



Adirondack Park Agency

KAREN FELDMAN
Acting Chair

TERRY MARTINO
Executive Director

DRAFT MINUTES
Public Awareness and
Communication Committee
November 8, 2018
Agency Meeting
WHT:KPM:mp

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

November 8, 2018

The Public Awareness and Communications Committee convened at 2:50 pm.

Committee Members Present:

William Thomas, Committee Chair, Daniel Wilt, Bradley Austin (ESD) and Lynne Mahoney (DOS)

Other Members or Designees Present:

Karen Feldman, Acting Chair, Chad Dawson, John Ernst, Arthur Lussi, and Robert Stegemann (DEC)

Local Government Review Board Present:

Gerald Delaney, Executive Director

Agency Staff Present:

Terry Martino, Sarah Reynolds, Keith McKeever, Mary Palmer

Public Outreach Report

Mr. McKeever noted highlights for public relations including his participation at the annual visit from Cornell and Syracuse Universities through the Hubert Humphrey Program. This program is administered nationally by the Institute of International Education, and primarily supported by the US Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. This year included people from four continents and discussion of the Adirondack Park and the public and private land use plan.

Mr. McKeever said work will be starting on the Annual Report.

NYSDEC Overview of Adirondack Park Conservation Easements

Rob Davies, Shaun Reynolds, and Peter D'Luhosch (NYSDEC) discussed the current status and value of sustainable forestry management on New York State Adirondack Park Conservation Easement Lands and provided an overview of the ongoing success

of DEC's conservation easement programs including conservation easement agreements, compliance and economic benefits to local economies. They also discussed the goals, management and monitoring of the program.

Ms. Feldman asked for clarification of the term "Bundle of Rights." Mr. Davies said it is a metaphor to explain the complexities of property ownership, which also may be divided among different parties. With conservation easements the State is buying development, subdivision, recreational and forestry rights from the landowner, and they can be tailored to the specific characteristics of the property.

Dr. Dawson asked if the economic benefits outweigh the cost of the program. Mr. Davies said money goes further for acres protected when acquiring conservation easements. Carrying costs are less because there is still a private owner who is paying their fair share of the taxes. So, when the State purchases an easement for fifty percent of the bundle of rights, the State pays fifty percent of the landowner's taxes.

Ms. Feldman added that better decisions are made for managing the property. Landowners are receiving an economic benefit but there is also a natural resource protection plan.

Ms. Feldman asked if management of conservation easements differ from managing state land. Ms. Davies said the conservation easements are partnerships between the State of New York and the private landowner. One important thing that has been developed into the State's administration is requiring yearly meetings between the private landowners and DEC land managers to discuss priorities and plans for the year.

Ms. Feldman asked how often staff find violations of conservation agreements, and if not, is it because staff are on the ground monitoring and enforcing. Mr. Reynolds said it is not uncommon to find violations and some are easier to address than others.

Mr. Stegemann asked about compliance with forestry standards. Mr. Reynolds said that is one of the areas where there is almost zero problems.

Dr. Dawson asked as land owners sell their property are the new owners aware of what they have to do under the requirements of the agreement. Mr. Reynolds said they generally do. Numerous companies have high standards for acquisitions on behalf of their investors.

Mr. Lussi asked how the monitoring is done, and how staff physically go on the property. Mr. D'Luhosch said monitoring is done by being physically on the property, doing data collection and analysis. Staff access the property by any means necessary, such as hiking, driving or snowmobile.

Ms. Feldman asked if drones are used. Mr. D'Luhosch said not at this time.

Mr. Davies said allocation factors have changed over the years. When DEC first started the conservation easement program they did not know what the resale value of the properties would be. The DEC thought the easements would have a bigger cost impact on future sales of those properties. He said they now are seeing those properties sell for good amounts because there is still a lot of value in them. The allocation factor is what the state determines what has been bought in terms of the value of the properties. The cost to the tax payer is coming down and the environmental benefits are still tremendous.

Dr. Dawson asked what the future of the program will be and how it will be prioritized. Mr. Davies said there are things that can be improved and there are benefits of having the team sit together and prioritize the major challenges and opportunities.

Dr. Dawson asked if staff see the program growing and having more acquisitions. Mr. Davies answered affirmatively. He said DEC is working to unify the easements in regards to modern forest management terms and amending existing easements.

Ms. Feldman asked if any thought has been given to applying easement monitoring to State Lands. Mr. Davies said to some extent of the rights the State has acquired, but easements are still private lands.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Adjournment:

Mr. Thomas, Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:45 pm.