

GLOCESTER LAND TRUST  
REGULAR MEETING  
November 14, 2019

The regular meeting of the Gloucester Land Trust took place on November 14, 2019 at the Gloucester Town Hall. Chair Stephen Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members in attendance: Stephen Mitchell, Steven St. Pierre, Gene Cavaliere, Roy Najecki, Janine Pitocco and Legal Counsel John J. Bevilacqua, Sr.

Members Absent: One member to be appointed by Town Council and David Piccirillo

Minutes: Judi Rix

Guests: GLT Volunteer Jim Giarrusso and Councilman Jay Forgue

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Open Forum Agenda Items Only:** No one present wished to speak.

**Approval of minutes of previous meetings** (discussions and /or action):

- a. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 08, 2019 meeting; it was seconded by Gene Cavaliere and passed unanimously. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to accept the amended minutes of the October 22, 2019 meeting; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco and passed unanimously.

**GLT Treasurer's Report** (discussions and /or action): Treasurer Roy Najecki provided an updated report showing all the expenses for October; there was nothing remarkable to report. The September transfer of funds into the capital equipment reserves took place and the tractor fund received \$5,000 and the computer fund received \$3,000. Gene Cavaliere made a motion to approve the report as presented; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco and passed unanimously.

**Approval of Bills** (discussions and /or action):

- a. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to pay Judi Rix a total of \$350.00 for October 08, 2019 and October 22, 2019 Minutes; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco and passed unanimously.
- b. Janine Pitocco made a motion to pay John J. Bevilacqua, Sr. a total of \$2,000.00 for Legal Services for October 22, 2019 workshop and November 14, 2019 meeting; it was seconded by Steven St. Pierre and passed unanimously.
- c. Janine Pitocco made a motion to pay Northern Landscape a total of \$1,300.00 for work at the Clarkville Schoolhouse; it was seconded by Steven St. Pierre and passed unanimously.
- d. Steven St. Pierre made a motion to pay Pare Corporation a total of \$981.54 for Services from August 31 to September 27, 2019; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco and passed unanimously.
- e. Janine Pitocco made a motion to pay RI Land Trust Council a total of \$500.00 for Annual Dues; it was seconded by Gene Cavaliere and passed unanimously with Roy Najecki abstaining due to his position on their Board of Directors. (The total breaks down: \$300 actual dues, \$200 donation)
- f. Janine Pitocco made a motion to pay Northern Landscape a total of \$575.00 for work at Hawkins Pond; it was seconded by Gene Cavaliere and passed unanimously.

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Chairman Mitchell wanted it on record that he authorized the finance department to reimburse the Town DPW for two expenses related to the GLT tractor; \$183.34 for repair supplies and \$11.99 for anti-freeze.

### **Old Business** (discussion and/or action):

a. Update on Volunteer Projects, Member Najecki emailed the volunteers of available opportunities to help with property maintenance projects every Saturday and Sunday for two hours each day to work on various trails and clean up the historical cemeteries on the Kwandrans and Garrity Woodland properties. Member Najecki did receive a few responses and a few people showed up this past weekend; they were able to get a lot accomplished. During that clean up event, there was a person who did some work that was a volunteer waiting for official Board approval. Chairman Mitchell wanted to make it crystal clear that only officially sanctioned/approved volunteers can work on any Gloucester Land Trust properties. Unless the person has been officially accepted, and that does not mean pending acceptance, they can not do work on the properties. It is a liability for the Board if they were to get injured, and once they are approved, they are then covered under the Board's insurance, so it is for their benefit as well.

b. Hopkins Woodlands Encroachment: Legal Counsel John J. Bevilacqua sent a letter to the landowner on 10/9/19, giving him seven days to contact Attorney Bevilacqua before the Board took action to remove the items still on GLT property. The landowner did not respond to that letter, so Attorney Bevilacqua would like to know how he should proceed. The landowner has spoken to Attorney Bevilacqua on the phone and is aware of the request and the deadline imposed to remove the items. Member Najecki believes the landowner even extended his lawn onto Land Trust property and installed a sprinkler system on it as well. Member Najecki will make another site visit to confirm this and take pictures. The landowner will receive one final letter which will include the mention of the sprinkler system on Land Trust property and be given until the next GLT meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> to respond.

