number one and two. And I will ask Director Kemper to give a description of what that amendment for this year entails. And this will be subject to a motion and approval. Right, right.

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Jason Kemper**

Yup.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay, thank you.

**Jason Kemper**

In front of everybody also just that sometimes this time of year, we hand out a little agricultural district cheat sheet. So for those Supervisors this is in front of you, just quickly explains our process that we go through every year for the agricultural districts number one and number two. This year we had three applications. That process starts in October of every year. We had three applications one from the Town of Wilton, 106.17 acres for hay and corn crop production, in support of raising livestock on the land in the future. Second one is the Town of Stillwater tax parcel 243.-1-43.2. This one's 38 plus or minus acres dedicated to firewood production and adding to the name, the family member who's immediately adjacent to the property and also participates in the ag district. Those two are both from agricultural district number one we have two agricultural districts in the county. The second one is from agriculture district number two in the Town of Clifton Park, this is Turner Tower LLC to include 12 and a half acres of predominantly viable agricultural land located on Tanner Road. So future is, this property has been historically farmed in the past and dedicated to the production of crops. So all of the normal processes these requests are made to the county and then their agricultural Farmland Protection Board holds a meeting. That has occurred so that process is completed and attached to my memo, you'll see the report from the Agricultural Farmland Protection Board which they are the body in charge of evaluating these proposals as far as adding them to the agricultural district. So that was completed, and that report is attached and they have recommended the approval of all three of these properties in the agricultural districts. And so prior to the February 9th meeting, there will be a public hearing at this board. If no one speaks in opposition to this then the plan is to adopt a negative declaration under SEQRA and approve these amendments to the agricultural district. And there are some color maps and other several attachments in the packet as well as the Farmland Protection Board report and the all the necessary SEQRA documents for those who wish to read those. And I'll just add Chairman, this is the

303 B process. This year once every eight years we also go through a 303 A process and that process will be starting in a month or so for agricultural district number one.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay, great, great description. Great to see continued interest in the expansion of uses within our and growing our ag districts within the county. Obviously, it's important to the economic vitality of our county and creating that character that so many people cherish within our county. So great to see. Thanks, Jason, for the description. Any questions from the members of the committee? No, are there any other supervisors on the line with any questions? Okay, do I have a motion to approve amending the boundaries of ag districts one and two as proposed?

**Joe Grasso**

Moved by Supervisor Matt Veitch. Do I have a second?

**Matt Veitch**

So moved.

**Kevin Tollisen**

Second.

**Joe Grasso**

A second by Supervisor Tollisen. Any other questions or discussion? All in favor say aye.

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Joe Grasso**

Nay? Ayes have it. Jason any update on the County forest land or the Zim Smith Trail updates?

**Jason Kemper**

Yah, so typically chairman what I would do is from the last meeting date until this meeting date I'll try to.

**Jason Kemper**

Thank you, Administrator Bulger, for the reminder. Typically what I tried to do is give just a brief update on what some of the funds were used, and some of the major projects we got going on and (inaudible) later along the Zim Smith. So I'll just go down through there quickly. We replaced just under 400 feet of fence at Oak Street that was seriously dilapidated. Replaced that, that was cedar fencing, has been replaced with a three rail pressure treated which will last a significantly long time. So we have an our next batch of aluminum signs are ordered. And there's one right down here in front of me. The last committee meeting, folks had asked to see those. We do design those here in the planning department and typically we had a paper sign in the past and we tried to put Plexiglas over it and it just it never really worked out. So these are waterproof aluminum signs. And then we put Plexiglas over those signs. So if people feel like vandalizing them, we only have to replace the plexiglass. So it's working out pretty well. And we're replacing all those in all the county forest lands and in numerous spots along the

