Wolcott Community Forest Committee
General Meeting notes, 12/14/2023

Attendance (in person): Gordon, Kurt, Dave, Joe C. Cate, Roger
(online): Hayden, Kelly, Gilly, Dolan (at 6:45pm)

- Call to Order (6:10 pm)
- Org Actions
    - Amendments to agenda?
        - None
    - **Approve minutes?**
        - **Moved by Roger, Second by Cate**
            - **Approved unanimously**
- Public comment
    - None
- Land purchase updates
    - TPL (Hayden)
        - Waiting on Emily Potter
        - All documents submitted, working on Forest Service documents (sending more tomorrow)
            - Required at least 60 days, prior to setting a closing date
        - Finalizing survey drafts; new surveys forthcoming (finalizing review)
            - Working with the environmental firm to wrap up Phase 2 site assessment
            - Soil testing is complete; samples are being analyzed
            - Due in January
        - Due diligence documents
            - Once Forest Service is done, should be done in February
            - Had conversations with property owners to extend our agreement to the end of April
            - Haven't seen any documents from Sinuosity re: amending their conceptual plan
            - Trail work must be done next year
        - Roger: Did you receive the signed documents for the right-of-way discussed last meeting?
            - Hayden: Right of way (Westover property) will be rerouted to the Woods Rd, and will be shown on the new map

Wolcott Community Forest Committee
General Meeting notes, 12/14/2023

- Gordon: is that at least 60 days or max 60 days?
    - Hayden: at least 60 days, town must provide all necessary documents, working on that process; US Forest Service will send a grant agreement for town approval; once reviewed, approval will be given to disperse the grant funding
        - Gordon: mid-February at the earliest?
            - Hayden: yes, depending on when we can get the information to them; possible that it can be complete within 60 days, too, once grant agreement has been signed; depends on how fast they can expedite review
            - Hayden: Because forest management plan is not finished, current plan will be considered a temporary plan; must submit new plan within 120 days of closing date; asked Emily to complete it by April 1
        - Gordon: seems there is a risk that it will not be finished on time, as she has missed the last few meetings; how significant would that be?
            - Hayden: consider it low risk since both properties have current plans; would be easy enough to take the current approved plan objectives and sync them with the stewardship plan goals (worst case scenario); confident that she will hit the requested deadline now that she has a hard date
            - Gordon: primary documents for management - terms of the easement; will work with the easement holders when we identify a use for the property
                - Gordon: Emily's document should probably sync with the Sinuosity conceptual plan
        - Gordon: if Sinuosity can only build 4 miles, for example, do they get paid less?

Wolcott Community Forest Committee
General Meeting notes, 12/14/2023

        - Hayden: now set requirement to have 5 miles; approval is written “up to 5 miles”; wouldn’t inhibit the town from building new trails; since the bridge upgrade is no longer in the plan, should be able to reutilize those funds for execute other trail work
    - Cate: are deadlines for forest management plans coming up soon?
        - Hayden: not sure, but I don’t believe so
    - Gordon: are the plans on the Google Drive?
        - Hayden: not sure, but we can add them
- New business
    - Forestry Plan
        - Emily Potter, not present
- Ongoing
    - Trail planning (Kiosks)
        - Gordon: what deliverable do we need? When should we submit it?
            - Hayden: not urgent, but certainly important; great opportunity to highlight aspects, uses, rules, trail map, description, role of committee; signs should include acknowledgments
            - Gordon: Maxfield shared that his students have built kiosks for the Hardwick Town Forest; would be cheaper; should consider the size of the kiosks; want to Gove credit to everyone who made it possible; Welcome to Wolcott moment
        - Roger: [introduced shared document]
        - Joe: how many kiosks?
            - Hayden: Two, one at each parking area; could add more
            - Gordon: kiosk on the knoll of the Right-of-way; could be ADA accessible
        - Gordon: re: Bar Hill - kiosks explain why keeping dogs on leash is important for habitat preservation; positive impression of those signs
        - Joe: could acknowledge the previous property owners (Biddell, Bourne)

Wolcott Community Forest Committee
General Meeting notes, 12/14/2023

- Gordon: acknowledge partners - UHCB, TPL, Forest Service
- Ongoing maintenance:
  - Roger: [ref to shared document]
  - Cate: what about plowing and mowing?
    - Kurt: town will probably handle that
    - Gordon: Rhoda likes to mow it, temporary solution though
- Gordon: please look over the VORAC grant and become familiar with it

- Public engagement
  - Speaker series:
    - Roger: sync with groundbreaking and activation of different areas
    - Joe: want to hear from Sinuosity again
    - Hayden: celebration at the end of year after trails and facilities are completed; invite the town, key personnel, media, champagne
    - Gordon: at least one forest walk was announced on the radio
      - Kurt: also Channel 3 news
        - **Gordon: will you take responsibility for our press release?**
          - **Kurt: yes**
  - **Roger: town meeting is coming soon; good time for signups; reach out to Sinuosity after the new year to sync energies**
    - **Gordon: let's be sure we set aside time to plan that**
      - Kurt: would be nice to have their new map and some fliers
  - Forest Committee Website
    - Roger: been working with Bradley to build a landing page beyond the town website with features discussed at the previous meeting; should have something to show in January
      - Hayden: sensitive species are documented in Heritage Foundation archive; probably best to keep those out of public view
  - Fundraising (to purchase Westover property)
    - Kurt: it's not in the flood plain, so FEMA can't buy it back; trying to sell it to the state
    - Gordon: would be a fantastic addition, but we already have 730 acres that we need to activate
      - Kurt: would be good for more rail trail access; parking lot potential
      - Gordon: is it in current use? How many acres?
        - Dave: maybe 40-41 acres

Wolcott Community Forest Committee
General Meeting notes, 12/14/2023

    - Gordon: would be a shame to see it become houses
        - Cate: would not be able to build on it if the state buys it
    - Kurt: could be a rail trail gateway area; not sure where the old school house is in the conversation; contractors are not bidding on the roof job; shaky supply chain
- Adjourn (7:20pm)