c. Trail Clearing and Installation of sign at Steere Hill: Chairman Mitchell spoke with Sean Condon of Northern Landscape Corporation about removing the tree to put up the new sign, but Mr. Condon would like to trim the tree instead of taking it down. Mr. Condon and his brother would also like to donate some landscaping shrubs for placement around the new sign once they put it in place. Most of the trails at Steere Hill have been cleared with only a small portion left to be done. Roy Najecki was able to get 9 of the 26 acres mowed and the main trail is clear. Member Najecki recently noticed that during the Route 44 construction the state blocked the entrance to the center field at Phillips Farm with a guardrail; that entrance was the only way to access that field. Chairman Mitchell will contact the director of the RIDOT to notify them of this problem and Member Najecki will flag the location in Question. Attorney Bevilacqua stated that the issue may have to go before the traffic committee to get the guardrail removed.

d. Update on Hawkins Pond Dam Project: Chairman Mitchell has no update on the project currently.

### **New Business** (discussions and/or action):

a. Naming of trail up to summit of Steere Hill Conservation Area: Chairman Stephen Mitchell would like to honor late Land Trust Trustee Russell K. Gross by naming the trail after him. Member Roy Najecki would not be in favor of this because he would like to see the trail keep its historical name of Steere Hill. Member Najecki suggested another alternative to honor Member Gross; could put his name on the tractor that he used so often and could put a plaque on one of the benches in his memory instead. Vice-Chairman Steven St. Pierre thinks it would be a nice gesture to name the trail after Member Gross since he spent a lot of time there taking care of the trail.

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Councilman Forgue asked to come up and speak on this agenda item. Councilor Forgue stated that the Town Council had discussed getting a piece of granite and having it engraved in Member gross's honor. Maybe the piece could be put by the bench under the tree, and the Town council will pay for it. Chairman Mitchell would like the Board to consider what has been proposed this evening, and he will speak with Russell's family about the proposals. It will be brought back for discussion at the next Land Trust meeting in December.

b. Proposed bid request to clear trees and brush at top of Steere Hill: Chairman Mitchell would like to table this item for now. Roy Najecki asked about contacting the USDA to see what they might suggest for maintaining that land. He was hoping they could provide some suggestions about how much to clear and how much to remove for environmental benefits to the property. Chairman Mitchell thinks that is a possibility in the future, just not right now. Roy Najecki made a motion to table the proposed bid request to clear trees and brush from the top of Steere Hill; seconded by Steven St. Pierre and it passed unanimously.

c. Action on Volunteer Application requests:

c.1. David DeCost (10/09/2019): Roy Najecki made a motion to approve and accept the application submitted by David DeCost to become a GLT volunteer; seconded by Janine Pitocco and it passed unanimously.

c.2. Jeffrey Steere (09/22/2019): Roy Najecki made a motion to approve and accept the application submitted by Jeffrey Steere to become a GLT volunteer; seconded by Gene Cavaliere and it passed unanimously.

c.3. Jennifer Winn (09/02/2019): Roy Najecki made a motion to approve and accept the application submitted by Jennifer Winn to become a GLT volunteer; seconded by Janine Pitocco and it passed unanimously.

c.4. Bruce Payton (06/10/2019, and 10/11/2019): Roy Najecki made a motion to approve and accept the application submitted by Bruce Payton to become a GLT volunteer; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco, but several Board members wanted to discuss this further. Steven St. Pierre said he struggles with this application. Vice-Chairman St. Pierre gives Mr. Payton credit for wanting to volunteer and help with the properties, yet over the years since Mr. Payton has left the Board he has publicly stated that he doesn't like how the Land Trust does things and that they don't do a good job. Member Janine Pitocco suggested meeting with volunteers to get feedback on what the Board could do better, and Vice-Chair St. Pierre agreed that was a great idea. The Board can't improve if people don't bring their concerns directly to them. Chairman Mitchell also wanted to point out that when Mr. Payton served as Chair of the Gloucester Land Trust, he left some serious legal and financial issues behind that the current Board had to deal with and rectify. Chairman Mitchell asked for a roll call vote: 2 Ayes: Roy Najecki and Janine Pitocco, 2 Nays: Steven St. Pierre and Stephen Mitchell and 1 Abstain: Gene Cavaliere. The motion failed and the application was not approved for acceptance.

d. Develop RFP for chimney rehab at Clarkville School: Vice-Chairman St. Pierre does not think an RFP will be necessary. The Board needs to get a few chimney experts out to look at the condition of the chimney to get a better idea of the cost to rehab it. This will be brought back to the December meeting.