Zim Smith. We completed the Champlain Canalway Empire trail, Empire State Trail construction in Waterford and submitted that reimbursement to the Hudson River Valley Greenway. We were the project managers for that pass through funding. The clearing and grubbing is completed on the east mitigation site in the Town of Northumberland. In the spring, the signage will be placed as well as the gates placed on the parcel. So these are the three county forest land parcels in the Town of Northumberland that basically are the Karner Blue mitigation sites. Down in the Zim we do have some snowmobile issues this winter, we're gonna have to do a new gate in the spring along the side of the Fairways of Halfmoon, and just a brief update on our open space projects, we got eight pending open space Farmland Protection projects being administered by the planning department, one the Town of Northumberland just submitted for reimbursement reviews, so that one will be coming off the books. We're currently managing 24, that's down from 30 at the last update, pending trial projects. Six have closed since the last update, those are the Town of Saratoga, the Town of Ballston, the Town of Malta, the Town of Moreau had two and the Town of Greenfield. Since the last update provided to this committee, we've also wrapped up all remaining contracts with the 10 that were on pending contracts. And we did just get a reimbursement request yesterday from the City of Saratoga Springs for a 2018 project. So, that's just a quick update on what's going on related to County Forest lands, Zim Smith and our programs.

**Steve Bulger**

Microphone.

**Joe Grasso**

Thanks, Director. So it seems like you know, there's, you know, some of these items are related to maintenance of our trail system within the county and I think that's something that's, you know, really important for us to consider as we continue to support the construction of these trail segments that along with that is a long term commitment by the county, you know, for the stewardship and maintenance of that. So, obviously, you know, there's residual costs on the county, but something that we need to stay, you know, committed to in the future. And we want to make sure that we're, you know, devoting sufficient resources to keep up with the maintenance of these facilities. So with that, that the Champlain canalway trail segment in Waterford, which I'm familiar with, so now we've got a trail that comes out of the Village of Waterford and comes up deep into the Town of Halfmoon. So that's a pretty good segment there. The maintenance on that segment in Waterford is that taken on by the Town?

**Jason Kemper**

The Town.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay, sounds good. Great, great update. Any questions on the update to the projects and items the Director discussed? Matt?

**Matt Veitch**

Oh, you're looking at me, but I don't really have anything I just know that A couple years ago, we had done, I'd done some reviews of some of our trails and put something together. I don't know if you ever

got that report, but I can share that with you if you'd like. There's a few things that we probably can look at, you know, for this year, I know we put some increased funding in this year, which is great. And there's some things we can do for, for using that. There definitely is a laundry list of things that have to be done, the trails first opened around 2009 so, you know, from then until now, you know, we've done limited maintenance. But you know, we're at the point now, where some of those older ones really need some, some work because they're, you know, they've been worn down for 10 years, and we need to we need to work out even longer need to work on them. So, I'm happy to work with the chair on that kind of stuff with Jason.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah. So Supervisor, I think that's a it's a great point, I'm glad you brought it up. I think it's you know, a lot of effort, I did see that report. There's a lot of information in there, it obviously took a lot of time and effort to put that report together and extensive field reconnaissance out of those, on those trails.

**Matt Veitch**

It was COVID, we had nothing else.

**Joe Grasso**

And I think it's telling about the level of use at our parks and trails within the county. And especially now I think what we're what we saw on that report isn't just COVID related, it's just based on the desirability of our trails, and parks in the County and I would like to share that report amongst the committee members, and have everybody give everybody a chance to opportunity to see it. Again, it points to that continued commitment towards stewardship and maintenance of these facilities and, and hopefully we can learn from information in that report, make some commitments about improvements, maybe there needs to be a prioritization regarding, you know, the costs and what's higher priority than some of the other items, because I know that's an extensive report. But let's it's something I'd like everybody to put some time into. So thank you for that. Alright, I asked Director Kemper to just put together a review of the 2022 budget allocations relating to trails, open space and Farmland Protection. I know some of the committee members have experience on this committee in years past I have not so just a chance for us to kind of lay some initial groundwork kicking off 2022 I asked Director Kemper to put some notes together for this. So Jason.

