

## **DRAFT**

### **RANDOLPH PLANNING BOARD**

#### **Minutes of Public Meeting**

November 1, 2012

**Members Present:** John Scarinza, Bob Ross and John Turner

**Alternates Present:** David Willcox

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. He asked if anyone had any changes to suggest for the minutes of October 4<sup>th</sup>. No one had. Bob moved that they be adopted as written. His motion was seconded and passed.

John and David then explained that there were two amendments to the Land-Use Ordinance before the Board. One was the building permit regulation which has already been introduced. The other was an amendment to the Town Forest Ordinance which sought to create the authority to regulate access to the crystal mine which is located on the Community Forest.

The crystal mine was worked by the General Electric Corporation during World War II. Alan Lowe is quoted as saying that GE was hauling ox carts full of crystals out of it for radios as part of the war effort. After the war, and after radio technology had moved on, the mine was blown up, probably a couple of times by various landowners to prevent people from getting in and getting lost or hurt.

Hobby gem collectors, however, had discovered a man-hole sized way of entering part of the mine and had been doing so for many years. When the conservation easement, which now governs the uses of land within the Randolph Community Forest, was being negotiated, the Presidential Gem and Mineral Society contacted us and asked if their right to explore the mine would be protected. As a result, a specific provision allows for non-commercial hobby mineral collecting. Over the last ten years the members of the Society and their guests have used the mine without any problems. They led one of the early Randolph Forest Day tours up to the mine and many of those who went along were able to go down into the mine and enjoy the sight of crystals glittering all around them.

Because the mine is located in a secluded spot and not easy to find for someone unfamiliar with the site, the Forest Commission had always assumed that its seclusion would protect it, and, for the last ten years it seemed to do so. But, last summer that all changed. Members of the Presidential Gem and Mineral Society reported serious vandalism at the mine. Someone was ripping off the covering layer of earth and rock and breaking off large plates of crystals, apparently with the aim of selling them. John Scarinza finally caught the perpetrator and he is now charged with breaking a condition of a DRED conservation easement.

In light of his actions, however, the Forest Commission is reconsidering its approach to the crystal mine. Instead of avoiding publicity about it and relying on its seclusion to protect it, the Commission will now assume regulatory power to limit access to the mine site, as permitted by the conservation easement. Moreover, if the Town designates the site as a “natural area,” which is proposed in the current draft of the proposed amendment, that would attract a state statute which makes it a class A misdemeanor to vandalize or deface a geological formation or rock surface which has been designated as such by any of the state political subdivisions. While these steps will not guarantee protection for the mine, without round-the-clock policing, it will provide the Town with a better ability to prosecute violators. The Forest Commission also intends to post notices at the mine site, so no one can claim that they were unaware of the rules that will be put into place.

With that introduction, members of the Board took up consideration of the two amendments proposed to the Land-Use Ordinance. Some alterations to the draft language were suggested and David will rework it and bring both drafts back to the Board at its next meeting. It is proposed to hold the required public hearing on both amendments at the January scheduled meeting and then place them before the Town at the March Town Meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed by general consent at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

David L. Willcox  
Acting Secretary

Posted at the Town Hall on November 5, 2012

