

Town of North Stonington, CT
HEWITT FARM COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 28, 2014 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 3:08 p.m. in the New Town Hall Conference Room with members Ellie Banker, Jack Brown, Dick (Coop) Cooper, Ed Harasimowitz and Nita Kincaid present. Beth Varas attended the meeting to discuss a Letterboxing project with the Committee. Nita also reported that Ron Lewis would arrive around 4:15 to review the hayfields' condition.

1) Approve 07/14/2014 Meeting Minutes

Ellie motioned and Jack seconded to approve the 07/14/2014 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

2) Letterboxing Request

Beth Varas approached the committee with an HFC project application. She requested that she and her children be allowed to "plant" a "Letterbox" somewhere on Hewitt Farm. Beth described what "Letterboxing" is and how it works. Prior to the meeting, Nita had provided the committee with a link to related CT DEEP information, which showed the existence of letterboxes throughout the state park system.

After numerous questions and discussion by committee members, Nita motioned and Ed seconded to allow Beth to establish a Letterbox on Hewitt Farm. The motion carried unanimously. A small box will be hidden in a location known only to Beth and to anyone else who finds it. Beth will write the required search instructions, post them, and maintain the Letterbox site.

3) Status of Dam Reconstruction Project

Nita reported that she and Coop had attended the meeting of First Selectman Nicholas Mullane, Engineer Karl Acimovic, Highway Foreman Steve Holliday, and two representatives from Mattern Construction, Inc., George Mattern and Rich Cheney. The purpose of the meeting was to question the lowest-price bidder on his approach to the required work, and to learn more about his experience with water control, bridge construction and stonework.

Karl will address the Board of Selectmen on July 29th to report on the results of this meeting and his recommendations on contractor selection.

4) Review of Trail Map and Other Handouts

The group discussed how the information on the back of the *Trail Map* and history handout, *A Brief History of Hewitt Farm*, came to be written, and what should be done to review them for accuracy and relevance. Nita offered that she and Cindy would meet to discuss any short-term needed revisions.

5) The Cabin

Jack reported that the vines growing up the side of The Cabin had returned, and that some action is required to remove them and prevent them from returning. Nita indicated she would speak to Foreman Holliday, as his workers had previously cleared the area, but perhaps nothing had been done to eliminate the roots.

6) Greene Gables

The committee acknowledged that it is waiting for the anticipated letter from the North Stonington Historical Society. A date of end of July had been promised.

7) The Hayfields

Ron Lewis, one of the farmers responsible for harvesting and maintaining Hewitt Farm's hayfields, attended the meeting to report what has been done on the hayfields so far this year, and to inform the committee of a desire to invest in improving the condition and yield of the fields. Ron stated that he and Mike Daniels would like to have the committee consider extending the original hayfield *Agreement* for three additional years on top of the originally contracted five years so that the farmers may invest substantial monies into improving the fields both for the Town's benefit and to increase the quality of their crop.

Ron stated that to date he and Mike have completed all improvements to the property that were specified in the initial *Request for Proposals* and the *Agreement* that they signed with the Town of North Stonington. Ron noted that he and Mike had removed all limbs and brush 10 to 30 feet from stonewalls around all of the hayfields. They also worked closely with the UConn Cooperative Extension Service using *Best Management Practices* to make the fields more productive. Ron explained to the committee that he and Mike brush hog the borders of the fields, and that they keep the fields fertilized and limed in response to periodic laboratory soil analyses.

Ron said that he and Mike are requesting an addendum to the *Agreement* at this time because they would like to reseed the fields in September, and that to do so will cost them between \$7,000 and \$8,000. If they do make such expenditure, they want to be assured that they will have at least six more years to experience a return. Ron added that if such an extension were granted, he and Mike would use a seed drill to plant a mixture of Red Clover and Timothy grasses.

Ron concluded by stating that he and Mike believe their proposal will leave the Town with very nice hayfields and that these fields will not require additional improvement for many years to come. He further stated that he looks forward to working with the committee and making the Hewitt Farm property one that everyone can enjoy and appreciate in the future.

The committee asked questions regarding, among others, the requested length of time of the extension, the benefits of reseeding at this time vs. not reseeding, and the advantages to the Town of this proposal. Of some concern to the committee was whether the existing agreement allowed granting this extension. The committee concluded however that item #9 of the *Hewitt Farm Hayfield Agreement* dated January 7, 2013 permits such an extension to be granted, and the committee agreed unanimously to proceed with informing the Board of Selectmen of its decision. Nita will so inform First Selectman Mullane.

8) Community Garden

The Chelsea Groton Savings Bank has notified the Hewitt Farm Committee that it is ready to present a check in the amount of \$500.00 as a grant to the Community Garden Association for a small structure and compost toilet at the Community Garden. The bank indicated a desire to make this award during a small ceremony at a time and place yet to be determined.

9) Public Comments and Questions

- None

10) Priorities for August 11, 2014 Agenda

- Review design of *Trail Map* and history handouts
- Review the revised project list, *Tasks Identified for Volunteers (07-28-2014)*
- Update on the Dam Reconstruction Project
- Update on Greene Gables resolution

Respectfully submitted, Richard B. Cooper