In Attendance

Michelle DeGarmo, Flatley Read

Joe Finan, Hudson Hoosic Partnership

Tim Holmes, Friends of the Saratoga Battlefield

Ed Kinowski, Supervisor of the Town of Stillwater

Amy Bracewell, National Parks Service

Julie Stokes, Government Appointee

Kay Tomasi, Senate Appointee

Joe Durkin, Rensselaer Land Trust

David Bullard, The Marshall House

David Pitlyk, NYS OPRHP

Maria Trabka, Saratoga Plan

Stephen Lack, BKC Battenkill Conservancy

Charles Vandrei, NYSDEC

Dennis Morrealle, Village of Corinth

John Sherman, Village of Schuylerville

Andrew Alberti, Lakes to Locks Passage

Travis Kline, Kata Phusin Design

Tom Wood, Town of Saratoga Supervisor

Tom Richardson, Chair, City of Mechanicville

TR: Welcome; everyone introduces themselves

1. **Acceptance of the minutes of the last meeting:**

Kate Tomasi proposed a change in her title to “Senate Appointee” and “Jomasik” to “Tomasi”

***Ed moved to accept the minutes***

***John seconded***

***Motion passed with corrections***

1. **Rensselaer Land Trust Presentation**

Joe Durkin presented on the Rensselaer Land Trust. The mission of the Rensselaer Land Trust is to conserve the open spaces, watersheds, and natural habitats of Rensselaer County, for the benefit of our communities and future generations. They envision Rensselaer County having sufficient conserved land to maintain clean water, clean air, wildlife and plant habitats, local farms, working forests, and scenic beauty. They envision the people of Rensselaer County being connected to nature; having access to outdoor places, understanding the benefits of land conservation and enjoying the quality of life created by a balanced mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities. They envision the Rensselaer Land Trust having sufficient staff, Board of Directors, members, volunteers, partnerships, and financial resources to accomplish our mission. The Rensselaer Land Trust was established in 1987. The first staff person was hired in 2005. There are now two part-time employees. Their membership base includes 283 people and they have a mailing list of 750. Their 2016 newsletter includes many listed upcoming events, including clean up days, and a water chestnut pull. Much of their land has been donated and they are in the process of connecting land in the City of Troy to create a trail. They also have donated land in Kinderhook Creek. There are nine preserves altogether. About half of the Rensselaer Land Trust’s operating budget is made up of membership. They also receive donations and foundation grants.

Ed Kinowski asked if the Rensselaer Land Trust is at all connected with the Open Space Institute.

Joe Durkin explained that they do work with the Open Space Institute, which is an organization that works throughout the East Coast. They are hoping to work with OSI for funding as a partner. The Rensselaer Land Trust is a small not-for-profit; the OSI is a large not-for-profit that acts in many ways like a grant organization. The Land Trust Alliance is national, which is where OSI gets its funding. OSI isn’t integrated with the Rensselaer Land Trust as management.

Ed Kinowski wondered what sort of individuals would donate to organizations like the Rensselaer Land Trust and how they might differ from individuals who might donate to organizations like OSI.

Julie Stokes explained that OSI is a large organization and its funding comes from the old Reader’s Digest fund. OSI works to hold land until states or municipalities can purchase it for half price. The Rensselaer Land Trust can encourage OSI to provide funds.

Ed Kinowski said that the Rensselaer Land Trust can be key in providing land to connect trails as well.

Joe Durkin said that the Rensselaer Land Trust is putting together a friend’s group. They are competing essentially with organizations like OSI regarding their donor base, but as a regional group instead of a national group. The competition is friendly because all of the work is good and worthwhile. Working with other not-for-profits in the City of Troy, they could pull together pieces of land to manage and connect trails.

1. **Update on the Sword Surrender Site**

Tim Holmes provided the following update on the Sword Surrender Site. The site was identified by this partnership as historically important. The Open Space Institute is the owner of the site. The friends raised over $100,000 early on. The site has national importance and cache, so raising funds comes naturally for it. The goal is $400,000. Capital Region builders are ready to help. OSI wanted to preserve their right to cancel the project at any time, so we’re currently trying to work out that legal wording.

Joe Finan called the project “shovel ready” and says that all that is left to complete is the final design. There are conceptual designs, archeology, and compliance that have already been completed. Once this agreement is in place, the Friends will proceed with their fundraising activity.

