

Draft
Minutes
Randolph Forest Commission
Special Meeting Held on Annual Forest Day
August 2, 2014

Members Present: John Scarinza, Walter Graff

Alternates Present: David Willcox

John opened the meeting at 8:35 am. He asked David to sit for Mark Kelley.

The Commission considered and approved five invoices:

Stipend for Henry Jones who would be delivering a presentation later in the morning on a study of the state of the New Hampshire moose herd: \$75.00

York Land Services for additional work on the new Randolph Hill Road parking lot: \$2,791

Kel.Log for finishing work on the wildlife opening and other parts of the area around the new parking lot: \$6,990.98

Kel.Log for its final bill for construction of the parking lot: \$63.42

Andre Belanger for 2 presentation saw blades to be presented at a ceremony later in the morning to Sally Glines and Becky Boothman to recognize their help in making the parking lot a reality: \$250 (\$125 each).

At 9:05, John Scarinza, as chairman of the Forest Commission, welcomed those who had come to participate in the events of the annual Forest Day. He explained that the first item on the agenda was a presentation of a report by Martha Cummings, historic preservation consultant, on the antiquity of the house often referred to as “the oldest house in town,” but referred to in the Cummings report as the “Levi Lowe house.” For purposes of this discussion, the session would be considered a public hearing by the Forest Commission.

He noted that last year the Farrar Farm was acquired by the Town as part of the Community Forest and the Forest Commission was faced with the question of what to do with the buildings on the property. There was a sign on the Levi Lowe house purporting to indicate that it had been built in 1790. It was explained, however, that that plaque had been posted during the Town’s sesquicentennial celebration, reflected an assumption popular within the Town and could not be considered dispositive.

The house is in very bad physical shape and would cost a lot to repair for purposes of preserving it. But, if it was indeed the oldest structure in Town the Commission would need to consider that it determining what to do about it. So, Ms. Cummings was asked to examine the building and make recommendations.

She made several site visits during the spring of 2014 and discovered several clues to the probable age of the building. One was that granite blocks in the foundation showed marks of having been split by wedges and that was a technique not greatly used before 1830/40. Another was the fact that there was no sign that the building had ever had a central fireplace for heat and cooking. Stoves, using pipes to a chimney on a side wall, came into use around 1840, but before that the central fireplace was common. From this, and other indicators, Ms. Cummings concluded that, while the first settler on the property probably did date back to 1790, the building itself was constructed later, probably about 1830 or 40. This means that there are other structures, such as the Broadacres Farm buildings, which predate it.

If the building is demolished, there are some uses to which some of the materials within it might be put. The Forest Commission is working with the US Forest Service on a new, improved access trail and boat launch for the Pond of Safety. Part of the project will involve stabilizing the shoreline and it has been suggested that granite blocks from the Farrar Farm could be used for that purpose. If so, an appropriate plaque would be erected to describe their provenance.

After presenting the main points of the Cummings Report, John asked if there were any comments or suggestions.

Judy Hudson said that she thought the conclusions about the age of the Levi Lowe house were probably correct. She noted that the earliest records referred to rolling the materials for building. This suggested log cabins. She thought it probable that the original settler, Silas Bumpas, built a log cabin, which was replaced half a century later, with the house which now stands there.

Edie Tucker argued that she would like to see all the buildings on the property taken down, including the two-story garage, which the Commission has said that it might consider preserving both as a storage facility for equipment and supplies downstairs and as temporary quarters upstairs for scholars, students or other researchers doing work on the Forest.

At 9:30 am the discussion of the Levi Lowe house was concluded, the public hearing closed and was followed by the rest of the annual Forest Day events.

Respectfully submitted,

David Willcox
Acting Secretary

Posted at Town Hall August 9, 2014

