



Randolph Community Forest

Sustainable forestry & traditional uses on 10,000 acres in Randolph, NH

Date: June 7, 2023

Location: Randolph Town Hall

Members Present: Mark Kelley, Laura Brockett, Nate Reid, Tim Mather, and Walter Graff

Guests Present: David Willcox (alternate), Michelle Cormier, David Fuller, David DeGruttola, LandVest, Shelli Fortin, Minutes

Mark Kelley called the meeting to order at 6:57 pm.

- I. Mark Kelley introduced Tim Mather, who is now the Planning Board Representative on the Forest Commission, and Shelli Fortin, who will be taking minutes.
- II. **On a motion by Walter Graff, seconded by Nate Reid, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 2023 meeting.**
- III. Financial Review
 - A. Payments Received

Dave Fuller sent a check for the maple taps in the amount of \$26,095.68 for 21,216 taps. Mr. Fuller advised that the tap count is still down slightly due to the caterpillar damage. Mr. Fuller advised that when he sent the check this year, he realized that he paid last year's taps at this year's rate, but advised it was his mistake. Mr. Fuller advised that they put up pipe this week, and are working on the new piece. Mr. Fuller stated that he will give the Crystal Mine piece another year or two. David Willcox asked if Mr. Fuller would be interested in the sugar bush on the Farrar lot and he advised that he would be, along with the old part of the forest just above that. Mr. Fuller noted that they may have to cross the hiking trail to tie into the existing line, but could keep it high enough to leave the trail alone. David Degruttola advised that he could draw up an amendment to the stewardship plan to add this acreage, and he and Mr. Fuller agreed to meet next week to walk the edge. Mr. Degruttola advised that he would circulate the

draft amendment to the group when completed, so that the Commission could vote on it at the July meeting.

On a motion by Walter Graff, seconded by Laura Brockett, the Commission voted unanimously to give preliminary approval for the expansion of the Maple Sugar Orchard onto the Farrar tract and above.

Walter Graff asked Mr. Fuller about the status of the company and he advised that it is still for sale, but there are no current offers. Mr. Fuller noted how incredibly important their employees are to them.

David Willcox asked about the status of the experimental plot, and stated he would reach out to Steven Roberge to ask. Mr. Fuller noted that many of the plots they started with are in the dead zone.

The Commission discussed the property with the right-of-way behind the restaurant and wondered if it could be used for maple taps as well as timber harvesting, as the right-of-way says forest products. Mr. Degruttola noted that it can only be used between November and March, when there are “winter conditions”. Many years the winter conditions do not start until January and end mid-March. If this property was able to be used, they would need a tank by the building and electricity for the vacuum equipment. It was suggested that a generator could be used for the electricity.

Payments were also received from LandVest for the May stumpage payments in the amounts of \$5,654.83 and \$9,538.99. David Degruttola advised that more will be coming in, but they will have to file another intent to cut to cover the remaining volume. Walter Graff asked about the market for timber, and Mr. Degruttola advised it is not great as interest rates are going up which slows the housing market, there is a low demand for hardwood pulp, and even less demand for softwood pulp. Hopefully the market will turn around, as they won’t be cutting again until next winter.

B. Invoices Received

Invoices were received for \$6.20 for the Town of Gorham for 511 acres, and from LandVest for \$456.84 for the month. The invoices were signed by members.

IV. Forester’s Report

A. Pond of Safety Bridge Project

David Degruttola advised that he met with JML on Monday and looked at the crossings and the road work to be done. Dirigo was contacted about the delivery

of the bridges, but they were unable to find a trucking company. JML will send their own trucks to pick up the bridges. A meeting will be held Monday at 10:00 am for a walk-through on the Pond of Safety Road with NRCS. They are hoping to start installing the bridges the following week and it should take 3-4 weeks. Mark Kelley advised that he would pick up anyone interested in attending the meeting on Monday at 9:00 am at Laura Brockett's house.

