



# SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

*Open Space Makes All the Difference*

## **AGENDA** **37th Annual Meeting of Members** **Wednesday, September 16, 2020** **5:30 PM via Zoom**

### **SKLT Business Meeting**

**Welcome & Call to Order** - Martha Day, President

**Minutes from 2019 Annual Meeting** - Linda Green, Secretary

**Treasurer's Report** - Jim Farrell, Treasurer

### **Business Items**

**Election of Directors** - Linda Green

**SKLT Highlights and Updates 2019 and 2020\***

Julia Landstreet, Executive Director

**Adjourn Meeting** – Martha Day, President

\*Traditionally SKLT Annual Meetings have been highlighted with a presentation addressing some aspect of our mission. The 2020 Annual Meeting will include a slide presentation on the myriad of projects and stewardship opportunities SKLT enjoyed in 2019 plus an update on the *Building Now Protecting Forever* campaign and projects.



## SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

*Open Space Makes All the Difference*

### **Minutes of the Thirty-sixth Annual Meeting of the South Kingstown Land Trust**

**Sunday April 28, 2019**

Board Chair Martha Day called to order the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the South Kingstown Land Trust at 3:05 pm, welcoming the approximately 90 SKLT members who attended.

Reading of the minutes from the 2018 annual meeting was waived by acclimation. The minutes were accepted.

Nominations Committee chair Linda Green presented the slate of director candidates for election to three-year terms. They are Jessica Bradley, Ellen Grebstein and Cindy Sabato. Tim Philbrick resolved, seconded by Jim Farrell, “to approve the slate as presented.” The resolution was approved by voice vote.

Executive Director Julia Landstreet welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation to all. She presented a report on “the state of SKLT, a banner year.”

SKLT now protects nearly 2860 acres, 1616 acres in fee (owned by SKLT) and 1244 protected by conservation easements. 47% has public access, 23% is actively farmed. Just like our own yards the farms, forests and meadows that comprise SKLT properties require active care and stewardship. Each year we monitor each and every property to be on the lookout for violations and issues of concern, man-made and natural. This year 45 volunteers contributed over 350 hours. Fortunately, only a handful of violations were found and were addressed by staff.

SKLT has 13 miles of publicly accessible trails through both woods and open meadows. These require considerable maintenance, removing fallen limbs and trees, crowding and invasive plants, mowing paths, picking up trash and restocking the ever-popular trail maps. And improving our trail signage. This year Founders Trail at Yawgoo Pond was completed and a handicapped accessible trail and viewing platform created at Biscuit City Pond. The gorgeous stone wall restoration at Weeden Farm has been completed but will require ongoing maintenance.

SKLT has a number of research projects in the works on our properties; such as, the American chestnut tree orchard, intentional pollinator habitat – seeded versus seedlings, archeology sites, flint corn from the field to the table, endangered amphibian habitat and restoring transitional habitat on a portion of our Browning property. In all cases land management is viewed through the lens of how to protect water quality, improve the ecological health of the soils, the plant communities, and the long-term viability of the parcel. All this is accomplished by a three-person land management staff on less than a total of 35 hours/week as well as the assistance of incredible volunteers.

Outreach and Development staff and committees outdid themselves. We hosted 25 hikes, 13 programs, 4 fund raising events and 4 thank you events. The 2018 Great Outdoors Celebration and Auction was the best to date, thanks to the hard work of the Auction committee and many others. There were nearly 300 attendees, a hundred more than last year and netted \$50K. We increased our events in number and variety, increasing our friend raising and outreach. The Green Corn Full Moon party had 150 attendees, 40% of whom were new to SKLT and netted nearly \$7K! Additionally, we now have several corporate sponsors.

This summer we will formally launch our Capital Campaign, Building Now Protecting Forever, with the goal of raising \$1 million dollars to build a tractor shed and a modest office building, both at Weeden Farm, and so importantly, to significantly add to our Stewardship Fund for property care, stewardship, and protection. To date there is over \$285K in the bank and \$125K in pledges.