1. **Update on the Gateway Visitor Center Project**

Joe Finan met with the Timber Frame Guild and went to the county forests and going to mead to determined costs. The Guild was impressed with the experience. The partnership is refining our agreement between the Partnership and the Guild. The Guild will take care of post-harvest and milling requirements for the lumber so the Partnership just gets the lumber to the mill and the Guild will take care of specifications and transportation of the lumber, which will be in the body of the agreement. The Partnership will pay for the harvesting costs. Housing was built into the agreement. The Partnership was able to get very reasonable housing at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center in Easton. The Guild will stay at the Children’s Camp. I’m working with the Schuylerville Chamber of Commerce to determine housing for the first workshop. Saratoga Associates will be delivering the 100% drawings around Wednesday. From there, the Partnership will meet with the Timber Frame Guild to work out the sequencing of construction. Joe is working on finding an appropriate construction manager and team to help this work out smoothly. Insurance is also being discussed. Many groups have been part of the discussion, including a group who works with Saratoga Plan and the Albany Pine Bush, which is Rose and Kiernan. The Partnership has provided Rose and Kiernan with information regarding the legislation regarding the Partnership, draft specifications, and insurance requirements for the construction project. The Partnership is ready to start the harvesting of the timber. They hope to begin the first part of the project—the foundation—around June.

1. **Communication Promotion Committee Report**

An update was provided by Andrew Alberti. Saratoga County and Saratoga County IDA have been helpful in communications efforts. The Partnership plans to have a presentation at the Saratoga County Supervisor’s Meeting. The Friends of the Saratoga Battlefield have generously donated 22 of the Saratoga coins to provide at that meeting. After this meeting, there will be a committee meeting to discuss the presentation and Powerpoint for the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors. This meeting will also discuss volunteer recruitment, as well as how to approach outreach and press releases.

1. **Fort Ann Battlefield Site**

An update was provided by Amy Bracewell. Fort Ann is interested in purchasing 165 acres of the Battlefield. The Saratoga Battlefield provided Christine Mulligan with a couple of resources that could assist them, including information on the American Battlefield Protection Program, which offers one-to-one non-federal matches of funds to purchase land. The Saratoga Battlefield also let them know about Lakes to Locks Passage workshops that are coming up in April, and The Civil War Trust 1787 Campaign.

Andrew said that Lakes to Locks signed a Letter of Support for an American Battlefield Protection Grant for Fort Ann. That was for a Level One Investigation to find the exact location of the Battlefield, which was debated for a while. Fort Ann applied for a second round of the American Battlefield Protection Grant, which is generally funded to see things come to fruition. This would be for archeology. The Town of Fort Ann is in charge of what happens to that site. Lakes to Locks works to provide them with resources.

Julie Stokes asked if the town was in discussion regarding gravel work.

Andrew said that he wasn’t able to say because Lakes to Locks doesn’t manage land.

Amy Bracewell explained that Larry Arnold from the Friends of the Saratoga Battlefield discovered a letter on eBay that went to an unknown buyer. The Battlefield knows a bit about the letter’s author, Bachelor, who was the right-hand man of Gates. The letter has changed the Battlefield’s opinion of Benedict Arnold, who it appears was not going against Gates, but in fact made sure that there was no friendly fire. Gates gave around his blessing to, as Arnold said, “have some fun.”

Joe Finan asked if it was possible to trace the buyer.

Amy Bracewell said that eBay is very private, but they were able to acquire a transcript and a screenshot.

1. **Progress on the Greenwich ABPP Grant**

Michelle DeGarmo explained that they sent out a request to archeological firms in March. They received four responses, and, from those four, selected Hartgen, which was approved by ABPP. They are on schedule to move forward in early May.

1. **CFA Grant Opportunities**

Tom Richardson mentioned that the Partnership is willing to provide Letters of Support for CFA Grant Opportunities. Cycle dates haven’t yet been announced.

1. **Champlain Canal Trail Committee Update**

Julie Stokes asked Ed Kinowski to comment on the efforts of the Town of Stillwater.

Ed explained that Congresswoman Stefanik’s office contacted him, and on the 31st at 10:15 a.m. she will be at the Stillwater Town Hall for a presentation where they will highlight trails systems, the revitalization of the Hudson River, and other things, and everyone in the partnership is invited to come. Funding is necessary for various projects, including funding related to flooding and the erosion of the Hudson River banks. If anyone would like to talk about a specific project, they’re welcome to have a couple of minutes to speak.

Julie Stokes mentioned that the trail section in Stillwater is under construction this year. Ed Kinowski mentioned that a small stretch is through private lands, but overall its working out very well and construction is happening in both the north and south.

