Wolcott Community Forest Committee

Next public meeting on Thursday, October 12, 2023
6 pm – 8 pm

Attendance: Gordon, Roger, Kelly, Gilly, Jack, Dave, Sheila, DJ, Joe
Online: Kate, Bradley, Maxfield

1. Call to order (6:06 pm)
2. Organizational actions
    - Amendments to agenda
        - Add a discussion for amending a right of way through the Westover property
        - Conceptual trail map
            - path to approval
            - recommendations of how to spend VORAC funds
    - Approve minutes from last meeting
        - Gilly moves, Dave seconds
            - passes, unanimously
3. Public comment
    - none
4. Land purchase updates
    - Status report from TPL
        - Kate: working on the remaining loose ends -survey and closing documents - but nothing extraordinary to report
            - Roger: is Emily Potter activated?
                - Kate: yes, she's working on it
                - Gordon: she will be at our next regular meeting in November
        - Jack: BDR report (description of property at time the easement is signed)
            - will be used to monitor the property and assess changes and that rules are followed
            - will contain sections that outline restricted and allowed activities
            - will borrow much of the language from the stewardship plan
                - no need to repeat the work
            - big part of what remains is photographs
                - scheduled for next week, likely Wed or Fri
        - Gordon: could we invite [speaker] to present findings?
            - Jack: possibly for a fee, ($200-300?)
            - Gordon: could maybe schedule for a winter evening
                - Kate: I'll connect you
5. New business (6:30 pm)
    - Selectboard approved the easement and stewardship plan
        - Gordon: On the agenda for 2 meetings, discussion focused on conservation easement and ongoing management

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- Select board can still update the stewardship plan as needed
- after second reading, it passed unanimous
- Jack: any public comment?
  - Gordon: one question about hunting, no objections raised
  - Joe: what's next?
    - Gordon: we can execute actions within the guidelines
      - Jack: it's a thorough document, shouldn't have any trouble getting approval
    - Jack: there is some overlap of different land trusts to assist each other with monitoring of town forests; can work on some trail planning and participate in town septic system discussion
      - Gordon: if federal government shuts down, it could affect the timeline

- Project the FY24 budget for town forest
  - Gordon: what do we want to do that will require money? Let's brainstorm possible expenses this upcoming year
    - investigating repair of the bridge
    - public events
    - speakers
    - consultants
    - additional trail building
      - Joe: will Sinuosity provide some estimated management costs?
        - Gordon: publicize that their trails are low maintenance
          - VORAC money must be spent by the end of next year; their work is funded; maybe should hold back on asking for more funds for trail building
          - consider publicizing; we had a line-item last year
        - DJ: should have a line item on the budget regardless of the amount, it should be an ongoing item right out of the gate
          - VORAC grant will cover a lot of things (signage, etc.)
          - small storage shed
        - Gordon: tech center or student projects

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- fund a stewardship endowment ($20K, or more; TBD)
  - available to enforce the terms of the easement
- mailings
- public gatherings to get public feedback/requests
- funds for remediation (e.g a cover on the bridge)

- Joe: people will return to the meetings to help with the construction efforts
  - potential grants for research and education
- DJ:
  - ribbon cutting
  - publicity, clean up, food, snacks
- Roger
  - trail maps
  - website/online resources
- Gordon:
  - request a modest amount for publicity, website and opening celebration and possibly expanding it in upcoming years
- Joe: other towns, what do they include in their budgets?
  - Roger: I did some research earlier in the year; will have to revisit my notes
- Dave
  - brush-hogging and upkeep
- Gordon
  - markers or larger signs?
    - couldn't paint this year due to weather
    - could still blaze
      - Dave: could be done this time of year
      - may need money to paint next spring

- Gordon: seems to be a lot of uncertainty
  - if someone is motivated to find grants to could help significantly; may be hard to get grants from a strictly volunteer organization

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- Kelly: I don't see any reason that we would have to pay for trail maintenance; there are robust networks of volunteers around here [cited some examples]
- Dave: does the town still have to pay any money towards the purchase?
  - Gordon: no
    - Dave: then who should complain about a line item to maintain it?
- Kelly:
  - bridge assessment by an engineer and/or town official
- Kelly: motion to empower Gordon and Roger to flesh out a budget to present it to the Select Board; second by Gilly
  - passed, unanimously

- Discuss right of way, Westover property
  - Gordon: survey crew suggested that the right of way may be amended to allow access to some logging roads on the Westover property; after scouting it out, I believe that this would be a good move
- Dave: there used to be gravel pits, but access was rescinded; may require some tact due to that history
- Gordon: based on my recent stroll, there's a well-built road at the end of Depot St; the right of way could branch off, next to some sugar tubes (that do not cross over)
  - Gilly: why would it be ideal?
    - Gordon: multiple reasons
      - would gain access to parts of the Bourne property that would be require greater resources to access otherwise
      - road continues up to a nice little knoll, recovering from last cut; could essentially create an ADA path on this accessible slope
      - would be a good trailhead
  - Gilly: were we not going to leave the Bourne property more wild? it may invite more traffic than desired, could impact the wilderness experience
    - Dave: there currently isn't an access point on that part of the property without crossing other

people's land, not even for maintenance, blazing trails, etc.