Treasurer Jim Farrell presented the 2018 year-end financial report:

SKLT operates on a calendar year basis. At year end there was over \$185,400 in the SKLT operating account and over \$1,210,600 in the SKLT investment portfolio. Total current assets are \$1,584,560, liabilities, all short-term were \$13,600. 2018 ended “with ample liquidity.” Income from member dues and restricted gifts showed an increase over 2017 and was \$12,000 ahead of budget. A major restricted gift enabled the annual budget to exceed budget by \$122,000. The Great Outdoors Celebration and Auction had record attendance and raised close to \$89,000. In total special events raised a total of \$111,000. On the expense side, outlays were generally well controlled with a 5% variance, or \$22,000 over budget. For the year our operating gain, before depreciation was \$103,000. Farrell commented that “in summation, it was an excellent year marked by very productive fund raising and effective expense control.” He further remarked that Katharine Estes, our CPA is just beginning our annual audit and when completed the 2018 financial statement and 990 form will be available in the Robinson St office.

Under business items

Chairperson Martha Day presented the report of the Governance Committee. In April 2019 the Board approved a resolution which was needed to approve an amendment to the Corporation’s Articles of Incorporation, to be filed with the RI Secretary of State, adopting revised by-laws and submitting a resolution to this effect to the members at the annual meeting for approval.

1. Throughout the By-laws, the word Trustee has been changed to Director, at the suggestion of our CPA since the word “trustee” is usually used for charitable trusts and “director” for non-profits.
2. The Board voted to change the title of the head of the Board of Directors from President to Chairperson, and the title Vice-president to Vice-chair.
3. Our mission statement has been condensed/shortened to read as follows:  
“To protect and steward the natural resources, open spaces and cultural landscapes for the benefit of our communities, now and forever.” (Article 1)
4. Membership provisions have been updated to allow for those making contributions to be considered members, even without designating a portion of the contribution to membership dues. (Article 2)
5. The date of the annual meeting will no longer be specified as to be held in April, but instead at a time and date to be determined by the Board. (Section 2.2)

6. Board of Director provisions are amended with updates concerning resignation, removal, and filling vacancies. (Article 3)
7. The powers of the Board of Directors are amended to include the power to employ an Executive Director and to create, enter into, and accept Conservation Easements. (Section 3.1)
8. The duties of the Chairperson of the Board have been modified to complement and not conflict with the duties of the Executive Director. (Section 4.2)
9. The Nominating Committee has been replaced by a Governance Committee as a standing committee of the Board. (Article 5)
10. We have included a new provision, Article 6, to define the role and duties of the Executive Director.

A Motion to approve the proposed amendments to the By-laws in its entirety was proposed by Rick Wilson and seconded by William Taft IV. It was approved by acclamation.

Vice-chair Susan Lovejoy expressed gratitude for the years of service of Rich Youngken, for his knowledge and expertise in cultural landscapes, and Joe Orlando, for his financial expertise. They have stepped down from the board. Additionally, they were presented with the traditional SKLT thank you gift of a walking stick.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Following adjournment Dr. Numi Mitchell, lead scientist of the Narragansett Bay Coyote Study, gave a thoughtful, enthusiastic, and informative presentation on "South County Coyotes."

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Taylor Green  
SKLT Board Secretary



# SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

*Open Space Makes All the Difference*

## **Governance Committee Nominations Report SKLT Annual Meeting, September 16, 2020**

SKLT by-laws require a Board of Directors of between 11 and 17 members. Directors are nominated by the Board and elected by the members at the Annual Meeting. Each serves a 3-year term and can be re-elected for 2 subsequent 3-year terms.

### **New Directors Nominated**



**Clarkson Collins** hardly needs an introduction! Clarkson retired as SKLT Land Management Director (2006-2019) in December. Involved with SKLT since its founding in 1983, he served on the Board and as its President from 1992 to 2004. His experience and insights are invaluable, and we are very glad he will continue to steward the properties protected by SKLT.



