

Town of North Stonington, CT
HEWITT FARM COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 1, 2012 at 3:00 p.m
New Town Hall Conference Room

The meeting of the Hewitt Farm Committee was called to order by Nita Kincaid at 3:05 p.m. in the New Town Hall Conference Room. This meeting was called as a Special Meeting to replace the Regular Meeting scheduled for Monday, October 29th, but canceled due to inclement weather. Members Ellie Banker, Jack Brown, Dick (Coop) Cooper and Nita Kincaid were present. Mary Ann Ricker arrived at 3:50.

1) Approve 10/15/12 Meeting Minutes

Jack motioned and Ellie seconded to approve the 10/15/12 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

2) Review second draft of the Hayfield RFP

The committee reviewed the 10/27/2012 draft of the "Request for Proposals to Harvest the Hewitt Farm Hayfields," and agreed to several changes that will be incorporated by Nita and submitted to First Selectman Nicholas Mullane for review.

Nita also distributed a draft of the "Hewitt Farm Hayfields Response Form" for the committee's approval. After considerable discussion by the group, changes were agreed-to. Nita will incorporate these changes and submit this document to Mr. Mullane.

Nita presented a list of names of individuals tentatively identified to receive the RFP and Response Form. Coop and Ellie will meet to further expand the list, and Nita will contact Mr. Mullane to determine how the request for proposals should be advertised.

Nita will write a cover letter that introduces the "RFP package." She will also assign dates for its release, a deadline for the return of proposals, and a contract award date. Jack suggested a return deadline three weeks after the package becomes available. The group agreed the period of time should be no longer than that.

3) Status of rental leases fireplace and insurance issues

Nita stated that the First Selectman is making arrangements to have the fireplaces in the 1750 Farm House and Cabin inspected. Issues involving the wording in the tenants' insurance policies have not yet been resolved.

4) Update on Greene Gables' fencing and trees

The committee very briefly discussed the proposal from Hull Forest Products to harvest the evergreen trees around Greene Gables. It was noted that at least three trees that were marked by Hull were blown down during the recent storm. It is not known what impact this will have on the Hull proposal.

5) Final report on Girl Scout Camporee

Nita reported that 29 Girl Scouts and 15 adults had attended the camporee. Nita asked the organizer for any suggested improvements to the site. A permanent portable toilet with water facilities was mentioned. Coop offered to "look" into possibilities and the cost.

6) Mary Ann Ricker on Community Gardens

Mary Ann Ricker attended the meeting to submit an *Event/Project Application* and to discuss the possibility of establishing Community Gardens on Hewitt Farm. She explained that her application was intended to start the committee thinking about Community Gardens and to allow her to get some idea of whether to continue pursuing the project.

Mary Ann read aloud to the committee a brief description of the proposed project, including why it should go forward, where the gardens could be located, and how the project might be operated. Her application contains a letter from the President of the Eastern Connecticut Community Gardens Association offering his help, and a copy of the *Application Form* and *Rules and Regulations* used by Kolp Community Garden Plots in Farmington, Connecticut.

Mary Ann answered the committee's many questions on how Community Gardens are generally organized, and how she envisions they would be run at Hewitt Farm. She said that she was waiting to see the committee's reaction to her proposal before beginning extensive research and planning. Mary Ann suggested some ways the project might be accomplished. She believes that there may be as many as 12 to 15 people who would participate in a Community Garden at this time.

Nita explained that the committee had briefly discussed such a project in the past, but envisioned that it would have to be formed and operated by individuals other than the Hewitt Farm Committee. She added, "It needs an advocate."

Jack said he would like to see a more detailed proposal, as well as some indication of the number of interested participants. Ellie noted the committee should accommodate the people of the town if they want Community Gardens on the farm.

Coop explained that over the years he had seen these projects in many different towns and that they seem to "work" only if they are well organized and well enforced. Apparently Community Gardens require a very strict management. Coop also noted that because Community Gardens do not require a large expenditure to get up and running, and because they are totally reversible if unsuccessful, they could be tried at Hewitt Farm.

The group also agreed that both Sites #1 & #2 on the application (the Greene Gables Meadow and adjacent to the Route 2 Parking Area) might be acceptable locations for Community Gardens.

Nita summed up the discussion by noting that the committee is receptive to such a project, provided the committee would not be responsible for the establishment and operation of such a Community Garden. She indicated that additional information is needed from Ms. Ricker before the idea can be discussed further.

At the end of the discussion with Ms. Ricker, she mentioned that she is co-chair of the NS Affordable Housing Committee. She suggested that consideration might be given to modifying the deeds on the two Hewitt Farm rental units to make them qualify as "affordable units" under state statutes.

7) Members' updates on projects & any additional items for discussion

Nita announced that the North Stonington Garden Club has added the Hewitt Farm to its list of annual donations and will be sending \$100.00 each year. This money will be placed in the separate Hewitt Farm bank account to be used for improvements to the property.

Nita stated that John Bradshaw has asked if he may tap the Maple trees for syrup again this winter. She gave him tentative approval pending the committee's agreement. Nita asked John if this year he would perform an education session for the public. The group agreed on both counts.

Nita has signed Grant Leiper's "completed project" form. He will attend a future meeting to present his project book.

8) Public comments and questions

There were none.

9) Priorities for the November 12, 2012 agenda

- a) Progress on the hayfield contract and rental leases
- b) Update on Greene Gables fencing and trees
- c) Response to storm damage
- d) Maintenance of the meadows (Jim Cowen)

- e) Letters to community groups
- f) Ideas for guest lecturers or consultations
- g) Member updates on projects and additional items for group discussion

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Richard B. Cooper