Wolcott Community Forest Committee

General meeting notes, Thursday September 12, 2024
6 pm – 8 pm

Attendance: Kelly, Gilly, Gordon, Dave, Joe, Jack, Roger, Gabe, Cate, DJ, Rhoda
Online: Kate, Maxfield, Sheila, Brooke

Agenda

1. Call to order (6 pm)
2. Organizational actions
    a. Amendments to agenda
    b. Approve minutes from last meeting
        i. 1st: Cate; 2nd: Gilly
            1. **Passed unanimously**
3. Public comment
4. Land purchase update (6:10 pm) [Kate W.]
    a. Status report from TPL - "We did it!"
        i. Forest officially belongs to the town now
        ii. Soil remediation – Sep. 30, clean up occurs [Stone Environmental]; final reports to follow
        iii. Bridge over Elmore Branch – original contractor noticed some damage; on board to make repairs
            1. [Rhoda] adding reinforcement rods (Mark Cody) to address washout damage
        iv. TPL involved until…
            1. soil cleanup is complete for affordable housing lot; will determine then if it is still usable as an affordable housing site or it is returned to the town forest
            2. all contracted trail-building is done
            3. big celebration next summer
        v. Will stay in touch to communicate as opportunities arise, for grants, etc.

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vi. Created an account for future management of the town forest ($25K raised by TPL, $12.5K donated from Bourne Association)
    1. [Gordon] on behalf of the town, thanks for everything!

5. New business (6:20 pm)
    a. Restructuring the Forest Committee
        i. [Gordon] we had talked previously about this subject, and sent a survey to gather your intentions moving forward
            1. Selectboard will have to approve any actions, sign checks, etc.
        ii. [DJ] What would be the scope of the work?
            1. [Gordon] Grassroots work, outreach, developing programming
            2. [DJ] What would the regulatory role of the committee, in order to review proposals for new activities?
            3. [Gordon] there are parameters (local, state, easement) that have to be navigated; also, forestry plan and stewardship plan/management and implementation, review proposed changes
            4. [Roger] operational and management, budget, delegation of labor, services, education,
            5. [Gordon] would like to meet twice per month; what are the details and species present, how can we be good stewards; looking for people that will be onboard to learn this and communicate to the community
            6. Those who responded [to be voting members]
                a. Kelly, Gilly, Gabe, Cate, Gordon, Roger, Dave

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b. DJ, Sheila, Joe, Maxfield are more interested in trail work and will step back
c. Jack will continue to be present as a NRLT easement rep
    i. **Final role needs approval by the Selectboard**
d. [Roger] Do we need to identify process for term limits? Bringing new people in? when someone resigns?
    i. [Gordon] we are all appointed by the Selectboard; they may want to continue doing it that way

7. Meeting twice per month
    a. [Gordon] there is a lot of stuff that we need to work through; just depends on how fast we want to move it forward
        i. [Kelly] are more meetings really necessary? We are about to enter the holidays.

b. Trail building update
    i. Progress report, Sinuosity
        1. [Brooke] started on school property; corridor clearing; have not started construction, yet; more final design and flagging on new town property, prepping to begin corridor clearing; likely to start next week, or the week after, on new property

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a. [Gordon] what are you putting up for flagging? There are several flags out there, want to clue people in on what to look out for
    i. [Brooke] pink, orange & blue; some pink flagging, probably related to wastewater system, is also up; metal pin flags set just before construction; further up, working on bike climbing trail and hiking trail (already flagged, just on trees)
b. [Gordon] any information we should share with the community?
    i. [Brooke] would be nice to not have extra visitors until we are further along in construction; not a lot to see yet; will be lots of short stumps people could trip over; visitors are fine, but with caution; no announcements yet
c. [Jack] how big is your trail crew? What equipment?
    i. [Brooke] small team of 5-6 people; using mostly chainsaws and the like early on; later, small excavators on larger connector trails
    ii. [Jack] if equipment is being used, could be a safety situation for volunteers
    iii. [Brooke] yes, which is why we want to avoid drawing a large crowd; work is

usually spread out, not usually disruptive; can place signs when necessary

d. [Roger] signage under VOREC grant? Sensitive areas and buffer zone around the school, are they covered by VOREC or covered by management account?
    i. [Brooke] only covers navigation on finished trails
    ii. [Kate] and 2 kiosks
    iii. [Gordon] were kiosks on Sinuosity's plate? Maxfield has volunteered his students, to work as a school project; can discuss it as we get closer
        1. [Brooke] sure, we can help with this
        2. [Maxfield] kids have been working on similar projects; we can build them for much less that than manufactured kits
        3. **[Gordon] will let you guys coordinate and take it from here**

ii. Coordinating volunteers
    1. [Brooke] smaller groups of volunteers would work better
        a. [Gordon] should we recruit or direct them to you?