**Jason Kemper**

Thank you, Chairman. So I'll just go down through the highlights, you know, the increases and then turn it over to for discussion. So the first one is our Open Space Preservation account, this is used to fund our open space and Farmland Protection programs, that was significantly bumped up this year, this is a was increased to \$400,000. So a significant jump. One, one problem I think we've had with the with the program in the past, we'll get to a little later, as you know, we've got some great projects, but never really that extremely large project. And I think, you know, now with this increase, we can start to look at, you know, we can get into it later, but the application and sort of what our requirements are on the program. So we also have \$100,000 to in the trails, municipal trails grant program, and you'll see from the list of projects, there's a lot of great work being done out there on these projects. It's also greatly appreciated. The big increases on the maintenance, typically in the past, we had one account to handle the maintenance on our trails, and kudos to Supervisor Veitch a couple years ago, prepared that

report and we started to increase the allocations to maintenance on the county forest land and the Zim Smith. So this year, we broke that into two separate accounts. It's not all handled in one account. We have 10,000 set aside solely for county forest land properties, and another 40,000 for maintenance on this Zim Smith. So that'll allow us to do some projects, frankly, we've had on hold on some of those areas. So and I will add, you know, Department of Public Works is a huge partner with us. They, they have an employee they provide to us that does, you know, the maintenance on the Zim as well as the county forest land. And when, when the work, the road crew guys are not busy, they assist us with parking lots and everything else. So kudos to DPW because they really helped us pull the weight on that. So that's greatly appreciated. The last item is a \$1.5 million infusion of funds into the capital fund. So what this will allow us to do is this is our first seed money to look at the Zim Smith going north from Oak Street to the city of Saratoga Springs. So I'll get to that little bit the next piece on the agenda. Thank you.

### **Joe Grasso**

Alright, thanks, Director Kemper. So just in terms of the, I was looking at the list of the trails projects over the past couple of years. It's quite an extensive list. That seems to be a very popular program and I'm glad that county continues to support it through funding on a year to year basis. You know, I know from our Town we've taken advantage of it and been able to do trail projects that we wouldn't otherwise been able to afford to do. One thing that I think we should look at for, you know, the this, I'll call it Town sponsored trail projects, is to make sure that we're looking at things from a county wide perspective. You know, we've all got trail projects going on in our local municipalities. But I think what we want to make sure that we're doing is also looking at how these trail projects fit into the county wide, you know, context and look for opportunities for interconnectivity between, you know, the projects that the towns are taking on and doing themselves to, you know, the more of the county wide trails network that we've got, we've got this Zim Smith, which is a, you know, a large, north, east west spine, we've got the Champlain canal trail now up through Waterford and most of the Town of Halfmoon, I think we want to look for opportunities to connected these things, so that we have that holistic view and, you know, provide increased mobility throughout the whole county, not just within individual towns. So that's kind of a focus, I would like, you know, the Supervisors to consider as we, as we talk about these projects next year. Any other questions regarding the information that Director Kemper shared?

### **Matt Veitch**

I just have a quick question. So, like in with the trail that's coming out of Waterford, heading up to the Town of Halfmoon, which I took a look at, I think it looks really great. Are those considered part of the Empire State Trail those sections? And is there any state incentive for us to try to build more of that, along those particular pathways, you know, along the, along the county, because, because I agree that a lot of times these trail projects are very specific to the municipality. You know, like, for example, the Saratoga Springs Greenbelt trail gets money but that's our main city trail right now we're working on. It will venture into the Town of Wilton and Greenfield a little bit, but at the end of the day, it's mainly a city trail. Doesn't necessarily have great connectivity to where the Zim Smith is going to come out at Spa State Park. It May, or going out of Saratoga toward Moreau, which is, hopefully Zim Smith eventually will terminate in the Town of Moreau. But at the end of the day, you know, I agree with you, how do we, how do we make that work better? And how do we maybe leverage other funding to try to get that kind of thing going?

