

WESTMORELAND LAND TRUST First Year Accomplishments, 2008

The newly formed Westmoreland Land Trust held eight meetings during 2008. Some of its achievements in this first year follow.

We are particularly grateful to the Westmoreland County Commissioners who made the land trust a line item in the county budget and appropriated \$10,000 for the trust's first-year administration expenses.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Approved for incorporation by the Pennsylvania Department of State Corporation Bureau on January 7, 2008.

Filed an Application for Recognition of Exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and subsequent narrative response.

Prepared the three-year projected organizational budget the IRS requires.

Procured a Federal ID (EIN) number.

Established terms of initial board by choosing lots; elected a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer; and, in December 2008, reappointed the six one-year board members to a three-year term beginning in 2009.

Created committees – Executive, Finance, Project, Stewardship, Governance, Audit, Communications/Outreach, Development, Finance, and Policy. Most began work in their respective areas.

Created bylaws, and two subsequent amendments – one that added a more comprehensive conflict of interest section (replacing the original Article X), and one that modified language throughout to limit the number of board appointments made by the commissioners. The latter was done in response to IRS concerns that the trust may be construed as being controlled by a government body.

Created a Mission Statement and Vision and Values statements.

Created 11 distinct policies on the following topics: advocacy, document retention and destruction, financial rules and internal controls, fundraising, communications with prospective donors, acknowledgement of donations, public policy, sexual harassment, openness and transparency, treasurer's responsibilities, and whistleblower activities. These policies help give direction to how we function as an organization.

BUILDING A COMMON KNOWLEDGE BASE

Heard knowledgeable speakers on the subjects of land stewardship considerations, appraisals, and the possibility of using an organization such as the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County.

OUTREACH

Created a website that was regularly updated with meeting information and purchased the domain name Westmoreland Land Trust.

Held a series of public meetings across the county to introduce public to the trust.

Wednesday, July 2, 7:00 p.m., Rostraver Municipal Building;

Monday, July 7, 6:00 p.m., Greensburg City Hall;

Tuesday, July 8, 7:00 p.m., Lower Burrell City Hall;

Thursday, July 10, 7:00 p.m. Unity Township Municipal Building;

Monday, July 14, 6:30 p.m., Scottdale Municipal Building;

Monday, July 21, 6:30 p.m., Penn Township Municipal Building; and

Tuesday, July 22, 7:00 p.m. North Huntingdon Township Building.

Issued several news releases and published Public Notices of all meetings.

Met with local reporters doing stories on the trust and responded to a letter to the editor in the Tribune Review.

Began work on creating a logo.

PROJECTS

Determined the type of properties the trust wants to consider and its overall philosophy. (The land trust should use any and all types of conservation instruments available...the growth triangle should be the primary, but not exclusive, focus of property acquisition...and the trust should seek to fill a preservation niche not currently being addressed).

Identified criteria for evaluating initial properties.

Sought suggestions of potential properties from board and public.

Began work on a Conservation Agreement.

FUNDRAISING

Initial discussions were held on potential funders and the collateral needed to prepare an ask. An initial overture was made to a major local funder. Further progress in this area is dependent on procurement of the nonprofit status.