Wolcott Community Forest Committee

Next public meeting on Thursday August 8, 2024
6 pm – 8 pm

Attending: Cate, Gordon, Joe, Gabe, Dave
Online: Roger, Sheila, Bradley

Agenda

1. Call to order (6 pm)
2. Organizational actions
    a. Amendments to agenda
        i. [Gordon] Now that the property is finally closing, how does this committee want to guide the process going forward?
    b. Approve minutes from last meeting
        i. Moved: Cate
        ii. Second: Gabe
            1. Passed unanimous
3. Public comment
        i. none
4. Land purchase updates (6:10 pm)
    a. Status report from TPL [Gordon]:
        i. Closing is on track for Sep 5
        ii. Soil Management Plan is on track and will not block the closing at this point
            1. [Joe] closing on both properties (Bourne and Bedell)?
                a. [Gordon] yes, it's critical that we close on both at the same time in order to secure the funding
            2. [Cate] The affordable housing plot is subdivided, and will be closed separately, correct?
                a. [Gordon] yes

b. [Roger] Was mentioned previously that it can be brought back into the town forest at a later time if deemed unusable for affordable housing

iii. VOREC deadline extended to 8/1/25

iv. Westover property and 2 other properties are moving forward with the FEMA buyout; will likely be complete by the end of the year; all structures must be demolished; adjacent land to the town forest could be a big benefit; we currently have the right of way across the property, would love to take people on walks through the right of way into the forest, as it's great access point; a little risky to bring people in without established trails, may be better to wait until we have some established paths; should scout out some routes and create simple signage in order to guide people through the forest, keeping them out of the current sugaring operation (which is grandfathered in)

1. [Cate] **rogue trails - need to clarify what are we preserving, and what are we closing**
2. [Joe] share what's permitted in the forest at the BBQ?
3. [Gordon] how should we introduce it?
    a. Guided walk(s), mid-September
    b. Monthly walks?
    c. Additional trails beyond Sinuosity-constructed trails
        i. Path from parking lot to the pond would be wonderful
        ii. Can mark new routes, independent of Sinuosity

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iii. Get approval from easement holders

iv. Identify interesting points

1. Process for establishing a new trail?

2. Executive meeting with NRLT and VHCB, how to proceed with rustic trail building

v. Cool geologic features for people to experience

5. New business (6:20 pm)

a. Selectboard actions in preparation for property closing

i. Approved updated Forest Management Plan

ii. Approved edited Stewardship Plan

b. Community BBQ (Sep 6)

i. [Cate] make an announcement at the BBQ on the mic?

1. [Joe] Mariah/Brooke at the BBQ?

a. [Gordon] I'll invite them

ii. Table

1. Equipment list

a. Table/chairs [Gordon]

b. Canopy [Cate]

c. Signage/posters/map [Gabe]

d. Announce a walk [Roger]

i. Strenuous walk to the pond on, Sat 9/14 [Gordon]

ii. Easier walk over Biddell bridge, Sat 9/14 [???]

iii. Maps

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1. **Updated trail map? Not yet**

iv. **FPF post [Roger]**

v. **Website [Roger w/Bradley]**

vi. **Instagram [Roger]**

vii. **Signage – wayfinding, maps**

1. **[Bradley]**

viii. **Operating budget? Low 5 digits**

ix. **Define the periphery of the area that we don't want people to go; mark it out as quickly as possible, need to be physically aware of the boundary to direct people away from it**

c. Opening ceremony: in mid-August 2025, after VOREC construction is complete

d. Invasives, we need a plan

i. **Honeysuckle – Dave knows the locations, chair of honeysuckle subcommittee, Cate and Sheila will support**

1. Luke and/or Emily can support with herbicide handling
2. Can find volunteers at the BBQ

e. State of the committee moving forward?

i. **Charter states we need 7 voting members to be appointed**

1. **Poll who is committed to continuing, try to get it down to 7; can discuss if no consensus**
2. Will the committee be a driving force to make things happen in the forest? OR sit back and wait for ideas to surface then evaluate as needed

6. Adjourn (8 pm)