



WOODSTOCK LAND CONSERVANCY

Press Release

Woodstock Land Conservancy and Woodstock Town Board Sign Comeau Easement
For release Monday, November 16, 2009

Kevin Smith, President of the Board of the Woodstock Land Conservancy (WLC) and Woodstock Town Supervisor Jeff Moran met today, in the presence of the WLC Board and the Town Board and other attendees, at the Town's main office building on Comeau Drive to sign the long-awaited deed of conservation easement on the town-owned, 76-acre Comeau property.

The signing of the Comeau easement completed a process that began in 2003, when the easement was drafted and submitted to a town referendum, which passed by a substantial majority. Later the constitutionality of the easement was challenged by a town resident in court proceedings pursued up to the Appellate Division. That court affirmed earlier findings in the Town's favor, finally dismissing the suit in October of last year and clearing the way for adoption of the easement. This year the Town and the Conservancy both carefully reviewed the easement, then moved toward its final passage.

Simultaneous to signing the easement, the two boards also adopted an amendment to it, setting the stage for the town to create a Stewardship Plan for the property. The plan will establish a process for the Town's management and protection of the property in compliance with the terms of the easement.

"Guidelines laid out in a stewardship plan will open the door for the people of the Town who love and use the Comeau property to take a role in overseeing its protection and governing its use," said John Winter, WLC's Executive Director.

"It will also enhance WLC's ability to monitor the property and communicate with the Town about maintenance or uses of the property relevant to the terms of the easement, and to identify and resolve potential conflicts proactively."

Kevin Smith, President of the WLC Board, observed that this approach is in keeping with WLC's commitment to a partnership model of easement stewardship. "So many people here in Woodstock are passionate about the Comeau, and we're encouraged by the tremendous work of the Comeau Advisory Committee, the Comeau Trails Task Force, the Parks and Recreation Committee, the Comeau Users Group, the Woodstock Soccer League, the Friends of Comeau, and so many others. The Stewardship Plan will help make us all partners in protecting the property."

While easements protecting multiple-use municipal properties are rare, all parties seem to agree that the Comeau Easement and its Stewardship Amendment are the strongest ways to limit development and conserve an extraordinary and deeply valued piece of land at the center of one of the world's most famous and unique small towns.

"We look forward to working closely with the Town Board and the people of Woodstock to realize stewardship of the Comeau property, a loved and valuable Woodstock resource, now and long into the future," added Winter.

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