**Jason Kemper**

So we do have an excellent relationship with Hudson River Valley Greenway. So typically, when they when they struggle, getting a project, you know, across the finish line, and we've done it twice, now that reached out to a county and asked us to manage those projects. We've sort of had an open door policy, if there's anything within that corridor, and obviously, if the municipalities agree, and the Board of Supervisors, then we'll gladly manage those projects. So we have a great dialogue with them. Like I said, they know we, we get the job done quickly, which I appreciate. You know, I mean, this one start to finish was very quick. And so I would say we're constantly working with them. And they know, you know, if there's a point where they need to get something done within that quarter, and it's located within the county, we've always been amenable to that. I think some of it or there's some design and environmental issues on certain pieces, that in my opinion, you know, I let them sort those out. And then so that it's not on us for that. But certainly when those are ready, I think we can move forward.

**Joe Grasso**

Supervisor Connolly, more to add?

**Eric Connolly**

Yeah, I do. I agree with your points of view as far as the holistic picture of our trails and connecting to already existing arteries and giving an update on the Town of Ballston and our efforts to connect the veterans trail which runs from the heart of Burnt Hills hamlet, to Outlet Road. We had two grants kind of applications already filed. One was just for the engineering to connect through the Curtis Lumber industrial park to the Zim. And one was for the engineering and the construction. And it's just north of \$2 million for both elements there. We did not get awarded the first grant for just the engineering we're waiting on the next month or two to find out if we get awarded the grants for both. However, if we don't, if we don't get awarded, of course we'll apply the next year but you know, we're back to square one there. So of course I'd like to have some deeper conversations with Jason and understand the whole process of how the county and the town might work together on that effort. If need be. We are also moving in the direction, The Board and the Town team to creating a parks department. And so we would be able to handle maintenance of both the veterans and the connector piece moving forward. The long term vision is not only just to go through the Curtis Lumber Industrial Park and connect to the Zim there, but there's also a the old trolley line right where you would go underneath the railroad track into the Curtis summer industrial park, you would veer to the left, go over Brookline Road, go over route 50 with push buttons, stop signs, stoplights, and then go into both the Middle School and the High School of Ballston Spa. So those are our big dreams for the town to be really connected with biking and walking and to the Zim. So just wanted to highlight that.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah, great information. So if you have information to share Supervisor Connolly, you know that I, that so we can get visuals on what Ballston is doing and Jason can take it under advisement and see how it factors into the bigger plan. It would be great. Thank you.

**Matt Veitch**

Hey Supervisor. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So is there any plan to extend the one that runs next to the rail line any further north, I guess would be the direction or is that part of those plans?

**Eric Connolly**

That is part of the plan. There was, the feasibility study looked at three options. The cheapest, by far was to get national grid to give us an easement to just go down the dirt road which they control. Yep. And then it tucks under the railroad tracks into the Curtis Lumber industrial park, but then it would also go left.

**Matt Veitch**

Yeah, it's a great trail. So thank you, frequent user on that one.

**Joe Grasso**

And just expanding this regional connectivity, you know, one step further. You know, Supervisor Connolly and I had a talk of the town's event yesterday that the town of Glenville took part in and the town of Glenville is extremely active in developing trails, throughout their, throughout their community and connecting into you know, county wide trails within Schenectady County. And there could even be some opportunities to provide some interconnections there so that we can really, you know, look at things in a more regional context. So great, great information. Okay, next on the agenda, I asked the Director Kemper to provide an update on the County trails grant review process with some updates to that to be considered. Go ahead.

**Bill Peck**

Before you before you move on, can I just make one comment? This is supervisor Peck.

**Joe Grasso**

Sure Supervisor Peck, up go ahead.

**Bill Peck**

Yeah, it might be helpful for Jason, for you folks to have Jason pull out the old Green Infrastructure Plan that the County did in 2005 or six, and just have that as a resource for everyone to look at. It was sort of a globally looking, plan for the county. And now it may be dated a bit being 15-16 years old, but it may be helpful as you're moving forward.

**Joe Grasso**

All right. Great suggestions, Supervisor Peck. Thank you for that.

**Jason Kemper**

I've got that Supervisor Peck. I'll forward that out to the committee members.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah, yeah. So talking about the Zim Smith, northern extension plans.