Tim Holmes explained that a $10,000 grant was received for a trailhead that runs south from the Sword Surrender site for 1.2 miles.

Amy Bracewell explained that OGS was looking into the dump to do test pits. The Department of Transportation will work on a crosswalk from the Schuyler House parking lot to the edge of the road. There will be a sign post pointing in the direction of the trail.

Julie Stokes explained that Travis Kline, architect and developer, will be working on a design for an interactive space (pocket park) in the Town of Victory. Travis introduced himself and explained that Victory is a centralized location that can link the trail systems and sites discussed. The design will be similar to a design created 10 years ago, on which Drew has provided information, along with the Lakes to Locks grant application of 2006. Travis is working on a design that integrates the waterway. The property is owned by the village of Victory.

Julie Stokes mentioned that the Snowmobile Association has been a huge asset for taking care of bridges. Tom Richardson explained that the contributions of the Snowmobile Association was a great help in grant applications.

Tom Richardson explained that a map of the Champlain Canalway Trail is framed and on the wall in the Saratoga County offices, raising awareness of the Supervisors. Tom mentioned that with the help of Mike Valentine and others, $2 million have been acquired from the Capital District Transportation Committee. The design should be finished shortly. They’re is looking for about 3.8 million. There’s some movement with the CFA process. There was a lot of help from a lot of people. The county provided $12,500. This has been great for the City of Mechanicville and their waterfront.

Joe Finan explained that a CFA grant was acquired for a boat launch in Stillwater, but that the National Heritage Trust was the applicant, and they had a change in leadership. The applicant would have to be changed to the Town of Stillwater. Ed Kinowski said that he’d be happy to work with Joe on this process. A lot of preliminary planning was done. Ed and Joe will speak to DOT. This could have great connectivity to the Saratoga Battlefield through boat access.

Tom Richardson explained that Mark Luciano’s report will be on the agenda for the next meeting. Tom asked for other orders of business.

Amy Bracewell explained that the Battlefield is participating in I Love My Park Day on May 7th. This year, National Parks, DEC Land, and State Parks are all invited to participate. Registration is open online through the Parks and Trails website.

Kate Tomasi requested a financial report be presented for the partnership. Joe Finan will provide the next financial report. He’ll work with Michelle to put together a spreadsheet that will review all of the grants that are solvent and that have been received. Tom Richardson explained that the Saratoga IDA agreed to pay Saratoga Associates on behalf of the partnership $130,000. The IDA is in charge of the billing cycle, and it’s reviewed by the Saratoga Plan (Mike Valentine) to make sure the numbers are accurate. Money doesn’t flow through the partnership. The partnership hasn’t spent money yet, but they will be. Saratoga County has provided a grant of $200,000, which is overseen by Tom Wood. The Town of Saratoga serves as the bank to get reimbursed. Tim Holmes explained that a monthly report would be easy to create. Kate suggested emailing the information to all of the partners because it might peek their interest. Lakes to Locks also created a fact sheet about the partnership which they’d be happy to disperse.

The Village of Corinth is developing a property for recreational use. They now have a Facebook page and they’ve cleared part of an overlook so that the mountains of Vermont are visible.

Andrew Alberti mentioned that Lakes to Locks is working on a Battlefield Stewardship Toolkit, which includes two upcoming workshops discussing Battlefield Stewardship. Amy Bracewell will facilitate and the Civil War Trust will discuss their resources.

The Battenkill Conservancy will have their annual event on Memorial Day weekend. The Town of Greenwich is working to raise consciousness and involvement of the river and water quality.

Ed Kinowski suggested that the partnership pass information about upcoming events and volunteer work to local schools to foster involvement. Tom Richardson mentioned that the Mechanicville Honor’s Society volunteer to pull weeds. Tom offered to introduce Amy to the superintendent. Ed Kinowski mentioned that Eagle Scouts have been working with the Battlefield on cemetery-related storage. Amy Bracewell explained that they’ve been partnering with the Erie Canalway to bring in schools. They’re working with Congresswoman Stefanik and an education committee to bring fourth graders to parks. Fourth graders get free entry to Parks for the 100th Anniversary of Parks.

New York State has introduced the next round of funding through CFA. Julie Stokes mentioned that there is a flood plain meeting on Thursday about the Champlain Canal.

Monday May 2nd will be the next meeting. Tom Richardson asked if there was a motion to adjourn. John Sherma moved. Tom Wood seconded.