

# MINUTES

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, Friends of Auerfarm State Park

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

Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

### Meeting Attendees:

Gene Aultz, Floyd Bagwell, Jr., Dominick Galletti, Eric Hammerling, Cary Henderson, Paula Jones, Nick Miller, Chris Norwood, Vikki Reski, Beth Schiro, Christopher Shepard, Lindsay Suhr, Tom Tyler, Linda Vossen

### 1. Introductions and Reintroductions

Most of the attendees had previously attended one or more meetings, but there were a couple of new friends. There was a mix of local residents, state park lovers, land trust members, 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm Board members, state park employees, Boy Scout representatives, and local business reps.

Eric Hammerling recapped some of the conservation easement terms and emphasized that this mechanism was used to ensure that the conservation values remain protected. He also reiterated how important active Friends groups are and will continue to be, especially in these times of such dire state budgets.

### 2. Review of Minutes from August 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting

No changes were made to the minutes from the August meeting. Eric noted that CFPA would be creating a page on our website for people to access info from these meetings.

### 3. Timeline for removal of buildings

Tom Tyler spoke about the timeline for the building removal. He said that he has been pushing the engineering department, but that there is a long list and funding is limited. The buildings are to be checked for asbestos and any abatement that is needed will happen in the next 30 days or so. Additionally, there is a town process regarding demolition that CT DEEP is working within. The state historic preservation department also has to go through their typical documentation process before any demolition can commence. Tom's estimate was for the demolition to happen in February or March of 2017 as long as the other pieces proceed relatively smoothly.

The buildings set to be demolished are the ones off the northern section of Cider Hill Road. This does not include the white building/apple barn at the intersection of Cider Hill and Auer Farm Roads. There was discussion about the potential hazards of this building

including the porch. There was also discussion about it being a beloved building that has been used by other groups including NRCS and the 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm (cider making). There may be some historic listing including this building, but the exact source was unclear.

#### 4. Publicity for Auerfarm SP (how to publicize, who can publicize, etc.)

There was discussion about publicity about the Park being low-key until the buildings are removed, and that any public events should be concentrated in the orchard and lower meadow (areas away from the buildings). Tom Tyler said that currently the park info is listed in a short paragraph on a section of DEEP's website titled "Other State Parks and Forests" [linked here](#). The state is working on creating a map for the site. CFPA and the state will work with the town of Bloomfield to coordinate on getting the best map possible that is consistent in materials used by all three entities.

There was discussion about where the parking would be advertised (there are a few spots across Auer Farm Road from the Park next to the white barn, but those are on the 4-H property) and also if additional signage would be created for the boundary line and potentially a kiosk in the parking area for a map and other info.

There was also talk about doing another CT Trails Day event in 2017 to continue showcasing the views and wildlife that make Auerfarm SP special.

#### 5. Discussion on future uses (hiking, etc.)

In this section the discussion focused on hiking opportunities. There was talk of connecting the state park to Talcott Mountain through 4H property and MDC land. Eric Hammerling already brought the idea up with MDC. The MDC is typically cautious with creating new entrances to their property, but they were not opposed to the idea either. It was also discussed that local neighborhood access is already happening from Balbrae and elsewhere and it would be great to encourage/improve/enhance/focus this usage.

There was also discussion on needs for maintenance of the orchard because doing nothing might negatively impact the orchard on the 4H property by harboring insects, diseases, etc. Linda Vossen and Tom Tyler said that there would be an upcoming facilities meeting where this and other aspects of Park management would be discussed.

#### 6. Formation of a Friends of Auerfarm SP group (organizational models/structure, timeline, etc.)

Eric Hammerling began a discussion about how this group wants to formally move forward. He requested that volunteers from the larger group meet between these meetings to talk about how to structure the group, create a timeline, and talk about potentially becoming a standalone entity. It was decided that Eric would bring representatives from a variety of friends groups with different models (independent 501c3, sponsored through other org., etc)

to aid in a discussion surrounding this topic, and then a smaller group will meet between the next two meetings to start discussing the options.

7. Identification of areas/assets of Auerfarm SP on a map (CT DEEP is working on a web page with a map for Auerfarm SP)

There was discussion around potentially opening the park to group camping in 2017. This led to consideration of having controlled fires on the site for camping and whether or not one of the stone fire places from the buildings could be left or rebuilt for this use.

There was also discussion about potentially moving some cultivated plants from near the Cider Mill Road houses before demolition occurs to save them for replanting or potentially sales in the future. Volunteers could help with this project and other current projects to create a parallel path for being helpful to part staff (while figuring out the details of a formal friends group).

8. Historical uses of what is now Auerfarm SP. Are there any inconsistencies with the easement and/or CT DEEP plans that need to be addressed?

This discussion focused on management of the property including orchard management, mowing, and uses of the property for hayrides. Creating a more formal management and use agreement between 4H and the state was discussed. A meeting between the state, 4H and CFPA is needed to ensure that all the uses are compatible with the easement before any updated agreement is finalized. Lindsay will look through all the associated easements and right of ways over the property before this meeting takes place.

Beth Schiro shared that the orchard on the property is very old and might not be too productive anymore, but might be useful for grafting. This could be a great educational opportunity and partnership project with 4-H and/or another interested farmer. It was also discussed that it would be good to know what varieties of apples were found in the orchard historically.

It was also suggested that species inventories be performed on the site because already unique species like bobolinks and box turtles have been found and it would be good to know what species should/could be managed for.

9. Next Steps?

Next meeting will be on Wednesday October 19<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.