Wolcott Community Forest Committee

Next public meeting on Thursday October 10, 2024
6 pm – 8 pm

Attending: Gordon, Dave, Roger, Jack, John Morale, Joe, Cate
Online: David Carter

Agenda

1. Call to order (6:08 pm)
2. Organizational actions
    a. Amendments to agenda
        i. [Gordon] Scheduling events in the next couple of months:
            1. Going to the Selectboard next week
                a. Vacancies – Kelly and Gilly resigned; 2 open seats
                b. Will introduce the proposed new structure for the forest committee, and process for filling seats
                    i. [Gordon] **will draft a proposal for structure; Roger will draft a proposal for bookkeeping (yes)**
            2. Discuss a process for new trails, recreation, etc. (see below)
    b. Approve minutes from last meeting
        i. **Moved: Dave, Seconded: Cate**
            1. **Passed unanimously**
3. Public comment
        i. none
4. Ongoing
    a. Status report from TPL (6:10 pm)
        i. No formal report
        ii. [Jack] believe that they are just waiting for all of the final closing documents to be received

iii. [Gordon] **would be good to get an update for the soil remediation project; will ask**

iv. [Dave] **also, would like to see if they are complete at the power pole so that I can brush hog**

b. Trail building update from Sinuosity (6:20 pm)

i. [Gordon] no formal update from Sinuosity; not aware of how their work is progressing; expressed interest for organizing volunteer work days; waiting for a response from them; **will follow up**

ii. [Roger] Brooke identified a suspected rogue trail while working; was mowed and leaf-blown; requested that we close it off as it heads into a wetland area

1. [Gordon] not sure who it could be, but will ask around

a. [Roger] should I post a notice on FPF?

i. [Gordon] not yet

5. New business (6:40 pm)

a. Forest management in Stand 8

i. White pine plantation

1. [Gordon] not a healthy stand, Emily agrees; could use some timber stand improvement, such as girdling to thin it out; nothing that's really worthy of harvest; looking for Emily, or other forester, to make a recommendation so that we can actively manage it

a. [Cate] a formal recommendation would be the way to go

b. [Dave] any work we do in there will make a mess; could raise opposition; may need to move any felled trees; I agree, there's not any

salable lumber in there; about a 3rd of it should go; probably best to girdle to ones we don't want

c. [Joe] the purpose is to create regeneration?
    i. [Gordon] mostly to spur regeneration?
    ii. [Dave] some infestations and the rest is too dense; need to thin it out to improve the health of the remaining trees
    iii. [Gordon] will this incur an expense?
    iv. [Dave] with proper directions from Emily, could probably do it myself with no additional cost
    v. [Gordon] just a reminder that it is a small area; **any objections to engaging Emily on this task**? [none voiced]
        1. [Jack] **should prepare a written document with Emily's report**; **we need to be thorough with communicating such work to the easement holders**; please read the requirements and be aware of the requirements
        2. [Gordon] **should seek approval from the Selectboard, as well**
        3. [Dave] Rhoda's previous plan did call out that work was necessary there

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b. Recreational trails, Phase 2 [Bourne parcel]
    i. Trail planning
        1. [Gordon] four of us went to the ecological protection zone; identified where the rough boundaries are; closer to the top then I thought, and further from the bottom; clarified that it would be unlikely that there would be an approach from the bottom; what do you all think is the urgency for placing signage?
            a. [Cate] didn't look like anyone was in there recently; should have signage just in case someone wanders independently into the area
            b. [Dave] signage might draw people in
            c. [Jack] we did enough brushing in that it will be a deterrent now; best to monitor it, and be sure deterrent is working; I agree that it draws curiosity
            d. [Dave] if we isolate that area as old growth potential, it will help
        2. [Gordon] could also steer traffic away by building trails to other areas; would like to begin planning trails for that area; I propose that we have a volunteer project of building a primitive multi-use trail, for hiking and biking, that has a manageable climb and heads out to the pond; could be part of a phase 2, if Sinuosity is driving phase 1; also, doing work on existing roads, as they are erosion prone; there are no water bars, not well constructed; would be good to give them some attention

   a. [Cate] just Bourne, or Biddell, too?
      i. [Gordon] just the Bourne parcel; as they are in the "quiet zone"
   b. [Cate] roughly how far is it to the pond?
      i. [Gordon] about a one-hour hike; more than a mile, probably not 2 mi