**Anne Richardson** has spent a part of every summer in South County. She and her husband permanently moved to the area in 2000 and relocated to Pond Street, overlooking Robinson Farm this past May. Anne is a URI Master Gardener and has been active in horticulture and garden design for many years, serving on the boards of The South County Garden Club, The South Ferry Church, The Courthouse Center for the Arts, The Dunes Club, The Point Judith Country Club, and The Handicraft Club.



**Elise Torello** has lived in South Kingstown for about 24 years. She is a two-time graduate of URI and volunteers with the URI Watershed Watch. She has both volunteered and worked for the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association and the Salt Ponds Coalition, focusing on water quality monitoring and data management. She has been a water quality monitor of Potter Pond for 12 years. When she is not spying on the local fauna with her wildlife camera, she is usually out hiking or kayaking. Elise is a past member of the Rhode Island Rivers Council, the South Kingstown Planning Board, and the Salt Ponds Coalition Board of Directors.

### **Directors Nominated for Re-election**

Heather Mae Breau

James Farrell

Susan Seyfarth Lovejoy

Timothy Philbrick

Caroline Wilkel

### **Emeritus Directors Nominated for Re-election**

Charles M. Lewis

Sophie Page Lewis



# SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

*Open Space Makes All the Difference*

## **2019 Annual Report September 16, 2020 Julia Landstreet, Executive Director**

In addition to ending the year with a strong fiscal position the South Kingstown Land Trust was able to: work with landowners and funders to protect an additional 114 acres; monitor, steward and maintain the properties in our care; work with volunteers and a broad range of community partners to provide dozens of hikes, educational programs and social events for our members and the community at large; and gestate and launch a capital campaign and building project.

The emphasis of the Annual Report will be 2019, but since it is nine months into the next year, which has been both highly unusual and fairly predictable, some 2020 information will be included as well.

### **Land Protection:**

- SKLT worked with a number of families and organizations to close on six projects in 2019. Two farmland conservation easement projects and four woodland/wetland fee property acquisitions. SKLT now protects 2,952 acres with 1,693 acres in fee (owned by SKLT) and 1,259 acres protected by conservation easement but remaining in private hands. 50% of SKLT owned property has public access, 22% is active farmland, and 28% is too wet, too fragile, too inaccessible, or too small for public access.
- Funding for the projects was provided by grants from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, Town of South Kingstown, The Bafflin Foundation, The Champlin Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, the gift of “bargain sales” from property owners and a land donation.
  - 2020: multiple land protection projects are in the works, but none have closed thus far. Not unusual to have a “quiet” year especially after one when multiple properties closed.

### **Land Stewardship:**

- Monitoring and ensuring the land is being cared for as intended is the most important thing SKLT does. Every property is monitored annually. In 2019 over 500 hours of staff and volunteer time were dedicated to this task. There were a handful of violations subsequently resolved by the staff.
- Work with farmer tenants, provide services and connect with advice for start-up farmers. Provided scholarships for two farm families to attend legacy planning program.
- Ongoing research and habitat restoration projects continued throughout 2019. Some highlights include riparian restoration at Biscuit City, research/ monitoring of endangered plants at three ongoing study sites, invasive plant eradication (black swallow wort, Japanese Knotweed, bittersweet) on multiple properties. Winter and gypsy moth counts,

bobcat and coyote tracking. The American chestnut orchard, monitoring cultivated pollinator habitat. The three sisters teaching garden at the Grist Mill.