**Jason Kemper**



Yeah, I'll just make it quick. Last fall, we completed a feasibility study for the Zim Smith extension north, which will go basically from Oak Street up to the City of Saratoga Springs, the Spa State Park. We do have two grants that are pending right now, we'll hopefully hear on those within the next month to two months. And that'll definitely determine our path forward. Both of those are through CDTC. So one grant is for two and a half million dollars to extend from Oak Street up to Maple Ave, which will basically get us a first section of the Zim. And then the second one is sort of the home run all the way from Oak Street to Saratoga Springs. So we'll see how we make out in either of those processes, which will definitely determine our steps forward. We do have existing Zim Smith capital funds from 2021. Now we have additional funds adopted in 2022 budgets. So hopefully they rank well, if not, I think our position is at that point in time, take that original capital fund seed money and start the initial design and right away acquisition, as we had discussed from the, for the Zim from Oak Street up to Saratoga Springs.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay, great. So and these things will be concurrent, so as these other grant applications are pending, we've got some funding to work with to advance these initiatives from the design and

**Jason Kemper**

Yup.

**Joe Grasso**

permitting, you know, starting this year. Is that our goal is to get this started this year. Right?

**Jason Kemper**

I would love to be, it depends, I mean, I would love to get a grant from CDTC and we build it but worst case scenario we will be getting into design this year.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah. Which the county has funded for 2022 so it's in the budget.

**Jason Kemper**

Yup, we had existing capital funds leftover from 2021. And we have this new allotment that the Supervisors put in the 2022 budget, so that'll absolutely give us significant seed money to complete that.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay, great, great news. And I know this the Sewer District is working on a relining project along their trunk sewer, so that may involve either the new Zim Smith north or the current Zim Smith,

**Jason Kemper**

That will involve both sections. So basically, their sewer relining project will sort of take care of the center section of the Zim Smith, it wasn't done. So there's a large section from just above the Village of Round Lake up to Curtis industrial park. That is the oldest section of the Zim sort of the most deteriorated pavement. So I've been working very closely with Dan at the Sewer District, he's been great trying to figure out, you know, because they do need heavy equipment, and it's large excavation

around pretty much every other manhole all the way from Curtis down to Round Lake. So there will be some absolute trail closures. And I'm working with Dan and his team to address, you know, any damage that may occur and or restoration. That's for the section that's built right now. He's also doing relining from, you know, the end of the Zim at Oak Street all the way up to Saratoga Spa State Park. So as part of that process, I've been working with Dan and his team, you know, sort of, if there's work, we will probably be in that same corridor with the trail. So he's looking at sort of teaming up on some of the work that we may be able to do within that corridor. So it's a good dialogue right now with the Sewer District. And as they finalize their plan for the relining you know, we'll be back to report on it.

**Joe Grasso**

All right. Great news. And I know and that's important. I know the Town of Halfmoon was very successful when they were doing waterline projects along the Erie Canalway Trail. You know, it kind of laid the groundwork for the for the trail project to come in on its heels. So good. Good that you're on top of that. So any questions about this Zim Smith North extension project this year?

**Jason Kemper**

And I do have the feasibility study if Supervisors would like that I could email that out, from last fall. So that

**Eric Connolly**

One question, Chairman. I know, Jason Kemper, we were having some issues with the feasibility study with a few properties and still not having all the right permissions in place. Did that get resolved?

**Jason Kemper**

Study.

**Eric Connolly**

The County study from Oak Street to the state park.

**Jason Kemper**

Yeah, we still you know, there will obviously be right of way issues along that corridor, I think there's a couple of key parcels that will be, you know, probably challenging and (in audible) when the time comes if that's the preferred route. So no right of way has been acquired or no landlords have been talk, have been spoken to along that corridor. It's just a feasibility study at this point in time.

**Eric Connolly**

Gotcha.

**Jason Kemper**

My suggestion would be once we get to design and get a design most of the way completed and similar to what we did on the Zim section to Mechanicville, we hire a right of way acquisition company and let them sort of carry the ball on those acquisitions.

**Joe Grasso**

Definitely something that we want to work on this year, getting those authorizations for the possible routes.