e. Resolution to Town Council in support of the Hawkins Dam Project: Town Clerk Jean Fecteau crafted a resolution from the Town Council (*Resolution 2019-#06, Dam Revitalization Funding*) that respectfully requested the town's Legislators in the House and Senate to find a solution to the funding situation, to repair the Hawkins Pond Dam, as part of a collaborative effort by the State of Rhode Island and the Department of Environmental Management, to enable the town to better protect its citizens. To support that resolution, Chairman Mitchell would like to develop a resolution for submission from the Gloucester Land Trust. Janine Pitocco made a motion to allow Chairman Mitchell to develop a resolution, that would

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support the Town Council's resolution, asking for help in obtaining financial assistance to repair the Hawkins Pond Dam from the town's Legislators in the House and Senate; seconded by Roy Najecki and unanimously approved.

f. Adopt 2019-2020 GLT Budget: Roy Najecki made the changes to the proposed budget requested at the last meeting. Chairman Mitchell still has questions regarding what exactly the remaining balances are, and why the Open Space funds have not been transferred into the Hawkins Pond Dam line yet.

As reflected in the March 12, 2019 meeting minutes, "Chairman Mitchell and Legal Counsel Bevilacqua spoke to the Finance Director about moving funds from the open space funds budget line, into the Hawkins Dam repair budget line, to start covering the expenses the Board has already begun incurring." Also mentioned again in the April 09, 2019 minutes: "Finance Office Director Diane Brennan needs to have a written resolution from the Board to authorize her to set this line account up. *Whereas it is the responsibility of the Board to designate funds for a specific purpose, a motion was put forth to provide this resolution. Russell K. Gross made a motion to consent to the adoption of a resolution, authorizing the Gloucester Finance Office and Director Diane Brennan to establish a line account in the Gloucester Land Trust Budget for the Hawkins Dam Project; the motion was seconded by David Piccirillo and passed unanimously.*" In the May 28, 2019 meeting minutes, both the April minutes and the letter that Attorney Bevilacqua sent to the Finance Office providing written authorization were mentioned: "Both Legal Counsel John J. Bevilacqua, Sr. and the Recording Clerk Judi Rix (motion in April minutes) provided the Finance Office with authorization to establish this line account for Hawkins Dam."

Steven St. Pierre made a motion to table the adoption of the 2019-2020 GLT Budget until the December meeting; it was seconded by Janine Pitocco and passed unanimously.

g. Foster Land Trust: Walter May of the Foster Land Trust reached out to Chairman Mitchell to ask how the GLT generates funds. The GLT is in the unique position of receiving much of their funding from the real estate taxes in town. Chairman Mitchell and Attorney Bevilacqua are planning on attending the Foster Land Trust's meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

h. Replacement of trustee to GLT (process): Chairman Mitchell emailed Town Clerk Jean Fecteau a copy of the letter he addressed to Town Council President George "Buster" Steere regarding the vacant trustee position on the Land Trust. Chairman Mitchell asked her to forward the email message to members of the Town Council as well, which asked for more time to review the files to be able to make a recommendation to the Town Council. Chairman Mitchell and Vice-Chairman St. Pierre have been researching and reviewing the applicant pool because they feel it will be important that the new trustee be someone who can do maintenance work and will be a good fit on the Board. Member Pitocco suggested holding interviews if possible. They are hoping to have a letter soon recommending one or two candidates to the Town Council.

### Correspondence

a. Jean Fecteau – Land Trust room reassignment (10/23/19): Chairman Mitchell received notification from the Town Clerk that all the Land Trust stuff in the old office has been moved out and is stored in a closet.

**Trail Inspection and Volunteer Hour(s) Reports:** Steven St. Pierre completed the inspections at Steere Hill. Roy Najecki mowed at the top of Steere Hill and has a little more left to do at Sprague Farm.

**Monthly GLT Activities/Reports:** Roy Najecki is still planning a walk at Steere Hill on the day after Thanksgiving (11/29) at 10am.

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**Open Forum:** Member Janine Pitocco is still having a problem with her IPAD and was wondering how she can get it to work. Vice-Chairman St. Pierre said he would take it with him and see if he can get it up and running for her.

**Executive Session:** There was no executive session held at the meeting this evening.

There being no further business before the Land Trust, Janine Pitocco made a motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m.; it was seconded by Gene Cavaliere and passed unanimously.

**Minutes Approved:** December 10, 2019 Meeting.