

SOUTH WINDSOR AGRICULTURE, ARTS & NATURE CENTER COMMITTEE

TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR

Minutes

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November 13, 2019

South Windsor Public Library – Board Room

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Pat Botteron, Open Space Task Force
John Caldwell, Park & Recreation Department
Stephanie Dexter, Planning & Zoning Commission
Mary Etter, Director of S. W. Public Library
Ray Favreau, Director of Parks & Recreation
Jeff Folger, Senior Environmental Planner
Katie Graham, Park & Recreation Commission
Michele Lipe, Director of Planning
Virginia Macro, Historic District Commission
Mayor Andrew Paterna, Town Council

Members Absent: Sandy Jeski, SWALPAC
Councilor Liz Pendleton, Town Council
Tim Shepard, South Windsor Land Trust
Betty Warren, IWA/CC

Others Present: Doug Williamson, Dudley Farm in Guilford

3. Approval of Past/Meeting Minutes (September 11, 2019)

Mr. Folger made a motion to approve the September 11, 2019 minutes. Mrs. Etter seconded the motion; and it was approved, unanimously.

4. Public Input

None

5. Discussion items

Guest: Doug Williamson visit/Dudley Farm/Guilford

Mayor Paterna explained that Mr. Doug Williamson from Dudley Farm in Guilford is present tonight. He has visited the Priest Farm and viewed the Burnham property.

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5. Discussion items (*Continued*)

Mr. Williamson came before the Committee and gave the Committee some history regarding the Dudley Farm in Guilford as follows:

- The Dudley Farm is a 10-acre farm.
- The owner left the property and his assets to a local church and the Fire House.
- The Fire House ended up with the farm.
- The farm was started by a group of neighbors and the Fire House.
- When the property was first acquired, there were no bathrooms.
- The house had a previously constructed addition on the north end, which was used as a rental apartment. A caregiver moved in immediately and started renovating the apartment in trade for not paying rent.
- The first donation of \$15,000 was used to put in a septic system.
- A big event was held, which brought 600 people to the property.
- There were 300 people who signed up to become members in the first year, which brought in funds for the project.
- A couple of other small donations came in.
- Recruited volunteers for various renovations on the property.
- The farm has been in operation for 25 years.
- All of the buildings have been restored. Three additional buildings have been added to the property. One of the buildings is a barn which is used as a rental for events. This barn was originally in another location in Town and was donated to the farm. The barn was taken down and put back up with the help of 100 volunteers. The renting of this barn brings in \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year in income.
- The property has community gardens (raises the funds to operate), farmers market, flower gardens, rentals, and programs. One program that is held is a classroom for local school systems.
- The caretaker's apartment is now a regular rental and produces \$15,000 to \$16,000 per year.
- The Dudley Farm has acquired other properties, consisting of a 13-acre farm (rented out), 25 acres of land, and restored historic property.
- The total revenues per year that are coming in presently is \$75,000 to \$80,000 per year.

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5. Discussion items (Continued)

Mr. Williamson stated that the big issues in a project such as the Priest Farm is funding and volunteers who are committed. A CSA and having livestock on the property will take volunteers who are very committed. Mr. Williamson suggested that the Committee consider selling some of the property to gain funding to begin the project and also stated that the community should understand what the Committee wants this farm to be.

Answering questions from the Committee, Mr. Williamson stated that getting people on the property is probably the first step. The barn, which is 30' x 50', cost approximately \$70,000 to put up and can fit about 120 attendees to any event with parking for 70-75 cars. The selling of syrup, farmers market, community garden, three sources of rental income, and membership generates about \$85,000 to \$90,000 per year. The individuals who helped with the renovations of the house were guys from the Fire Company and volunteers. Mr. Williamson stated that there were no zoning issues on the property. The property had two driveway cuts, and all of the barns existed, so building permits for each building were filed. All buildings, except the house, are handicap accessible. The total cost to create public bathrooms with chemical toilets was \$8,200. The service on that building is \$200.00 per month for five months.

Mr. Williamson stated that being a non-profit organization makes it easier to operate. Mr. Favreau explained that there is a Community Foundation that can serve as a fiduciary.

Mrs. Lipe informed the Committee that membership costs are \$15.00 for students, \$25.00 for seniors, and \$500.00 for a lifetime membership.

Mr. Williams suggested to the Committee that the greenhouse be eliminated on the Priest house. At least half of the L should be eliminated. Structurally, the house is descent. There is a little bit of sill damage on the front wall with a lot of cosmetic work throughout the house that should be done.

Mrs. Lipe stated that there might be a way for the Town to deed out a portion of the property to a non-profit organization. This would make it so the Town doesn't give up all of the land.

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5. Discussion items (*Continued*)

Mr. Williamson told the Committee that the Dudley home was completely furnished by donations. The furnishings are all of the correct time period of the house. The barns have equipment from the 1840's period.

The Dudley Farm is opened on a limited basis in the winter. There are Christmas events and the Winter Farmer's Market. If the Town can get volunteers to move the barn from the Burnham property to the Priest property, there would still need to be a couple of paid people who would be in charge.

Mrs. Macro stated that she feels the present Committee will be able to get people interested and committed to this project, but she is not sure this is the group that will be able to see this project to the end conclusion.

Mr. Williamson informed the Committee that the Dudley Farm was gifted in 1991 and began programs on the property in 1992 and then suggested that the house on the Burnham property be moved to the Priest property.

Mr. Caldwell said that this Committee has been working on this project for at least three years and has done very little. To make this property succeed, the Committee needs to bring income into this project. Mr. Williamson stated that if the Committee comes up with a vision that can be shown to people, there will be interest in the project.

Committee members discussed exploring what legal options the Committee has through a referendum for the development of this property. Also, discussions were held about approaching the State Department of Transportation about curb cuts, programs that are envisioned at the Priest Farm, and options for the house. Mr. Williamson stated that even if the first tenant of the home is not involved, the project will receive a certain amount of money per month for rent. Mr. Caldwell felt that the house should be separate from the rest of the property. The person who lives there can restore it rather than pay rent. Mr. Williamson suggested that the Town keep at least 15 to 16 acres for the project. Mr. Folger reminded the Committee that the property presently has 14 acres of tillable land.

Mayor Paterna stated that at the next meeting, a ballot should be taken to see what Committee members feel should be done on the property.

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5. Discussion items (*Continued*)

Mrs. Dexter felt that the Committee needs to regroup. A workshop should be held to review the whole project and all of the materials the Committee has to date. Mrs. Dexter also felt that if there are members that have not been committed, they should be replaced.

Mayor Paterna stated that he feels a tour of the Dudley Farm should be scheduled.

6. New Business/Additional Discussion Items

None

7. Next Meeting/Public Meeting: Wednesday, December 11, 2019, at 5:30 p.m.

8. Adjournment

At 5:49 p.m. Mrs. Lipe made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Botteron seconded the motion; and it was approved, unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah W. Reid
Council Clerk