**Jason Kemper**

Yep.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay. Great. Any other questions from the Supervisors? All right now, next on the agenda, County Trails Grant process review.

**Jason Kemper**

Okay, so in front of you, you have the, you know, the old, not the old, the 2021 trails grant application. So it's a fairly simple, you know, application. Typically, in front of this committee, we go over, you know, does that application work? Are there things we want to change? As I said, it's \$100,000 this year. The simple things we usually look at are the project maxes, when the projects will be released, and then we usually like to give two full months, and then time it up with a committee meeting to for the applications to be due. You do have a chart in front of you, of all the pending trail projects that we have out there right now. We're working hard to get them completed. Just some general comments that have been made in the past is the Supervisors are great about providing reports, but maybe a timeline on completing the projects. And that's, it's something that's been discussed, ultimately, that decision lies with the committee. You do have \$100,000 limit. Some years we've gone over that some years, we've been under that. So. And I'm sorry, \$10,000 limit 100,000 in the budget. So those are the two main things that this committee usually sort of sort of chats about during this process and I'll leave the rest of the discussion up to any Supervisors.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah, and looking at the list, it does seem like some of those are aging and some kind of sunset provisions on those on the funding commitment I think may be appropriate. But I think that's something that all the Supervisors you know, just should weigh in on any thoughts about the those edits there or any questions?

**Eric Connolly**

Have a quick question, Supervisor Connolly. Is that application online available to Towns?

**Jason Kemper**

It will be once we put it back up. So right now this is 2021.

**Eric Connolly**

We're just looking at it.

**Jason Kemper**

Yeah.

**Joe Grasso**

But right now these are, these are changes to the program for 2022 that are under consideration.

**Jason Kemper**

The typical changes this committee looks at are highlighted in red.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah. So again, we don't need to make a decision today on that but I just asked all the committee members to take a look, and if they have any recommendations to be made in before this gets finalized to get those recommendations to Director Kemper within the next few weeks. Does that work?

**Jason Kemper**

Absolutely. And I could, I'll flag all those and then you could decide as a committee which ones you want.

**Matt Veitch**

Mr. Chair.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah. Supervisor Matt Veitch.

**Matt Veitch**

So the so the form the application itself is just committee approval that we we're okay with the form we don't have to send it any further than this. Right. I don't know how we do this normally, I haven't been around for these.

**Jason Kemper**

Yeah, it typically form is committee approval and the actual trails grants.

**Matt Veitch**

Right.

**Jason Kemper**

Different from economic development grants that are approved by the committee and then the full Board of Supervisors.

**Matt Veitch**

Right, right. Okay. Thanks.

**Jason Kemper**

The form and the, the form and the requirements procedures are always at the committee level, always have been in the past.

**Matt Veitch**

Okay, thanks.

**Joe Grasso**

All right. And the same holds true for the County Farmland and Open Space Grant process.

**Jason Kemper**

Yup, so that application is in front of you as well. This one, you know, we always had a limit of \$100,000, we usually had anywheres, it's ranged since I've been here from anywheres from 50 up to 500,000. That has the things I think the committee would be interested in, it does have a \$100,000 max. Thank you, Mr. Hartnett, for reminding me. I got to evil look to turn the mic on so, so that that project, you threw me off kilter, their attorney Hartnett, so these projects, it's \$100,000 limit on farmland and open space. And you'll see those that spelled out. So that that's just something if we're talking about a program now that is upwards, you know, at \$400,000, does the committee want to change those project limits that we've typically funded, so that that's something for discussion. Other issues that have been raised, in the past, the committee has been, and if Supervisory Peck's still on the line, I definitely, want his thoughts here, in the past, the committee has not been enthusiastic to funding, you know, stewardship costs, that's something that has been raised before from some folks at Saratoga PLAN and some supervisors. You know, we we'll cover the transaction cost, but we don't put up, we won't let County money be used for transaction costs moving forward. So those are just a couple things that have come up in the process. And like I said, this is a significant increase in the program. Hopefully, we could garner some applications out there, you know, and get people very interested in the program.

