Wolcott Forest Stewardship Committee

General Meeting notes, Thursday, May 8, 2025
6 pm – 8 pm

Attending: Gordon, Gabe, Jack, Cate, Dave, Roger, Luke
Online: Maxfield
Quorum? yes

Agenda

1. Call to order (6:03 pm)
2. Organizational actions
    a. Amendments to agenda
        i. Dave: apple pruning workshop went well; was well attended; lots of work accomplished; went over tools, techniques
    b. Approve minutes from last meeting (4/10)
        i. Moved: Gabe
        ii. Second: Dave
            1. Passed unan.
3. Public comment
    a. none
4. Ongoing (6:10 pm)
    a. Update from Sinuosity, trail building
        i. Gordon corresponded with Brooke, who confirmed that work would resume with their full crew on 5/19. They are on track to complete work this summer, as planned. **Brooke asked WFSC to organize volunteers to drag brush, etc. Gordon said that we should build a volunteer pool and schedule work based on their availability.** Volunteers need to check in at the school if accessing the town forest from their parking lot during school hours.
    b. Update from NRLT, Smith property
        i. Jack reported that NRLT is preparing options for the town to consider regarding whether or not the property will be divided

to allow a for a residence, with the rest of the land donated to the forest. Allowing for a residence would benefit the town by maintaining its current tax base. The decision will not be finalized until it is appraised in July. **Looking to Gordon to speak before the Select Board to present the options and state the committee's preference.** There is a $6,500 fee to NLRT, but the executor of the estate is willing to pay that fee.

ii. Jack volunteered to lead a walk through the property on Tuesday, 5/13, at 5pm.

c. Update, Westover property
    i. There was nothing new to report about adding the former-Westover property to the town forest, but the planning commission has been considering several ideas.
d. Maintenance – proposed/planned/completed
    i. Work update from Dave, for projects approved last meeting
        1. VHCB and NLRT have both given their stamp of approval, clarifying that any maintenance activity, and activity detailed in the SMP/FMP, does not need approval. However, it is necessary to create a new open area within the forest.
        2. Dave will lead weekly work sessions, meeting at the school to work through the list beginning **Wednesday, 5/7.**
        3. After discussion, WFSC agreed to:
            a. **Err on the side of getting stuff done, but emphasized the need to be safe;**
            b. **Alert on the email chain when actions are being done; and**

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c. **To document activities by taking before and after pictures of the work.**

4. Gordon introduced discussion about foraging in the forest. It was agreed that dispersed foraging for personal use is okay, but foragers should be conscious of leaving enough for regeneration.

e. Forest management

i. Continuing our discussion from past meetings, the committee revisited the need for forest management planning and identified several projects that should be prioritized. There are plenty of places where skidder roads were not closed out properly, which is affecting the water quality. The boundaries need to be re-blazed. There are issues with forest health in other sections, which could be set up for better regeneration and diversity by actively working it. we could benefit from a more thorough review; from a forest health perspective, it deserves a deeper look. Luke Hardt explained that there will be opportunities for funding such projects this year, but we will need better baseline data to clearly visualize the projects and prepare applications. These funds are linked to management activities, which could include strategic timbering, but can also be linked to trail development and other areas of interest, such as a community firewood program. Once we have better data and our priorities have been identified, we'll have a better idea of whether or not a timber sale is necessary, and what the costs may be, with or without grant money. Gordon reiterated that the town has

consistently prioritized forest health, rather than production timbering, when queried. **Luke stated that he would need 7 volunteers that he could train to map assigned sections of the forest, and offered to organize training for them.** Gordon suggested focusing on the Bourne property first, as to not interfere with their trail work.

1. **Roger will reach out to past committee members to see if they are interested in helping.**

f. Planning, Opening ceremony
   i. The ribbon cutting ceremony is currently scheduled for Saturday, September 13, at 10am. It will be located at Wolcott Elementary. More details will follow.

5. New business (7:10 pm)
   a. Organizing volunteer trail builders
      i. Reiterated the need for volunteers to assist Sinuosity in order to hit our completion date (Aug 1).
   b. Sign painting project, WES kids
      i. $300 was approved to purchase materials for the project.
         1. Moved, Roger; Second, Cate; approved unanimously
6. Adjourn (8 pm)