

# Weston Town Committee for the Oversight of the Lachat Property

## MINUTES

October 2, 2012

**Present: Committee Members:** Ellen McCormick, Judy Saffan, Amy Kalafa, Carol Baldwin, Sheila Koehler, Paul Deysenroth, Nicholas Bell; **Consultants:** Robert Hatch, AIA Architect

**Presided By:** Ellen McCormick,

**Meeting** was called to order at 7:45 p.m.

- A. The minutes for the last 3 meetings were approved unanimously.
- B. Robert Hatch (“Bob”) was presented with a written out “Use” description (attached) for the farmhouse from the Committee. He will use this description when approaching the Town’s P&Z Committee and Building Department for input. Once he has had those meetings, the Committee will reconvene to discuss the results of those discussions. Additionally, at that point, CT Trust Grant specified Landscape Architect, Sylvia Erskine, will be brought in to meet with the Committee as well as Selectwoman Gayle Weinstein.
- C. *Master Plan Preparation* – A draft master plan in a timeline form was submitted by Carol Baldwin for discussion but the sense of the Committee is that it was not what was needed for a presentation to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). Rather a Master Plan centered on Phases of the work, as well general philosophy/objectives/mission would be more appropriate. A draft submitted to Ellen by Margaret Wirtenberg was deemed as a good model.

*(Action plan:)* The Committee was asked to send to Amy Kalafa, via email, ideas of what each feels should be included in the Master Plan, indicating which items could also be income generating. She will gather and distill the input and put together a Master Plan, possibly in conjunction with Margaret. The Committee also needs to put together a Financial Plan outlining how the Lachat Farm project can sustain itself into the future, also to be presented to the BOS. Both plans could also be used for presentation to other Town Committees and at a future Public Town Hearing.

- D. *Status of repairs to the house:* Bob Hatch indicated that the bidding process for the foundation work is still in progress.
- E. *Status report on fund raising:* Carol mentioned a potential October 21 Lachat Awareness Day, with guided hikes and homestead history tours, as well as some kind of fundraising element. Planning for a more elaborate Farm To Table spring benefit will continue.
- F. *Report on farming plans:* Abigail Squance, a Weston based Master Gardener, has been approached to help create a plan for the larger property (Please note: previously mentioned Landscape Architect Sylvia Erskine’s grant funding only covers the area surrounding the farmhouse). Nick Bell described the soil, drainage, and other topography issues that affect the property. Amy and Nick pointed out that the best area to use for vegetable farming would be to the west of the farmhouse. The hilly sections of the property would have much less rich soil, create possible drainage/erosion issues, and be

difficult to access. Amy pointed out that creating raised beds would be cost prohibitive and unnecessary in the lower West Field. Nick mentioned that using a cover crop on the agricultural fields in the winter would maintain an attractive aesthetic. Paul mentioned that Leon Lachat had used the lower West Field for annual haying.

*(Action plan:)* Ellen will contact Peter Romano of Land Tech to gather the results of land assessment work they had previously been hired by the Town/Nature Conservancy to do for the Lachat property. Sheila asked that more copies of the land maps be made available to the committee and Ellen said she would ask Land Tech for them. Ellen will also approach the Weston/Westport Health District to find out what information they have on the two wells on the property.

- G. *Maintenance Issues:* Nick suggested that, since a permanent heating solution for the house will not be installed prior to this winter, relatively inexpensive ceramic heaters should be used in the house over the winter to reduce the decay that the moisture within the house is causing.

*(Action:)* Nick will look into the costs and feasibility of using ceramic heaters temporarily for the farmhouse.

- H. *Research: (Action:)* Ellen will try to set up information gathering meetings with Westport's Shelly Katzen to ask about Wakeman Farm, as well as representatives from Wilton's Ambler Farm and other local town farms. She will also organize Weston's "Master Gardeners" to walk the property along with local farmers Dina Brewster/Annie Farrell and glean their input.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:40pm.

**THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING WILL BE HELD ON Tuesday, November 6 (Election Day) AT 7:30 PM in Town Hall.**

(Minutes submitted by Carol Baldwin.)