

Minutes, Meadow Brook Ad Hoc Committee

September 14, 2016, Town Hall, Sandwich, NH

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mike Yeager at 2:38 p.m. Present were Mike Yeager, Fred Lavigne, Peter Pohl, Susan Bryant-Kimball, Martha Carlson and Oliva Saunders, UNH Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agent.

Minutes of August 10 Meeting

The minutes were approved with corrections of misspellings and approved unanimously.

Forestry Cut

A timber sale and cutting agreement has been negotiated with Bill Dunn. Peter Pohl drafted the agreement and the Board of Selectmen tentatively approved the documents and plan, conditional upon our approval. Mike Yeager moved and Susan Bryant-Kimball seconded a motion to approve the documents. Peter and Mike said they would obtain Selectmen's signatures to complete the documents. Mr. Dunn plans to begin the two acre cut next week. This work will removed white pines, aspen and other trees in the fields area of Meadow Brook.

Discussion with Olivia Saunders

Ms. Saunders (OS) visited the Meadow Brook property on May 21, 2015. Mike Yeager asked Olivia what is the best use of the agricultural fields.

OS: Hay, vegetable production, pollinator gardens. If the Town were to lease the fields to a farmer, "Let that person decide what to grow" within the Committee's guidelines. A less commercial use might be to simply open the fields for public walking and to grow pollinator crops and grasses.

Peter asked about community gardens.

OS: In a rural community, it is very hard to have a garden. Would need irrigation. Easy transportation and access are essential.

Mike asked what our next steps, after the logging job, should be. Should we plow or rototill the soil, lime or ash it?

OS: Lime every three years is recommended. The fall is the best time. Seed can be over-seeded, spread on plowed or rototilled ground or seeded with no-til seeders.

OS: On leasing the land, she can provide NRCS templates for contracts. She prefers a five-year lease with an annual rotating renewal. This allows the Town or the leasee to cancel after five years or to renew with continuations, even after a cancellation, for five more years.

OS: On seeding the fields, use grass, winter rye, fescue, conservation mix, hay mix, pasture mix.

Peter: He uses a conservation mix with red clover, great for wildlife.

OS: On logging in and around the fields, the removal of trees will bring more light to the fields and create a more viable larger field.

Martha asked about permaculture, renewing the soil without chemicals.

OS: There are experiments at Shaker Village and in Grafton County.

OS: On timing, bringing the fields into condition for production may take about a year. We should discuss whether the Town would invest in this or whether the leasee would pay the costs.

Martha asked about a buffer between the fields and the wetlands boundary.

OS: a good idea but no answer.

Mike: Ash? Or lime?

OS: Pelleted lime is less mobile. Ash requires twice the amount. RMI holds the contract with Pine Tree Power. They may spread the ash or we might have to hire someone to do that.

Mike considered stumping the logging areas. John Blackwood might do it.

OS: This will probably take longer than mid-October, the prime time for seeding new grasses.

The members discussed the timing of stumping, the problems with erosion if the ground is plowed this fall. Plowing, if done, and seeding might have to wait until next spring.

OS: On crops, hay has the lowest inputs. Vegetable production would require irrigation, power, a wash station. The Town of Albany is currently renting town land to two farmers who take the crops back to their farms for washing. Power is readily available on that site. Livestock is a difficult option because most animals need an on-site monitor. They can easily get out of fencing. With Route 25 so close, that would be an issue.

Martha: Is it time to advertise for prospective leasees and discuss the possibilities with them?

Mike: We can take the winter to think about seeding, lime or ash and fertilizing.

Plans for Next Month

Mike will obtain Selectmen's signatures on the logging documents. Bill Dunn will start on 9-20-16.

Susan will contact the Dail family to tell them about the logging.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Submitted September 20, 2016