- While many of the research projects are ongoing and have been able to continue in 2020 the installation of the spadefoot toad habitat is on hold.
- The 13 miles of trails (14 miles as of 9.16.20- see below) require vigilant maintenance. Staff hikes them on a weekly basis and after all major weather events.
  - A significant difference in 2020 has been the increased trail use since March. SKLT chose to keep all trails open during the lockdown. On some trails traffic has increased by four-fold. SKLT has pivoted staff and financial resources to develop a new trail (Alewife Brook Preserve, the land purchased from the RI Boy Scouts), trail maps, and improved trail signage.
- Work began on the repair of the Grist Mill Sluiceway in 2019, until weather delayed completion of the sluice repair after only 2/3 had been restored.
  - The same anonymous donor who had provided matching funds for the sluice repair contributed to the materials needed to re-shingle and re-roof the Mill. Jeff Sweenor of Sweenor Builders assumed the cost of labor and collected an assemblage of donors for materials and skilled labor to complete the restoration of the weir and sluice, and the Mill exterior. Board member Kevin McCloskey has corralled other volunteers to begin readying the stone, Mill, and corn for a grinding as soon as November 2020 once the new sluice grass has established firm enough roots.
- Clarkson Collins retired as Land Management Director at the end of the calendar year. His contributions to land protection, land stewardship and conservation throughout Rhode Island will remain invaluable for generations to come.
  - Hiring someone to fill a job description formatted to accommodate replacing an irreplaceable person and stewarding a significant and highly diverse property portfolio was complicated even further by COVID19. Paul Miller joined the staff the end of July 2020. While not from the area he spent his childhood in different parts of RI and is excited to be here. His strengths dovetail nicely with the upcoming administrative opportunities of transitioning from an analog to digital based land management program. And his experience managing volunteers and field crews will be an asset as will his lifelong passion for birding and sharing the natural world with others.

### **Development and Outreach:**

- 2019 SKLT offered free and open to the public: 23 guided hikes and 4 potluck suppers with a guest speaker. There were 12 events and programs such as Youth Fishing Day at Biscuit City, a Car Show with corn shucking demonstrations and an educational children's wildlife program, release of a new backpack program for youth in partnership with the South Kingstown Public Library, the B5: BBQ, Blues, Beer, Barn, Bonfire Party, Hot Dog Roast, and of course, The Great Outdoors Celebration and Live Auction.

- 2020 began with bi-monthly guided hikes, potluck/speaker evenings and a full roster of programs and events. All were suspended through July 2020. In August we held a re-vamped Great Outdoors Celebration as a COVID precautions drive-thru event. Guided hikes resumed in late August for members. DuVal trail is used frequently by other partner organizations to host hikes and programs.

***Building Now Protecting Forever Capacity Campaign Update:***

- A consultant was hired to conduct a feasibility study and the results revealed SKLT could be successful with a campaign to raise \$1,000,000 over three years to create a campus adding a tractor shed and welcome/office building next to the Barn plus a named stewardship fund. 2019 involved quite a bit of behind the scenes work and planning in advance of launching the campaign. Before the formal launch for the campaign in January of 2020, over half of the funds had been raised. The Board also made the decision to name the Clarkson A Collins Stewardship Fund. In deference to the economic impacts of the pandemic SKLT has conducted more of a silent than public campaign. Fundraising has been ongoing, and we are ever closer to our goal. A donor has come forward and offered an additional \$100,000 if we can match the gift by December 31. If you have not given, now is the best time!
- **Tractor Shed:** The tractor shed is almost complete, which is very good news as our equipment was evicted from the neighbor's garage. SKLT selected a 1,200 square foot "kit" post & beam structure from Country Carpenters, designed and built to look like it has always been there.
- **Welcome/Office:** The building is up, the roof is on, the stained concrete floor is poured and ready to polish. The windows are delivered and getting installed and next will be the exterior cedar shingles followed by the interior walls. Projected to move in by the end of the year.
- **Clarkson A Collins Stewardship Fund:** The building will greatly facilitate the staff's efforts and energies, but this fund will ensure that the generosity and vision of our generation will benefit the generations to come. SKLT has been shy about asking landowners to make a contribution for the long-term stewardship of the property they have sought to protect. SKLT will continue to identify gifts and raise monies for this need. Legacy gifts, including SKLT in estate plans, is a significant opportunity for all of us to extend our impact and truly benefit future generations.

➤ **General Review 2019/2020**

- A stable organization in an amazing community.