

# Minutes Washington Forestry Committee: Meeting of October 28, 2014

## 1.0 Assembly:

- 1.1 The meeting was called to order at Washington Town Hall at 4:00 P.M.
- 1.2 Members present: Tom Burt, Larry Gaskell, Steve Hanssen, Al Krygeris, Pete Martin, and Tom Taylor (Chairman).
- 1.3 Guests: Anita Blakeman (forestry consultant)

## 2.0 Minutes:

- 2.1 Steve Hanssen presented the minutes of the previous meeting held on August 26, 2014. Suggested modifications were made and incorporated. Al K. moved to accept the corrected minutes. Tom B. seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

## 3.0 Old Business:

### 3.1 Anita Blakeman report:

Anita provided a three ring binder to Tom T. containing indexed sections for the current forestry property holdings listed in the Town's Forest Management Master Plan. At this time, each of the other members of the Committee received only one section of the plan-the Farnsworth Hill section.

- 3.2 While the group focused on the handout, Anita explained that the whole master plan would be organized like the sample; each property would have its own section and subsection(s), uniformly arranged, that would include available information from multiple sources about each forest parcel. She emphasized that the binder should be considered a "working" (living) document meant for opportunistic update as new information is discovered.

Although substantial progress has been made since the last meeting, there remains a considerable amount of office and fieldwork ahead of her in order to complete the task.

- 3.3 At this point, suggested by Anita, the Committee members can begin reviewing the plan content. Rather than distributing hard copy of the growing body of information as it's developed and acquired, all agreed that electronic means would be most satisfactory. Anita will provide periodic updates to the members using flash drives (portable memory devices) (also known as memory sticks). She provided one flash drive from which Tom T. will make duplicates to be available in about a week.
- 3.4 The members agreed that electronic information sharing will work during the draft and assembly stage of the updated plan, but all would expect and appreciate a binder with hard copy pages at the conclusion of the project.
- 3.5 Anita stated that Allan Krygeris, an associate contributor to the activities of the Forestry Committee, has completed considerable field discovery and library analysis of conditions and information concerning most of the Town forest parcels. In consideration of professional practices and research ownership, she felt obliged to ask for his permission to use and reprint this valuable information. All agreed that incorporation of Allan's work within the plan was very important. Anita was encouraged to contact Allan directly to coordinate this matter of interest.

## 4.0 Forest Cut, Parcel Selection:

- 4.1 The focus of the meeting then shifted to the selection of the most revenue promising land parcel from three options with potential. They are:

Forestry Parcel	Acres
Barrett Pond	191
Huntley Mountain	106
Farnsworth Hill	135.1

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- 4.2 In the judgment of Ms. Blakeman, the Farnsworth Hill parcel appears to provide the highest and best opportunity to produce desired revenue and most benefit from a woods cutting to promote wood lot sustainability.
- 4.3 Following general agreement with Anita's recommendation, the discussion turned to the logistic and access challenges posed by the Farnsworth lot selection. Anita pointed out that, based on her observations, the best access to the lot was via the Old Marlow Road and then through an adjacent property owned by the Forestry Society (known as the "Farnsworth Hill Forest"). Access from the Ashuelot Drive Cul-de-sac was not recommended because of the poor condition of the Class VI roadbed and operational constraints imposed by the Ashuelot Village district. The Old Marlow Road approach in the vicinity of the Farnsworth Hill Forest is also in poor condition and would require substantial importation of sand and building drainage improvement structures.
- 4.4 During Anita's site visit to the Farnsworth Hill Lot, she reported finding an old stone cellar hole and a near-by well. The "dug well", upon inspection, had been filled with rocks. However, Anita indicated that due to settling, the opening could accommodate additional rocks to completely fill the well.
- 4.5 Preliminarily, Anita indicated that \$400 per acre (less overhead expenses) could render a net revenue amount to the Town of possibly \$300 per acre.
- 4.6 The group voted unanimously to pursue a timber cut on the Farnsworth Hill property, subject to the resolution of the logistical and access coordination issues with the adjacent landowner.

