

Windham Forestry Committee Workshop

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 4, 2015

ATTENDANCE:

Wanda Rice – Chair
Norman Babineau – Vice Chair
Holly Hanford Oliver – Secretary
Wayne Morris – Conservation Commission
James Finn – Conservation Commission

Wanda called meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

DISCUSSION:

Wanda opened the workshop and welcomed the public.

Wanda referenced our meeting with the Board of Selectmen on May 18th and a flyer distributed to residents that contained much misinformation. Tonight's session will address concerns brought up by residents at that meeting and in the flyer. After some informational presentations, public comment or questions are welcomed.

Forestry Committee and Forester gave individual introductions. Members reviewed their family history in town and other member activities. Mike Powers with Bay State Forestry licensed forester overseeing our forest management activities.

Wayne reviewed recent history of the property with Conservation, initial 10-year Stewardship Plan completed, new town forest name is McIlvaine Town Forest based on the family of a historic foundation found on the property.

Mike gave a presentation on general forestry practices. Forestry plans are unique to the property and the owner goals. The initial McIlvaine stewardship plan included a multiple use concept including forest health, improve wildlife habitat, and provide recreational opportunities. The town forest is basically healthy but data showed overstocking of various stands. Dense overgrown forest slows tree growth and then mortality causes declines. Trees are marked based on various criteria with a goal to save the best trees for the future. Marking is complete and 80% of the available saw timber will remain standing. Special care is taken to avoid disturbing wetlands, vernal pools, and cultural sites. Hemlock stands being left as winter shelter deer yards. The overall forest habitat will not change, over 3 or 4 growing seasons evidence of the harvest will be greatly diminished. Snags (dead standing trees) are being left for wildlife use. Healthy white oaks are being left as a wildlife food source. Some small "patch" cuts will clear small areas for early successional forest habitat which benefits many types of wildlife. Only an experienced top logger contractor will be used for this work.

Holly gave a presentation on forest wildlife. Reviewed animal evidence seen to date. A wildlife biologist from UNHCE has reviewed our plans and provided recommendations. Mike P. has reviewed the report and is implementing suggestions. Wanda has begun mapping vernal pools and their overall health.

Norm reviewed the forestry committee logistics. He described the new Forestry Committee web page and email address. Meeting times and dates held per state statutes based on member availability. A brief history of committee actions in 2014 and public outreach to date including signs, newspaper articles, and the BOS request for this workshop were discussed.

Wanda discussed harvest economics and process. Alternate forest access through the town landfill approved by the BOS based on Osgood Rd. neighbor feedback on our original plan to use Osgood Rd. Landfill cap will not be impacted at all. Logging vehicles will use the landfill access driveway to access the town forest. All processing will occur in the town forest landing site. Dave Poulson has contacted DES to ensure no concerns using the landfill access. Logging contractors bid on planned-marked trees based on many factors including market conditions. Revenue received from a harvest will go directly into a Forestry Fund. Appropriations from this fund will be voted on by town ballot. It is hoped by the committee that funds can be used to continue actively managing the town forest, make improvements to the forest health, create recreational trails, and preserve the historic McIlvaine foundation. Methods of forester payments reviewed. Mike is paid by the acre which is a set cost. No home devaluation based on a neighboring forest harvest found in her research. For safety concerns forest users should avoid any areas actively harvesting. Harvest timing anticipated to be 6-10 weeks but is weather dependent.

Mike described forms and permits required for a timber harvest. Intent to cut form filed with the town and with DES for wetland crossing permits. None have been submitted as a logger has not been chosen yet. Mike talked about other municipal projects including Pelham also harvesting this summer. Other towns listed including property managed by Audubon Society.

Wanda discussed advantages of a trails network connecting neighborhoods and providing outdoor nature experiences to residents. ATVs are not allowed on town properties and they are not allowed in the McIlvaine Town Forest.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

First resident mentioned she had not read any of the articles but appreciated the workshop information. The tone of BOS meeting comments caused her concern. Was landfill access approved? Yes, it was. Where is the Route 28 Windham Town Forest? Off Route 28 before Spruce Pond Estates.

Barbar, Osgood Road, thanked committee for the workshop. Reviewed his background in engineering and surveying. He said it is basic to understand the land, including boundary markings. He claimed this is a risk for the town without properly surveyed property. Was concerned that wetlands have not been identified by a soils scientist and wildlife inventory has not been done. Suggests the committee takes step back and complete the basics and understand all the impacts. What is the gross revenue? \$50K - \$60K. Net revenue will be gross minus forester fees.

Mike reviewed how he used property survey maps and located corner markings to flag boundary lines. If there was any questions on boundary lines, work would be done well away from that boundary.

Babar was not comfortable without a licensed surveyor marking the boundaries. He would also like know why we need a harvest if the forest is already healthy.

Mike described forest as healthy but overstocked leading to poor growth. Active management will include watching for invasive species and improving overall forest health. It's important to focus on the trees that remain after the harvest not just those being harvested. Mike went on describe forestry operations versus development operations as it concerns wetlands. All visible wetlands and vernal pools identified. Care is taken not to adversely affect wetland areas. All road/trail/landing construction is temporary following forestry best management practices. There are no forestry projects done in this state that hire soils scientist because it's not required for proper forestry projects. Endangered species are checked through state agencies to identify any endangered plants or animals. Any stumps removed for road or landing will be disbursed and hidden as best they can. Mike reviewed bidding process including a timber showing for prospective logging contractors. Mike addressed his payment by the acre and that is a common method of payment for his time spent on the project. Norm explained that the committee was given no budget when formed to do surveys, or other work ahead of the harvest. Harvest revenue is planned to be used to address boundary marking and other improvements.

| Jim, Bayberry [Road](#), is a frequent forest user and thinks that the planned trail improvements will benefit the forest. He is interested in the cellar holes and property history around the new McIlvaine name. Wayne will be publishing an article with historic details around the new name. Mike explained types of wood products designated for harvest and percentages of trees harvested. Where are the rabbits? Holly explained the need to create proper shrubland habitat to encourage rabbit population growth.

Gina, Osgood Road, requested more details around types of harvests. Mike explained different harvest methods. Conventional harvest, cutting trees and leaving tops in the woods. Cut to length harvest where trees are cut and de-limbed in the forest. Bio-mass whole tree harvest, whole tree is brought to the landing for processing, limbs are chipped for fuel. Whole tree harvest is planned for McIlvaine. How was the % of trees to be cut determined? Mike did tree inventory stocking tally and based on stocking guides from the USDA determined the percentage of these to be marked for harvest.

Norm asked Mike to explain timber resource tracking for this type of project. Mike stated he is onsite twice a week and picks up truck load trip tickets. The contractor supplies mill scale slips with payments periodically and Mike compares to the trip tickets.

Mike listed sites in Pelham that have been harvested and can be viewed by residents. After the harvest a post basal area survey can be done and then monitor the property for general health. The Forestry Committee will monitor health of forest and wildlife with input from hunters and other users.

Babar re-addressed budgeting, and his concerns about the need to do things in the proper ways. He suggested fund raising for resources to do boundary surveys, soils scientist reviews, etc. prior to a harvest.

Wayne again explained our precautions to protect the town, and emphasized that we're doing things properly for a forestry project.

*Wayne motioned to adjourn, Wanda seconded. Approved 5-0-0.
Meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.*