

Tunbridge Town Forest Committee – July 22, 2020, Parish House lawn – minutes

David Kimball, Brenda Field, Gary Mullen, Dan ‘rudi’ Ruddell, guests Michael Livingston, Elaine Howe, Amy Bogardus, Gordy Barnaby

Meeting to order at 7:10 pm

Gary gave a brief update from County Forester David Paganelli: wood prices have been down on nearly everything but ash and firewood, and it may make sense to hold off on the Drew Lot harvest this winter if this remains true. Drew Lot will be scheduled as a winter harvest per management plan.

This impacts plans for utilizing wood and funds from the harvest for construction of a pavilion on the Town Garage Lot, a focal point of plans for enhancing educational use of the Town Forest. An exploratory walk for this on the Town Garage Lot on May 23, 2020 (including many of the same folks present tonight as well as additional community members and TF committee members not present tonight) identified an area off the main landing that looks promising.

Remainder of meeting was largely a discussion around making use of the Town Forest, especially for educational purposes. Strong desire for this for the long-term, as demonstrated by school staff – re-confirmed and strongly stated by Michael Livingston this evening. Current issues around CoVid-19 and re-opening schools offer a unique window of opportunity to advance outdoor education.

Matt Loftus has been consulted regarding re-location of the road up to the landing on the Town Garage Lot, to help with accessibility and safety. Previous discussions have explored using funds from Drew Lot harvest to address this access, as well as contribute to creation of a pavilion. CoVid-19 increases desirability of outdoor ed spaces at same time harvest scheduling is likely delayed. Discussion tonight included exploring possible solicitation of funding (private parties, to be explored) for the pavilion - to be reimbursed at time of Drew Lot harvest. This might expedite pavilion construction if harvest does not happen this winter. Further discussion noted that allowing adequate timeline to involve students in planning and construction is desirable, so likely at least a year out. Gary mentioned discussion with Bob Machin, whose octagonal house is an intriguing model; we’re hoping something with roughly a thirty foot span, two stories high, open sides. Other outdoor spaces (uncovered) utilized at previous Curiousitoriums would remain in the mix and be focal, as outside experience is central.

In the near term, development of outdoor spaces at Tunbridge Central School is happening quickly as school opening is approaching. Task force discussions have included a desire for possible pole wood for 5-7 “spaces” on the TCS campus, as well as roughly 100-125 “sit stumps”. Gary will talk to road foreman about a staging area near the Town Garage where donated materials can be dropped off and processed.

Elaine noted that the planners for Curiousitorium welcome suggestions for speakers for this year’s week on the Town Forest. Past speakers have included the local Game Warden from VT Fish & Wildlife, K-9 rescue personnel, VINS educators with raptors, and several skills-oriented speakers.

Meeting adjourned 8:15 pm