Mr. Degruttola also advised that he came across a vehicle with a trailer on the Ingerson Road heading toward the Pond of Safety Road that was full of stuff and was concerned it may be someone trying to set up a camp there. A call has been made to the Coos County Sheriff's Office to contact the owner and advise him that he cannot stay there. Laura Brockett asked if this has happened on other town forests and Mr. Degruttola advised that it has.

B. Right of Way Letters – Update

Mr. Degruttola advised that the letters were sent, and that he spoke with the owner of Dreamview Acres. The letter to the Water Wheel has been received, however they have not reached out.

Mr. Degruttola advised that he has spoken with Wayne Peterson about the land in the northwest corner. Mr. Peterson will also have his surveyor look at the area that was flagged in. The surveyor had stopped when there was no evidence found of the boundary, and the line has now been flagged in straight. Mr. Peterson said that if his surveyor agreed with LandVest's surveyors about the location of the boundary, he would sign off on it. Laura Brockett asked if they are caught up on the boundary line maintenance and Mr. Degruttola advised that they are, other than a half-mile section by the Brooks inholding where there was not sufficient evidence to follow. Boundary line maintenance should be done every ten years to maintain the lines.

V. 2023 Forest Day – August 5, 2023

Mark Kelley advised that this will be the 20th anniversary of the Town Forest. Several people have been asked to speak, and there will be an annual update on the Stewardship plan.

Laura Brockett and Walter Graff advised that they received a letter from the Coos County Conservation District, who would like to help with a memorial for John Scarinza. Several ideas were discussed, including a bench, a table, and a bird blind. It was suggested that the ideas also be mentioned to his wife, Jennifer Barton-Scarinza. Laura Brockett will draft a letter back to the Conservation District concerning the memorial.

It was noted that people have been walking down through the woods from the parking lot at the Pond of Safety, and it was suggested that either a boulder be placed to stop them from walking through, or that steps be added to control erosion. Tim Mather suggested that this may be an idea for the Conservation District, as they may be able to donate to help with the cost, and the Randolph Mountain Club trail crew could help with the work.

VI. Other Business

A. Signs for Pond of Safety and Trailhead Parking

Laura Brockett shared the draft sign for the Kiosks on Randolph Hill and the Pond of Safety. These will be dedicated to John Scarinza. Mark Kelley advised that he will talk with David Doyle about the signs, which are made of Corian, to see what the lettering would be done with.

B. Alternate Candidates

A few names were mentioned of people that may be interested in serving on the Forest Commission as an alternate member. Members will continue to think about those that may be willing to help.

C. Webpage Updates

It was noted that the webpage needs to be updated, as LandVest is not listed on there. Mark Kelley and Laura Brockett will meet on Monday to review this.

D. Critter Crossing

Walter Graff advised that they have found a contractor to do the study for the Critter Crossing on Route 2. There will be a Conservation Commission meeting at the end of July to discuss this. They are also looking at other alternatives.

E. Farrar Farm Garage

David Willcox mentioned that the upstairs of the Farrar Farm garage is an apartment, and work could be done to this so that it could be used by students doing research on the Forest. The apartment would need water and power.

F. Walkway along Moose River

David Willcox suggested a walkway along the Moose River on the Meikeljohn property that was donated. This would make an easy walk along a boardwalk. The property consists of 32 acres between Route 2 and the Moose River, and there would be access from Durand Pond.

G. Contract with LandVest

The LandVest contract was discussed. There has been an increase in the hourly rate. Another option suggested in the contract is a percentage of the timber cut. The Commission noted that they have been very happy with the work and the dedication of the forester. Mark Kelley will check with other local foresters to see what the average hourly rate is, however members agreed they would like to stay with an hourly rate instead of a percentage.

H. Forest Service Contract

David Willcox advised that the contract with the Forest Service is good until next January. He spoke with Scott Lees who advised he will start working on it.

Mr. Willcox also noted that the Forest Service owns Bailey Bridge, and cannot transfer ownership unless it was offered to other government agencies first.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.

The next gathering will be held Wednesday, July 5, 2023 at 7:00 pm in the Randolph Town Hall.