

Minutes of the WPA Annual Meeting
Wonalancet Chapel
7:30 p.m.
August 6, 2006

Members Attending:

Gretchen Behr-Svendsen and Karl F. Svendsen
John Breasted
John and Ann Carman
John and Martha Chandler
Genevieve Christy and Peter Galassi
Janet and Ian Cooke
Stan Coville
Bill and Mary Hargens
Tom and Athena Holtey
John Howell and Laura Weymouth
Kelley McGrath
Doug McVicar
`Chele Miller, with guest Sachiko Maeda
David and Denney Morton
Marie Ortner
John and Alette Reed
Margaret Reiser
Tom Ryan and Heather P. Thompson-Ryan
Ted and Barbara Sidley
Mary Breasted Smyth
Nancy Stearns
Helen Steele
John Waite
Ralph and Lo Weymouth
George and Sally Zink

After welcoming everyone to the meeting, President Ted Sidley conveyed the sad news of Ann Behr's death earlier this summer and asked for a moment of silence in her memory.

Minutes:

Minutes of the 2005 annual meeting were read and approved after corrections: Peter Galassi, not Galacci; and John Waite's sentence (pp.2-3), which reads, "His fear is that a developer will buy a hundred acres and put in five twenty-acre lots" should read ". . . twenty five-acre lots."

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's report was read and approved. The operating fund is now

at \$2,533.54; the response fund, at \$66,750.21.

Discussions:

1. Ted reminded everyone that the investment committee of the WPA Board has kept WPA funds in a savings account. He asked if anyone could become a member of that committee and help to "galvanize" the account." He then introduced the subject of Helen Steele's property, soon to be sold, and yielded the floor to Helen, who addressed the group.

2. Helen, just in from haying, introduced herself and asked for a list of everyone present so that she could be sure all members receive a copy of her letter to the community (see attached letter). She said that she is currently working with Land Vest to obtain a real estate appraisal, with a three-stage appraisal upcoming. She feels that the property would make a good horse farm, but the first phase of the appraisal alone will cost \$4,500. The crux of the issue for her is that she needs to teach to maintain the farm, and she recalled B.J. Semmes saying to her long ago, "Helen, don't let that farm break your back." Her parents bought the farm to keep it from development, and Helen has kept it intact to this point, teaching for forty-one years in order to do so. It costs \$25,000 yearly to run the farm, and Helen knows that her health will not allow her to keep teaching and farming much longer.

Ralph Weymouth said that he had talked with a supporting member of the Lakes Region Conservation Trust who would like to see the principles of the Trust applied to Helen's land. The LRCT trustees previously thought about buying the land outright but are unable to do so. They would, however, like to help with the solution, perhaps by purchasing a conservation easement. To begin, they told Helen that they need her to obtain an appraisal and would help her find an appropriate buyer.

Helen responded that the LRCT has taken no action so far, and because she needs an appraisal by November, she has engaged Keith Ross, an employee of Land Vest, to develop a restricted use appraisal. The appraisal includes a site inspection, regulatory analysis, site analysis, and conceptual planning (including determining buildable sites). The first phase will begin on August 10 and should be completed in eight to ten weeks, at which time easement options will be discussed. Helen wants above all to preserve the land and hopes to sign the WPA covenant, but if conservation efforts fail, she will out of necessity put it on the market.

Stan commented that there are eighty property owners in the Wonalancet area and wondered if it would make a difference if all of them wrote to the LRCT, expressing their concern and desire to have the property preserved.

John Waite reported that at the last WPA Board meeting, there was discussion of the WPA contacting other conservation organizations in hopes of working with them.

Mary Breasted Smyth felt that we would need to raise funds in order to work with the LRCT. She noted that Castle in the Clouds is a huge expense for the LRCT, but that they will consider property showing promise as a fund-raiser project.

In regard to the WPA funds, John Waite remarked that we have to realize that we may not be big enough to support this and other projects that may arise. Alette Reed asked if we could contribute to the conservation of Helen's property from the fund; Ted responded that we have flexibility.

Martha Chandler asked Helen, "If others in the valley made permanent arrangements for their property, would that encourage you?" She said that, if it would, she and John would put permanent restrictions on their land to prevent commercial use and would work with neighbors to encourage them to do the same. Her remarks were met with applause.

Chele Miller asked Helen if she had talked to Don Berry in regard to the appraisal by Jay Closser; Helen has talked to him via messages four times. Ted asked about the difference between fair market and best use appraisals. Helen responded that the fair market price might be much higher than best use, which is agricultural.

George Zink reminded the group that the Wonalancet area is an aquifer that Green Mountain is trying to preserve. He asked if they had been contacted and said they should be consulted, as they have data on the soil. He also said that the Chocorua Lake Association deals only with permanent protection and that it is an aggressive organization. "This farm is to Wonalancet as Chocorua Lake is to Chocorua," Stan added.

Helen asked that everyone keep her informed about conversations anyone might have with conservation groups. John Waite suggested that if anyone sends suggestions to the WPA, we copy them to Helen.

John Breasted commented that Great Barrington, MA, contributed funds matched by the state to keep farmland farmed in perpetuity. This is now MA law. Martha commented that, sad to say, the NH legislature lowered the funds available for this purpose. Helen added that in Maine, a farm in New Gloucester started with a large trust being established and is now a viable farm.

Chele: "Listening to this conversation, it sounds like we all share the same goal. Helen is on a path toward that. If you need help, Helen, there are a lot of people here who'd be glad to help."

Diane: "Surely we've agreed that Helen's property is so important that we should spend at least a part of our funds now."

Denney then rose and, to lengthy applause, thanked Helen for her stewardship.

Mary: "If the organization asks what neighbors would do to help, let us know."

Athena Holtey noted that we all go our separate ways after a meeting like this and asked if there might be a committee to help Helen with phone calls, etc. Helen responded that she hasn't gotten any further than she has because she's so often out working in the barn! Mary suggested that people sign up to help; John Waite moved we pass around a sheet for that purpose. That was done, and many signed.

Peter Galassi suggested that the WPA share its mailing list with all the members. Ted ruled his suggestion out of order, but promised to discuss it at the next Board meeting.

3. Ted showed the group a map based on Chloe Johnson's map, with green areas indicating protection. Considering the whole map, about eighty percent of the land is protected. He noted that Dick Daniels' and Joann Cave's properties are permanently protected.

4. Stan reported that about forty landowners have signed the covenant or have indicated that they will do so. Ted remarked that problems with covenants are mostly as they were last year, simply technical.

5. Ted announced that John Waite, Ann Carman, and Stan Coville had agreed to be renominated as WPA directors, and that Gretchen Behr-Svendsen, had kindly agreed to join the Board in her sister Ann's place. As there were no further nominations, Mary moved that the secretary cast a single vote. The "ayes" were unanimous.

6. Ted reminded the group that the WPA is still cooperating with the NH Highway Department, and Martha added that all of us should check our own property and get rid of vines that threaten our trees—bittersweet, ivy, etc.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:55.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Carman, secretary

Notes