

MINUTES

Meeting on Friends of Auerfarm State Park

4-H Education Center at Auerfarm (158 Auer Farm Road, Bloomfield)

Tuesday, August 23th at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Attendees:

Rep. David Baram, Stephen Bayer, Steve Dombrowski, Eric Hammerling, Diane Joy, David Mann, Sharon Mann, Nick Miller, Chris Norwood, Vikki Reski, Beth Schiro, Syd Schulman, Christopher Shepard, Lindsay Suhr, Linda Vossen

1. Introductions and Reintroductions

There were some return members and some new faces that came to this meeting, but everyone seemed to have the same or similar reasons for being interested in joining the Friends Group. Some similar themes for the park emerged including:

- Connectivity to 4H property and the Metacomet Trail via new trail system including handicap accessible trail
- Bring people in for the views and educational programs
- Enhance education for youth
- Connect this park to local neighborhoods
- Increase usage and community awareness

Additionally, Eric Hammerling emphasized that there have been many cuts to the state parks budget and that these cuts will only continue into the foreseeable future, but that Parks with Friends Groups have the best chance to begin or continue great things for the public.

2. Review of Minutes from July 26th Meeting

The minutes from the inaugural meeting on July 26th were reviewed and approved by consent.

3. Review of Conservation Easement

The majority of the time in the meeting was spent discussing the allowed and prohibited uses within the conservation easement. Eric Hammerling gave an overview of conservation easements and how they are drafted, and then led the group through the easement outline that he and Lindsay Suhr put together at CFPA. There were questions about various management activities such as the use of herbicides, building and road construction, parking area placement, and vehicle use. This discussion led to a more in depth conversation about the roles of CFPA, the state, and 4H in the new park, about the current maintenance that has been happening, and about the future building removal. In general, the State/CT DEEP is the property owner, CFPA holds a conservation restriction on the property that CFPA is bound to monitor and enforce, and 4H is a neighbor and natural partner on future activities and/or land management.

4. How can a Friends Group best support CT DEEP's needs for Auerfarm SP?

- Top priority is removal of the buildings that are currently on the list to receive a historical review before demolition.
- There is need for someone(s) to help by tending to the apple trees on the property (pruning, vine removal, identification of apple varieties). There was some discussion about whether the orchard tending might be done cooperatively with the 4-H Center and/or a local farmer.
- There is interest in starting to plan for trail connections between Auerfarm SP, the 4-H Center, MDC land, and Talcott Mountain State Park.
- There is interest in holding some educational activities (walk, birding, etc.) in the orchard area only.
- There was interest in the Friends providing input to a management plan for the Park if one is put together.

5. Next Steps?

Rep. Baram suggested (and there was broad acceptance of his proposal) there are a few categories that we might use to organize our next discussion(s):

- Timeline for removal of buildings;
- Publicity for Auerfarm SP (how to publicize, who can publicize, etc.);
- Discussion on future uses (hiking, etc.);
- Formation of a Friends of Auerfarm SP group (organizational models/structure, timeline, etc.);
- Identification of areas/assets of Auerfarm SP on a map (CT DEEP is working on a web page with a map for Auerfarm SP); and
- Historical uses of what is now Auerfarm SP. Are there any inconsistencies that need to be addressed?