### *Note:*

*The Farnsworth Parcel was identified in the Management Plan, published in 1999, as the most probable site for future cutting. Recognizing the potential, the committee in 2006 engaged a surveyor to define the property boundaries. Members have subsequently reinforced the boundary markers to assure field recognition. Logging this track now is timely as logger activities can benefit from recent class six road improvements made in conjunction with other recent logging activities. Creating new forest growth along side other recent logged properties expands the area of opportunity for encouraging wild life propagation.*

- 4.7 Tom T. outlined the steps ahead of the Committee to implement the proposed wood cut as follows:
- a) Neighbor coordination;
  - b) Obtain 3 competitive bids from prequalified loggers.
  - c) Contact the Town's Road Agent to determine road-bonding requirements.
  - d) Obtain concurrence for the proposed project from the Select Board and Conservation Commission.
  - e) Forestry Committee Chair sign logging contract.

### 5.0 Protection of Town Forest Properties:

- 5.1 Tom T. indicated that there is a continued Town desire (from some quarters of the population) to establish more stringent voter control to protect the integrity of ownership of town forest properties. This focus is to make it more difficult to adopt proposals from either individuals or interest groups from avariciously or inspirationally selling Town Forest parcels of ten acres or more.
- 5.2 Tom T. suggested that a reasonable administrative step to protect forest properties might include increasing the current simple majority of 50.1% of the voters to a more substantial majority of 66.67 % to dispose of Town Forest properties. Tom T. asked Pete M. to look at this possibility from a legal feasibility perspective.

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### **6.0 Barney Brook Bridge Status:**

- 6.1 Pete M. informed the Committee there have been several new developments since the last WFC meeting. The Washington Snow Riders and the Stoddard Rock Hoppers snowmobile clubs have enacted a plan to rehabilitate both the bridge and Jeft's Road in the vicinity of the bridge, in consultation with Washington Road Agent Ed Thayer. The Snow Riders have engaged a person (Tom Marshall) with a tracked bulldozer to fill in the erosion gullying at the approaches to the bridge. 1<sup>st</sup>, the landowners on either side of Jeft's Road have granted the clubs permission to use fill from their properties for this purpose. 2<sup>nd</sup>, when the road rehabilitation has been completed, materials for rebuilding the bridge will be delivered to the site. 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Rock Hoppers will use these materials to reconstruct the Barney Brook Bridge.

### **7.0 Trail Manager Vacancy:**

- 7.1 Tom T. reminded the group that a Trail Manager is being sought to coordinate the design and construction of a new area trail network connecting several preserved forestry properties in the towns of Washington and Lempster.

### **8.0 Incoming Correspondence:**

- 8.1 A three-ring binder containing draft material for the update to the town's Forestry Management Plan.
- 8.2 Multiple copies of the draft Farnsworth Hill section of the Management Plan.

- 9.0 **Adjournment:** There being no further business before the Committee, Pete M. motioned adjournment, with Larry G. seconding. All voted in favor.

### **Post-Meeting Notes:**

- (1) Steve H., after this meeting, visited the well site mentioned in section 4.4 above. He concluded that it did not currently pose an immediate safety hazard. The depression, although minor in extent, can be topped off at a convenient time next spring (2015). Tom B. and Pete M. previously expressed interest in helping with this task.
- (2) Tom T, with the assistance of Steve H., distributed individual flash drives to each WFC member. Thus, each member now has a copy of the most recent version of the updated Forest Management Plan. All were asked to critically review the contents.
- (3) Steve H., during a conversation on January 10, 2015, with John Brighton (SPNHF Land Steward for the Farnsworth Hill Forest), asked about SPNHF granting the Town temporary access across the their property to allow access to the Town property. John B. indicated that the WFC has his full support for the temporary access. Mister Brighton said his only concern regards restoration of the SPNHF property afterwards. Misters Hanssen and Brighton agreed that stringent contract-specified cleanup measures and field restoration requirements would be able to fully abrogate any post-access concerns.