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i. [Brooke] either way would be fine; cell service is spotty in the forest; generally, work 9:30am – 6pm; will email the group when we are ready to start

b. [Gabe] what is the initial volunteer work?

i. [Brooke] dragging what has been cut out of the way, following the chainsaws

iii. [Gordon] could we schedule a regular update at our meetings going forward?

1. [Brooke] certainly

c. Invasive species abatement, update

i. [Dave] Cate, Sheila, Julie, Joe and myself; met and traveled to the field across the bridge; pulled honeysuckle out by the roots; flagged the site; mostly had old blue ribbons on it (from Rhoda);

ii. looked at the bridge – some washout damage under the bridge; missing sand and several rocks had moved; needs to be addressed; will talk to Mark about it

iii. another meeting on Sunday at 1pm; talked to Emily Potter; looking for honeysuckle south of the school; one patch has been located; Emily can help with others

iv. daylilies will be dug up from the future parking lot site; meet at the bridge on Sunday if you want to join us!

1. [Gilly] any Japanese knotweed?

a. [Rhoda] not that I've seen

b. [Dave] could be some deeper in (south of the bridge); will investigate

d. Feedback from Community BBQ

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i. [Cate] general excitement to move forward and build out the trails

e. Planning future events
    i. Matt Peters (botanist), potential speaker to educate the stewardship committee; maybe in November? Maybe 2 meetings, to do a deeper dive; may engage him to do a public presentation, as well, in the future; what info do we want to present publicly, and which format is best for that?
    ii. **Need a small group of volunteers (maybe with Matt Peters?) to block an established trail through the ecological protection zone**; such a beautiful, yet sensitive, location; currently, there is a motorbike trail which needs to be addressed; need to consider where the exact zone is and where to establish a buffer to prevent casual traffic
        1. [Jack] can use Avensa map to identify the exact boundary of the ecological protection zone
            a. [Gordon] Kate, do we have one?
                i. [Kate] yes; if not, I can make one for you
        2. [Gordon] **September 29**
            a. Who could help? Jack, NRLT may have some volunteers
            b. We will need signage
    iii. Brush-hogging around the fields
        1. Talked with Emily Potter; need to trim back the field with a soft edge; after the goldenrod is gone
        2. Small field south of the school; clear part of it
            a. [Dave] any sensitive wildlife in that field?

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i. **[Jack] Kiley Briggs, herpetologist, would be interested in checking; I can reach out to him**

iv. Earthen dam
    1. Cut back the brush
v. Remediation work, Gates Farm Rd
    1. Water bars need to be repaired
vi. Need to agree upon trail markers (in Sinuosity budget); need to take down ribbons
    1. Can discuss at a future meeting
        a. [Gordon] will likely have plaques
vii. Signage
    1. [Gordon] had conversations with Bradley, he is interested in designing it
viii. Right of way (Westover property)
    1. Will become town property soon (FEMA buyout); it is currently wet and mucky; should consider how we want to evolve other sections of the forest beyond Sinuosity contract
        a. Opportunity to be built by volunteers
        b. [Roger] what process will the easement holders expect?
            i. [Jack] needs to be informed; it can be done, but it has to be careful; think of the Sinuosity process; it may require permits, etc.; there are rules for building advertised trails

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ii. [Dave] could be more permissible to allow logging operations, then follow through, converting an access road into a trail

iii. [Jack] you say unprofessional, but please don't write off the possibility that funding will be available for these projects to employ professionals for this purpose

iv. [Gordon] that brings up that we have some existing erosion sites that we may want to look into erosion remediation

2. Website? [Kelly]

a. [Roger] We are working on a template. Have been withholding a launch of the website as we are not yet trying to actively promote it until construction is further along.

b. Town Forest Associations? Potential links, connections

ix. Grand Opening

1. [Brooke] July would work best
2. [Kate] In the past, set aside a budget for food, porta-potty, invitations (invite donors and important people – supporters, politicians, local officials, foundations, landowners, committee members), speaking program, activities (guided hike, guided bike ride, food);
    a. usually 45 minutes of mingling, talking, etc.; then send people out in the property

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   b. can postpone planning until next Spring, but we do want a ribbon-cutting
   c. [**Gordon] maybe there will be overlap with other town projects (wastewater, schoolhouse, etc.); possible to coordinate**

6. Upcoming (7:50pm)
   a. Hosted Trail Walk on Saturday, 9/14
      i. Right of way has tall brush, not very inviting; “No Trespassing” sign, currently; could create a path, don’t want to invite people off of the rail trail; don’t want to disrupt the sugaring operation; don’t want to invite vandalism and vagrancy
      ii. Thinking about entering behind the town garage or up around the corner from that property in the town forest
         1. [Dave] past the gravel pits would work
         2. [Gordon] need to clearly mark the right of way
7. Adjourn (8 pm)