**Joe Grasso**

Alright, thanks, Director and hang on a second,

**Bill Peck**

Just (inaudible)

**Joe Grasso**

Hang on, Supervisor. So yeah, in terms of those costs, you know, and, you know, how the funding could be used, you know, just something to consider. I'm not personally in favor of using one time funding items for operation or stewardship costs, I think that's a residual cost that you got to consider. And you should have other means and methods to accomplish that, in case that funding isn't available. But I do think the point about making sure that the funding that we allocate is flexible enough that it can be used that, you know, the \$100,000 in today's cost of trying to complete these projects may be limiting. So I think we're going to look for your feedback, Jason on, you know, ways that we can make sure that this program is, you know, flexible enough that it serves the needs, and we continue to, you know, close projects, which is our ultimate objective. So, those are just my thoughts. Supervisor Connolly your light is on.

**Eric Connolly**

Yes, sir. Just a quick clarification, I'm new to the committee. So, pardon my ignorance here, but what types of things have been awarded in the past? Jason, can you just give me a couple examples?

**Jason Kemper**

Yeah, I could go down through I mean, most of them have been PDR projects, large very large ones, PDR projects and you'll see that on the list here which remaining outstanding. We basically have two categories, you know, Farmland Protection, which are usually we'll team up with New York State Ag and Markets on those projects as well as Saratoga plan. And then you have separately just open space projects, so not active farmland projects. So the priority by this board and the committee in the past has always been firmly in protection, I think that was the original intent as spelled out in the green infrastructure plan. However, we do fund open space projects as well. So you'll see a breakdown of that on that chart of the remaining ones, which one are farmland and open space. So typically your farmland are much larger projects, much more involved and often involve multiple agencies. So sometimes, like right now we're working to wrap up the 2019, Town of Northumberland project, and that that just received the approvals. So you know, you sometimes two to three years out on those, oftentimes the open space ones, we can, we can do a little bit quicker, because it's usually just PLAN and the municipality and the landowner.

**Eric Connolly**

And that's up to how much for open space?

**Jason Kemper**

In the past it's been 50.

**Eric Connolly**

Right.

**Jason Kemper**

50 or 50%.

**Eric Connolly**

And that was helpful information. I was really asking about trails though.

**Jason Kemper**

Okay,

**Eric Connolly**

But I needed that too. So

**Jason Kemper**

Okay, you want to go back to trails.

**Eric Connolly**

So just a couple quick examples of I know, it's up to 10k, and what types of projects have been approved in the past for trails.

**Jason Kemper**

So that that's ranged anywhere from park equipment, to engineering studies to actual construction to purchase of materials for construction. It's been a wide array over the years. So I think this committee is, if it's demonstrated by that municipality, in the application, I think this committee has always been very amenable to get these projects off the ground. And you look, and kudos to Supervisor Veitch and those that started the program back in the day. But if you look at, I mean, there's three pages of municipal projects that have been completed, you look at the overall investment by the county and the total project cost here. You know, we're into it for about 480,000, you're over 3 million in total project costs. So there's a lot of projects that have been put on the ground by this program. It's working out very well.

**Joe Grasso**

So in terms of the county funding, it's a 50% match.

**Jason Kemper**

50% up to 10,000.

**Joe Grasso**

Yeah, so up to 10,000. So if you've got a \$20,000 trail project that the town wants to take on, you submit an application for 10 grand after you spend it, that easy reimbursement process.

**Jason Kemper**

And we do use in-kind so a lot of folks are using in-kind highway or town services for their match.

**Joe Grasso**

Again, and the county has been great about the flexibility of the program. You know, we've used it for not only trail construction, you know, but some drainage improvements to make our trails more accessible. And also, you know, some surveying efforts to mark the boundaries of our parks and preserves so, popular program. Supervisor Peck I think that wanted to have a question? Supervisor.

