

Town of Monkton
Town Forest Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 28th, 2024, 5:30pm
Monkton Town Hall & via Zoom
(Approved: March 14th, 2024)

Members present: Callie Brynn (Chair), Jaime Schulte (Vice-Chair), John McNerney, Pete Dufault, Molly Parren, CJ Buzzy (Alternate)

Members absent: None

Guests: Bob Heiser (Vermont Land Trust), Joan Holloway, Jessica Demeritt, Tom Kenyon

Call To Order - Callie called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

1. Review Agenda - no changes
2. Public Comment - none offered
3. Grant/funding updates
 - a. Discussed the upcoming mailing to the community to invite contributions toward the \$50k of private fundraising described in the project budget. Fundraising started a few months ago with outreach for larger contributions first. This initial fundraising was more successful than expected and we may be already at or near the target of \$50k! Some of this amount will go to project expenses, but the majority is allocated to a \$30k management fund for the forest. The fund will be used after closing to leverage small grants for things like trails, parking, signage, and other forms of setup/upkeep/management. It would also be used directly as needed for such expenses, so it is to the town's advantage to have the balance be as large as possible.
 - b. Discussed whether to proceed with the mailing and how to communicate that we might have met the minimum needed for the budget, but there is an opportunity to help make the \$30k management fund even stronger. It is possible that there could be some unforeseen expenses as we get closer to a closing too.
 - c. The committee feels that we should proceed with the mailing, while being clear that we are in a phase of strengthening the project's finances rather than just getting to the minimum necessary to close. This is a good place to be!
4. Committee membership
 - a. Jessica Demeritt joined the meeting to introduce herself and share her interest in joining the committee. She has a background in horticulture and is a Vermont Master Naturalist. She's been involved in introducing beaver deceiver devices in Monkton at key locations of human/beaver conflict and has learned about the value of longer-term projects, public engagement and really hearing what people have to say. Jessica appreciates the community engagement the Town Forest Committee has undertaken so far.

- b. Discussed that the Selectboard will make appointments after Town Meeting.
 - c. **Jaime moved to recommend to the Selectboard that Jessica Demeritt be appointed to the open position on the Town Forest Committee. John seconded.** There was no further discussion. **All were in favor (6-0-0).**
5. Community updates – Town Meeting Day 3/2/24
- a. Discussed logistics for the table we will have in the hallway at Town Meeting.
6. Interim Management Plan
- a. Reviewed the progress that Molly and CJ have made so far on the framework of the interim management plan. This interim plan is a placeholder that would guide management of the new town forest for several months while the long-term plan is being created with the community this spring/summer. In general we expect to stick to state and town guidelines for topics like dogs, wetland setbacks, or hunting in this interim phase while the community has the chance to be heard and we have the opportunity to absorb the data provided by the UVM class that is assessing the land and other inputs to the full management plan.
7. Old Airport Road status
- a. We will plan for and discuss the upcoming hearing on Old Airport becoming a Class IV road (March 28th) at our next meeting (March 14th).
 - b. Tom Kenyon joined us at the end of the meeting. We discussed the history of the proposed town forest parcel and of the portion of Old Airport Rd that he owns. We will be looking to the town attorney for guidance on the Class IV process, which would be contingent upon the purchase of the town forest land, but it would seem that owners of the roadway can continue to own it (or could quit claim their part of the road to the town if they prefer). If the Selectboard decides to proceed after the hearing on the 28th the town would create a new easement over OAR as a Class IV public highway.
8. Other project updates & timeline review
- a. UVM Course - the class is visiting the land on most Mondays
 - b. Grant requirements for closing - working on the list
 - c. Title work - did some additional title work to confirm that all mineral rights to the parcel are held by A. Johnson.
9. Review 2/6/24 minutes
- a. **Jaime moved to approve the minutes of February 6th, 2024 as amended (two incorrect dates). Molly seconded.** There was no further discussion. **All were in favor (6-0-0).**
10. Set next meeting date(s)
- a. Thursday, March 14th, 2024, 5:30pm

Adjournment - Jaime moved to adjourn. All were in favor (6-0-0). Adjourned at 7:54pm.

Minutes taken by Jaime Schulte.