

Draft Minutes of Town Forest Committee meeting, March 11, 2015, Story Memorial Hall

Members in attendance: Rudy Gross, Dennis Lemire, Laura Stillson, Cathy Boedtger and Jim Lyall

Public Attendees: none

1. Meeting called to order: 6:30 p.m.
2. No changes or additions.
3. Minutes from the previous two meetings were read and approved.
4. No public comment.
5. Trail Report: There has been a lot of snowshoe traffic on the trails and a few fat bikers. Glenn has set a groomed trail of about 5 miles which has gotten good reviews. With the powder, there were a lot of backcountry skiers in the town forest. Cathy suggested that we put up a sign about horses on ski/snowshoe trails, and that we should also consider opening up Arrow Route to horses to make a loop.

The committee discussed possible snowmobile routes from the resort to Snowmobile Route 5, and felt that the best route was across the lower MLF, crossing Coaching Lane, following an old trail to 44, then Pierce Rd. to the Nilson property.

6. Discussion of grant possibilities for 2015. Our RTP grant is still open, but must be completed this year, assuming that we get Act 250 approval. Jim said he applied for a VMBA trail grant for materials for 3 bridges, but won't hear on it for awhile, though he thinks we have a very good chance of getting it.

7. Update on acquisition of resort property. There was a very positive meeting with the Resort POA about the acquisition, with John Roe and Kate Wanner covering the same issues as the 2 other public meetings. Glenn also talked at that meeting about plans for a non-profit to run the recreation on the land. There will be two public meetings in April about the non-profit. We will need to know where the "foundation"'s responsibilities end and the TFC's begin. Also, what happens if the foundation fails - who will have responsibility? Rudy suggested that we have the select board discuss responsibilities with us, and Laura suggested that that should be after the public meetings about the foundation, and after we have draft easements from the UVLT. A discussion about the proper makeup of the easement committee ensued, and Laura said she would discuss it at the next select board meeting. Upper Valley Land Trust will be holding the conservation easement on the whole Town Forest and will have the responsibility of monitoring the easement. The easement restrictions will not be as onerous as those on Wilderness Areas, but the grantors are

looking for forest area, not ski area, so there will need to be a balance between the wants of the grantors and the town. Easement restrictions need to be negotiated before they go into effect, and then must be met and maintained by the town, or major penalties will ensue. Cathy is concerned about personal uses in the TF that have been grandfathered such as a camp and a snowmobile access - that we should have a written agreement on those exceptions. Laura said that once easements are drafted and a management plan follows, we will review them.

8. Invasive Species Control: UVLT is concerned about how invasive species tend to spread along trails, and they will want us to control them. Laura is asking for a baseline study so that we know the existing situation. We also need a protocol for what to do when we encounter an invasive. She expects that she can get funding for mapping, but that the committee may have to pay for printing.

9. Events: Jim discussed the idea of involving more people in the TF by having hikes or "walks" periodically hosted by individuals who might be less athletically intimidating. Laura suggested we have an event in September or October to acknowledge the acquisition. Cathy suggested something like the "Sense of Place" potluck they had in Weathersfield. Laura would like to have a fund raiser event for the TF next year.

10. Other business: Bicentennial Trail Reroute: Act 250 said if it needs rerouting then the existing trail should be closed. If we are rerouting, and if we own the resort property, we should consider going onto the ski area for the view, and/or include the canyon as a feature of interest that the trail needs. Also, consider a spur from the resort, tying into the reroute on the ski area, since many visitors like to climb the ski area.

11. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Lyall, TFC Secretary