**Bill Peck**

I just wanted to give the committee as you're looking at the Farmland Protection a little historical background, the program was started in 2003. I think the county put up a million dollars over a three year plan. Then after the first year, it was so successful that year two it went to 500,000. It was really started just so everyone knows, back in the old days of New York State was funding 75% of farmland PDR programs and Open space Institute was quite often the matching portion. As they wanted to get out of that, that's how the county program started as mostly a matching program, then the state stopped funding for a few years. So the county up its dollar amount, I believe we got as high as \$6-7-800,000 doing programs or PDR projects on our own. And I do believe that there's county funding or state funding back available again. But it just gives you an idea. And to your point, Chairman Grasso I was adamant from the start, that that the ongoing costs, the stewardship costs weren't from the County taxpayers, the county taxpayer, I thought always was preserving the open space, the Farmland Protection through the PDR. But the ongoing stewardship had to be done through the private, whoever is holding the conservation easement, which quite often is either the town or the Saratoga PLAN has been a great partner in these. And so the ongoing stewardship costs needed to become be separate.

Although, several years ago, and Jason could look back, I wasn't on the committee, and that did change for a year or two where they were awarding stewardship costs as well. But then I think they pulled that back again.

**Joe Grasso**

Alright, great Supervisor Peck for that historical context. Good thoughts for us to consider moving forward.

**Matt Veitch**

Mr. Chair? Yeah, just one last comment. So as far as the trails are concerned, yeah, I mean, I think it's been a great success, you know, doing that program over the years and agree with Jason completely. A lot of times, it's, it's just that little bit of funding that you need to get the project going. And so we've been really quite open ended as to how we, you know, allow that to be, you know, distributed. And I think that was kind of the intention was that, you know, it could be really for anything, whether you're designing a project, building a project, something on your Recreation Park, that you need to have a path people walk around on, you know, I mean, anything like that would be, you know, open, because it's just a little project that, you know, just helps people get outside and do that kind of stuff. So, at the end of the day, I think you're right, it's really leveraged a lot of extra projects that would not have otherwise gotten done. So. Thanks. Thanks to us for doing it.

**Joe Grasso**

Great thoughts. And Supervisor Connolly, I know the town of Ballston is very active, it's in its pursuit of a PDR program. And that's where this program can really help facilitate some additional funding where there's a gap needed to close on some of those projects.

**Eric Connolly**

Yes, sounds exciting. I mean, when we combine some of what we have going on with raising funding for PDR purposes, it's going to come in really handy.

**Joe Grasso**

I think the more we can leverage these county funds through other, you know, either town or state or federal dollars I think that benefits everybody. All right. With that, I had asked Jason to, you know, think about other initiatives that the Supervisors on the committee and even all the Supervisors within the county, if there's things regarding trails, and open space, Farmland Protection, that you that you're working on in your community, that you think that the county could have a facilitative role, you know, we want to provide an environment where you can get those thoughts and ideas to either myself or more, more importantly, to, to Jason to consider. Again, we've got some, obviously some new members on the committee, but obviously, some people that have a lot of tenure with this committee, a lot of experience Supervisor Peck, you've obviously got a lot of experience and, you know, although, you know, this is the format of the committee or the form of the committee for 2022, you know, we want to look at what we, you know, things that we've already been working on as a county in the past, continue those forward. And then, you know, a lot of these things are long term initiatives are going to take a lot longer than us being able to accomplish in 2022. So we want to have that long range goal and get everybody's, we welcome everybody's input into the process. So, you know, the our marching orders



for, you know, the next month or two are to give some thought, the things that you think that this committee may want to add to our action item list of things to start to discuss, and toss around and maybe identify some action items for. Any other business for the committee members. Anybody else on the phone? All right, I'd like to just thank Jason and, you know, for helping putting the agenda together and, you know, all the backup that goes along with these things. Great, great job. And I'm looking forward to working with the committee in 2022. So with that, I'll ask for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nobody wants to leave. Okay.

**Kevin Tollisen**

So moved.

**Eric Connolly**

Second.

**Joe Grasso**

Moved by Supervisor Tollisen and seconded by Supervisor Connolly. All in favor say aye.

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Joe Grasso**

Nay. Ayes have it. Alright. Thanks, everyone. Have a good night. Stay safe.