



Randolph Community Forest

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

- Date:** May 1, 2024
- Location:** Randolph Town Hall
- Members Present:** Mark Kelley, Tim Mather, Nate Reid, Laura Brockett, and David Willcox
- Guests Present:** Paul Jadis, David DeGruttola from LandVest, Elise Lawson, June Hammond Rowan, Gary Newfield, Jeremiah Hawkins, Jonathan Sisson, William Demers, and Shelli Fortin, Minutes

Mark Kelley called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

- I. Review Minutes of April Meeting
On a motion by Laura Brockett, seconded by Nate Reid, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2024, meeting as presented.
- II. Welcome Elise Lawson, Wildlife Specialist and Former RCF Advisor
- III. Financial Review
 - A. Invoices Received
Two invoices were received: one in the amount of \$1,291.59 from LandVest, the other from York Land Services for \$6,000.00.
 - B. Payments Received
There were no payments received.
 - C. Financial Report
There was no financial report available.
- IV. Elise Lawson – Wildlife Discussion
Elise Lawson discussed the 15 transects that are on the Randolph Community Forest. The transects are an opportunity for students or other organizations to do long-term studies, such as songbird studies and tracks to monitor wildlife populations, such as lynx, gray fox, and pine marten. The transects are numbered with GPS coordinates and descriptions, and have pins set every 1000 feet. The transects range in length from 1,500 feet to over 4,000 feet long and

are located in various areas, including wetlands, steep slopes, higher elevations, softwood stands, wildlife openings, and beaver ponds.

Laura Brockett noted that a baseline would be needed for a study. Mark Kelley suggested planning a day in the summer to walk the transects.

The transects were cleared in 2012 to make them easier to follow, but should be brushed out again. When asked how wide the brush cutting would need to be, Ms. Lawson advised it was originally cleared with hand loppers, and just needs to be cleared enough to see down the line. David DeGruttola advised that any brush left would be a barrier and would skew the study results.

June Hammond Rowan suggested that working with a research program, such as the Hubbard Brook Study, would be beneficial. If partnering with colleges, you would need a faculty member with interest to lead the study.

William Demers asked if the transects were set up for logging in certain sections, and Ms. Lawson advised they did design them to be able to do before and after studies to compare results. Mr. Degruttola noted that from a forest management standpoint, they should be treated as if they are not there, so results are not biased.

V. Backcountry Skiing

Tim Mather shared a list of Findings of Fact from the Planning Board's public hearing. Mather asked the Commission if GBA had been providing periodic reports, and was advised that they did attend a meeting every year to give updates and discuss concerns. This was the first year that they provided a written report to the present board's knowledge. David Willcox advised that GBA has tried to respond to complaints, however it does not always last. GBA's business plan has evolved, and no longer fits with the community and the residential area. Mather noted that the increased traffic during snowstorms and snow removal complicates the issue.

Paul Jadis suggested that the Commission needs to look at what they want as an end result, such as trail maintenance and the maximum number of people, and then find an organization that can enforce that. It was suggested that a mission statement, such as the community goal of low-impact recreational opportunities, be drafted.

It was suggested that the area may need to be shut down for a couple years to stop the overuse. This could be achieved by not plowing the parking area.

It was noted that other areas, such as Jackson and the Kingdom Trails area in Vermont, are having similar overuse issues.

On a motion by Laura Brockett, seconded by Nate Reid, the Forest Commission voted unanimously to recommend that they give a 6-month notice to GBA that they will be terminating the current contract.

June Hammond Rowan advised that the law changed in 2022, and Planning Boards are now required to provide findings of fact. Ms. Hammond Rowan stated that the Planning Board would discuss this at the June meeting, and will contact the Town attorney for guidance, so that it is handled in a way appropriate for the community.

VI. EMS Communication Tower

a. Selectmen Update – Paul Jadis

Paul Jadis advised that another meeting is scheduled with Gorham on Monday. They do have an MOU drafted which specifies who is responsible, and for what. Gorham would like Randolph to provide the cleared land, and the concrete.

b. Salvage Cut Update – David DeGruttola

David DeGruttola advised that he has not received a response yet about the salvage cut. Mark Kelley noted that revenue received from the salvage can be used to offset the cost of the work for the communication tower.

VII. Signs P-O-S Parking and Trailhead Parking

Mark Kelley advised that DuPont donated the Corian for the signs, the CNC engraving was donated by Cyr Woodworking in Newington, CT, and that David Doyle donated his time, so there was no cost for the three new signs. One will be at the top parking lot, one at the snowmobile parking lot, and a couple locations were suggested for the third sign, including off of Jimtown Road and at the Farrar Farm. They are planning to install one on Memorial Day Weekend.

VIII. Farrar Farm Wildlife Crossing – Wildlife Camera Placement

Mark Kelley advised that McFarland Johnson has moved to phase two of the study. Peter Steckler, of New England Conservation, would like to put up four game cameras to see what wildlife is currently crossing at that location.

IX. Forester's Report

a. Timber Cut Report due to Town of Randolph by May 15

b. Forester's Report

David DeGruttola advised that the Stewardship Plan has been submitted to the State of NH and is under review.

Mr. DeGruttola advised that there will be no more revenue from this winter's timber harvest. This is currently the only timber harvest they are working on, and Mr. DeGruttola stated that he will start looking at other areas to harvest.

Mr. DeGruttola advised that they are hoping to get the wildlife opening cut on the Potter Tract this summer, and stumping will be a separate phase.

Road work on the Pond of Safety road was discussed. Mr. DeGruttola will check to be sure the road is passable, and determine the extent of work needed so that they can begin to get estimates.

X. Other Business

a. Workbook of Randolph Forest Procedures

Mark Kelley is working on this, but no updates were provided.

b. Water Runoff from Randolph Community Forest

Jonathan Sisson spoke to the Commission concerning runoff from the Forest onto his and the White's properties. Mr. Sisson advised that there is a culvert off of Jimtown Road that is plugged, and will need to be replaced to prevent further flooding. Mark Kelley advised that he will walk up to the culvert with Mr. Sisson on Friday or Saturday this week.

XI. Public Comments

William Demers noted that he is not in favor of the wildlife crossing, as there should be more data available before spending money on this project. Mark Kelley advised that they have only moved on to the engineering study, the project is not approved, and that they are putting up cameras to see what wildlife is crossing there.

William Demers also asked why the emergency tower cannot go on the Farrar Farm property, as it is for emergency communication to save lives, and would cost less if it could be installed behind the garage. Mark Kelley noted that the Commission has not yet decided what they will use the buildings at the Farrar Farm for, and the tower could interfere with future use. Mr. Kelley noted that they are trying to manage multiple interests, and that the revenue from the timber will pay for part of the project on the piece of property already owned by the town.

XII. Executive Session

There was no executive session needed.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at 6:30 pm at the Randolph Town Hall.