- Gordon: re: conceptual trail map and overall usage
  - upper plateau of the Bourne property is more ideal for the quiet wilderness activity; sections of the site facing route 15 should be more recreation focused (already loud from the traffic); map from Sinuosity shows trails that could lead to the Bourne property, but I would argue that we don't need to build a trail up it that area, rather they should be moved to those slopes
- DJ: Sinuosity is focusing the conceptual map as you describe?
  - Gordon: it would require some changes to the current concept; still needs to be approved by the town; needs to be proposed/reviewed by a Trails Committee (not WCFC); not completely clear who has final approval; we can still recommend edits at this time
    - DJ: my understanding that the Trails Committee would be formed and report back to the forest committee
    - Gordon: Select board has not officially recognized the WCFC to approve the final map, but they could
    - Gordon: it will be flagged to avoid sensitive areas, and facilitate this stage of the approval process, will also need permitting
      - Mariah needs feedback and the town has to decide who is empowered to approve

- Gordon:
  - (shared revised map draft for consideration to submit to Sinuosity)
    - move development from south end of Bourne property to area facing route 15 (Biddell property)
    - add a simple trail across the top of the Bourne property

        - Roger: looks good
        - Dave: the town will want access it to see what was purchased; they will need a right a way because otherwise its too steep
        - Gordon: would rather see trail building in the accessible parts; additional multi use trails may not be necessary back up into the Bourne property
- Kate: just uploaded another map with entire Bourne property to show restrictions
    - it would have to considered by the land trust before building a trail across the Bourne property; lots of considerations
    - willing arrange a meeting with the stakeholders to identify a way through the Bourne property
- Gordon: we should make efficient use of Sinuosity before the end of next year; may get more efficient development if we focus on the proposed areas; would minimize stream crossings
    - we can pursue other options moving forward to continue developing
- DJ: it does make sense to me to focus on developed areas
- Joe: where are the trailheads going to be? where do they park?
    - Gordon: the VORAC grant specifies where two pakring areas will be; would be cool to have a lot across the bridge with an ADA and family accessible trail; but may allow for vandalism or other issues
- DJ: are we still discussing the right of way?
    - Gordon: yes. would prefer the Good Woods Rd (no sap lines that cross it)
- Joe: would that right of way be a trail head?
    - Gordon: currently wide enough to drive a pick up truck; does not appear to have been used this year
- Gordon: proposing to rework some of the trails to make them more intensive, interesting, as opposed to a walk through the field
- Gilly: could you please summarize the proposed changes? then let's have a vote
        - Gordon: proposed edits utilizing the right of way:
            - develop the north facing slope of Biddell property along route 15
            - also, rework the southern portion of the conceptual map to the forest and streams,

away from the field; groundwork for steeper hikes later
- Gilly: what about protected areas?
  - Gordon: would need to be considered but the area is interesting and worth it
- Kelly: is Bourne bridge passable or damaged?
  - Gordon: no conclusive professional opinion, but looks sound by my observance; it may be worth it to have someone re-pile some of the large stones after a professional assessment
- Kelly: right of way; there really is no practical access to the Bourne property?
  - Kate: correct
- Kelly: the property owner is open to it?
  - Gordon: yes

- Dave: Walk coming up, last week of October
  - Has knowledge of roads and access ways and potential value of logging
- Gilly: motion to take Gordons suggestions to Sinuosity, second by Joe
  - passed, unanimously

6. Ongoing (7:15 pm)
   - Request to tap trees
     - Gordon: understands that it couldn't be next spring, but wants to be considered for the future
       - is it desired
       - how much is possible?
         - Kate: up to 18,000 potential taps across Bourne property; industrial sugaring is not compatible with community use
         - Dave: would require a lot of groundwork to make it happen; nobody else could bid as they have no access point; but should be bid anyways with a min. per tap; doesn't seem feasible
       - Roger: it's premature; they need to assemble and make and formal proposal for consideration; should be open to bid
       - Gilly: motion to deny this proposal for now, and for it to be submitted to the ongoing committee
         - Gordon: no vote necessary at this time
         - DJ: let's not crack that door open; doesn't seem compatible
       - Gordon: I'll follow up and share this feedback with him; to say "no sugaring ever", should require a vote and added language to the

stewardship plan; lots of things left to identify and consider as we close on the property

7. Adjourn (8:08 pm)