3. [Gordon] Excellent trail network in Calais; small public network of trails; some public, others private but marked as permitted for respectful use; some are marked for winter fat-biking; invite you to check them out for inspiration
   a. [Cate] is the priority fixing trails or plotting new ones?
      i. [Gordon] equal; we need to execute both, and they can proceed concurrently; remediation would likely take some equipment to do right; need a trail through the right of way across Westover, with a kiosk; then, remediation; then hand-tool construction to make a path to the pond; then, how do we build off of the pond trail; lots of interesting features for mountain biking, some technical opportunities over rocks, etc.
      ii. [John] we need both types of trails for a robust network

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iii. [Gordon] reached out to Sinuosity to survey the Bourne property to assess the scope of proposed work; they suggested that we wait, as grants are competitive; trail building applications requires a lot of pre-work (40-50 hours); could mark a trail before we even begin construction

1. [Cate] erosion remediation is the clear priority to me; with storms hitting every year, it will only get worse

ii. Grant applications

1. [Gordon] Maybe we can get a grant for roadway maintenance and erosion prevention; most applicable ones might be too much ($50K); need a match to secure some of the other grants
    a. [Jack] Woodbury got one of those grants, and used youth conservation corps who provided a match, did not charge full cost; contact Patrick Pfiefer(?); they didn't bring in any equipment, all hand tools; 4' path w/ water bars, used federal standards for trail building
    b. [Gordon] detailed trail building guidelines are included in the grant documentation
2. [Gordon] many of the grants located are ultimately fueled with federal dollars; historically, a portion is set

aside for motorized recreation, and a portion for non-motorized

3. [Roger] I have some questions regarding managing our committee spending, grants and funds; any pre-existing guidelines or recommended processes for committees?
    a. [Gordon] will ask the Select Board
    b. [Roger] **I can reach out to Belinda for information; prepare a document for review and approval**
    c. [Gordon] town has more property now than ever before; FEMA buyouts, town forest, etc.; spends money for other departments, so they must have a process; VOREC is administered by TPL;
    d. [Cate] Michelle is responsible for grants
    e. [Roger] There is also the operating fund from TPL
    f. [Gordon] we do have these funds?
    g. [Gordon] **We also need to prepare a budget request for the Select Board. The deadline is coming up soon.**

iii. [Jack] NRCS provides funding for remediation work Forest roads, water bars), but may only provide it to private property owners

iv. [Gordon] **We need a list of upcoming projects**; need organization

c. Potential funding, VT Fish & Wildlife Habitat Stamp program

i. **Revisit at a future date when Gabe is present.**

d. Bridge repair
    i. [Dave] checked on it; looks excellent, reinforced with rebar and concrete
e. Should consider how to redo to the bridge/gate to allow access; revisit at our next meeting
    i. [Gordon] Should we cover it to extend its life?
        1. [Dave] may just need to be treated to preserve it with environmentally friendly product
    ii. [Gordon] let's brainstorm option and next steps
f. [Gordon] **will flesh out my proposals for phase 2 ideas**
    i. [Dave] can't use equipment until Westover property is closed
        1. [Gordon] will follow up with Linda; the existing sugaring operation is a complication, under existing lease

6. Upcoming (7:50pm)
    a. Volunteer work day, corridor clearing
        i. **Waiting on response with date time; can post on FPF**
    b. Website
        i. [Roger] was holding off as to not invite volunteers/visitors into an active work zone
        ii. [Gordon] We should go live with an information page at least, to be transparent about our progress. **Activate with a current status report; [Roger] ok**
    c. [Gordon] there's some disconnect with the requirement to conduct work publicly under new laws; it's very different as opposed to how we workshopped ideas a year ago; before we were allowed to

prepare a project as a proposal to be voted upon later (like the stewardship plan)

7. Adjourn (8 pm)