

DRAFT
THE RANDOLPH PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of Public Hearing and Meeting
January 7, 2016

Members Present: John Scarinza, Bob Ross, Roberta Arbree and John Turner

Alternates Present: David Willcox

Others Present: Nancy Penney, Sandy Wier, Ted Wier, Auvie, Judy and Kelly Kenison, Bruce Kirmmse, Gary Newfield, Mike Sewick, Bill Arnold, Kevin Rousseau and Alan Lowe

The chairman opened the meeting at 7:10. Bob moved that the minutes of the December meeting be approved as written. Roberta seconded the motion and it was adopted.

David handed out copies of an agreement between the RCF and the RMC dealing with the construction and maintenance of “designated trails,” trails identified by the RFC as being of importance for the management of the Forest. The agreement establishes the basis under which the RMC would work on these trails for the RFC. Since it is an agreement for a term of more than one year, it will need Planning Board approval before it can become operative. The Board agreed to hold a public hearing on the agreement at its meeting on February 4, 2016.

Forest Commission Budget

The chairman then opened the first public hearing. He read through the line items, explaining those which were not self-evident.

A new line item provided for the administration of the maple tapping agreement. This was added in anticipation of the commercial maple tapping project which is expected to start this fiscal year. John noted that, when fully implemented, the project would involve 25 to 30 thousand taps. And this number could increase over time.

Ted Wier said that he was not sure whether or not the budget discussion was the appropriate place to interject a point, but he would do so anyway. He said that when a question was asked about John Scarinza’s right to store his maple sap in the garage on the old Farrar Farm, he showed the questioner the deed from the Willcoxes to the Town which includes the right for John tap the maples on the Farm so long as he wants to do so. [In fact, what was stored in the garage was a sap tank not filled with sap but with water, for the use of the trail crew working on the Crystal Mine trail. There is also some equipment belonging to the Forest Commission. More generally, the condition was inserted in the deed to allow John who, as chairman of the Forest Commission is the only person in Town who cannot ask the Commission for permission to tap in the Forest, to continue what he had begun before the land was given to the Town.]

Auvie asked if this arrangement was in the deed at the time the transfer of the land came before Town Meeting. David said that he was not sure, but that he did not think so. It was added

when the deed was drawn up, and that was probably later. John Turner pointed out that it was in the deed when the selectmen considered the deed, which they had to accept on behalf of the Town. He said they even asked for an opinion from Town Counsel as to the legality of such a conditional gift, and were reassured on that score.

The item for “gates,” refers to the need to put up some new gates on certain roads in the Forest. There is, for instance, a plan to move the gate at the Bowman entrance to the Forest, now down by Route 2, up to the log landing about three-quarters of a mile above the highway. Two roads lead out of the log landing into different parts of the Forest. The plan is to use the old gate on one road and supplement it with a new gate for the other. This would allow visitors to park in the log landing and use either road into the Forest.

An allocation for the Farrar Farm is included to cover the costs of demolition of the remaining house. It has been tested for, and contains, some asbestos, which will need special handling, at an estimated cost of \$8500.

The DTW line item, from the grants and gifts account, refers to the “Dirt to Trees to Wildlife” project being supported by the Forest Commission. The Commission has a contract with GRANIT, the computer arm of the University of New Hampshire, to develop software which will enable landowners, by readily combining information about soils with the foliage they support to identify the wildlife their land would be likely to attract. Used in long term planning, the technology can be used by the landowners to design their land to attract specific species. Once the software is available, the plan is to publicize it with an event on the RCF. It would then be available to any landowner in New Hampshire, and could be replicated for other parts of the country.

After some discussion of the potential of the DTW project, the chairman called for a vote on the budget. Bob moved that it be adopted. Roberta seconded the motion and it was approved.

Master Plan

The chairman then opened the public hearing on the Master plan. He asked David to introduce the discussion. David gave a brief overview of the document,\. He said it was not a comprehensive review of all aspects of Town governance or a complete inventory of Town facilities. It was meant to be a vision of the future of the Town for the Planning Board to use going forward.

There were several themes to the criticism of the Master Plan document and of the Planning Board. One was the argument that the Board had not sent out surveys to all of the residents in the Town including summer residents.

Ted Wier introduced this theme. He pointed out that in 1980, 21 people had been involved in preparing material for the plan, and, in 1992, 20 people. The 2005 surveys, which were relied upon in part for this plan had not been published. He had seen only a few excerpts from the returns that Arlene had made available to him. He felt that the Board should not have written the plan without more input from the townspeople.

There followed some discussion about what would be needed to prepare, distribute and analyze a survey and whether the Board had the expertise required.

Bill Arnold questioned the style of the document. He said he expected a master plan to provide direction to the Planning Board as to where to or not to lay out subdivisions or at least as to where the town should expand.

Ted Wier objected to the main theme of the Master Plan. The Community Forest, he said, already had more than enough land. But, the Conservation Commission is still going around Town looking for land to acquire to add to the Forest. More land was conserved through conservation easements. It is getting hard to find land in Town to build on. As evidence of the problem he cited the declining statistics of children of school age in Town. If we keep going like this, he said, the five or six families living on Randolph Hill will inhabit the Town in isolation.

Bruce Kirmmse responded by saying the Conservation Commission is not going around looking for land to acquire, except for wetlands, which should not be developed in any case. He went on say that he was hearing two arguments: One, that the Plan was not specific enough; and, two, that poor Randolph is in dire economic straits. To the first, he would answer that as he read the Plan, it was meant as a vision of and for the Town. He thought it was a well-expressed vision. To the second, he would say that Randolph's economic straits were not the fault of land conservation but of the economy of the North Country as a whole. The woods have failed us. That is the reason no one can afford to build anymore.

To this, Ted responded that he agreed that the North Country economy was to blame, but he wanted to make sure that when the economy eventually rebounded, there would be enough land available to meet the demand.

Bill Arnold said that the woods have not failed us. He said that he thought Randolph was ahead for the game with its public land. When the White Mountain National Forest was created in 1911, he surmised that the same sort of conversations probably took place; with a third of the Town being made part of the WMNF, would there be any land left to live on? But, he said that conservation effort had turned out pretty well. With one-third of the Town still in private hands, he said the saturation point was still far from being reached. The Town, as a whole, benefits from the existence of our Forest. What is likely to create jobs and bring residents more than any other factor is the quality of life. People will move to Randolph to seek an atmosphere epitomized by the conserved land.

Bruce agreed. The salvation of Randolph, he said, is the summer community. The natural quality of the town is what keeps them coming back. We are lucky to have a well-heeled summer community.

The chairman summed up the discussion, saying that what he was hearing was that people thought the board should have sent surveys out to all the residents of the Town. The Board, he said, would take that sentiment into consideration.

There being no further business, the public hearing, and meeting, were adjourned by general consent at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David L. Willcox
Acting Secretary

Posted at Town Hall on January 11, 2016