

**Minutes of West Fairlee Selectboard Regular Meeting
May 17, 2010**

Present from the Selectboard: Nate Pero, Jim Brigham, David Butch Moore, Sharon Petersen

Visitors: John Benjamin, John Blake, Jonathan Blake, Corey Paye (Conservation Commission), Jim Lanctot (Thetford Police Chief), Betty Dixon, Bert Nadeau, Linda Bacca, Rodger Krussman (TPL), Katherine Cooper (TPL), Fred E. Cook, Tracy Durkee, Bert Dodson, Guy Wilson, Peggy Willey, Elizabeth Upton, Geoffrey Gardner, Ann Stephens, Doris Honig, Frank Stephens, Bruce Durkee, Chris Aquino

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm at the Community Building multi-purpose room.

Visitors: Trust for Public Land – Katherine Cooper & Rodger Krussman – Potential Purchase of Land from Bradford for Brushwood Community Forest

Cooper introduced herself and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Cooper explained that the intent of her visit was to discuss the potential addition of land to the public forest. Approximately 475 acres of land were designated as community forest. Cooper presented a map depicting the location of the existing forest and the land for potential inclusion. Cooper explained that the Town of Bradford owns a portion of property known as the Bradford Town Forest. The land was originally acquired as a back up water supply, but current does not meet those needs for Bradford. Cooper indicated that grant funds are still available to aid in purchasing the land from Bradford. Rodger Krussman clarified that the Bradford forest was originally included in the area of interest for the forest. Cooper explained that although the land is currently forested, it is not preserved. The total acreage is 465 acres in Fairlee and 114 acres in West Fairlee approximately. Moore clarified that West Fairlee would pay tax to Fairlee for any land acquired in their Town. Cooper indicated that Bradford currently pays Fairlee just over \$1,000 for taxes on the parcel in current use. The portion of land in West Fairlee currently generates \$250 in tax income from Bradford. Moore clarified that the total cost to West Fairlee would be \$1,250 annually.

Pero asked if ATV access currently across the land could continue to be utilized for recreation as part of the community forest. Cooper explained that the decision would be made by the Town. Moore asked if the funds were state or federal and indicated that if it is a federal grant, the ATV trails could no longer be used. Krussman explained that the funding would not prevent ATV use. Paye explained that there is a restrictive easement on the land formerly owned by the Crawfords that restricts ATV use on that portion of the existing community forest. Paye explained that designated trails are required and do not currently exist on the existing community forest property. Pero suggested that the public land be opened for use by all people. Paye explained that trails could be discussed with the Conservation Commission and Selectboard. The board and State could authorize the use of the land where easements exist. Moore clarified that there was no guarantee that an ATV trail could be authorized. Paye indicated that it was not guaranteed. Blake clarified that trails exist on the property currently owned by Bradford

and if the land were included in the community forest, the trail use could be built into the agreement.

Petersen asked if there was any required matching by the Town for the grant. Cooper explained that TPL raised the money required for the match. According to Krussman, the forest legacy grant currently contains \$700,000-800,000. Krussman indicated that timber management could off-set some of the costs of obtaining the land. Cook explained that the value of the forest could be approximately \$1,000 an acre according to a forester. Petersen asked why Bradford does not forest the land. Cook explained that Bradford has never initiated timber sales. Moore asked for clarification on the time line for timber management. Cooper explained that management of the forest is required once the land is obtained in accordance with a management plan and the easement(s). The plan would be completed at the same time as the land acquirement. Krussman indicated that the intent of the grant is to protect public access as well as to manage the land in protection.

Pero suggested a Town meeting to discuss the next steps. Krussman asked if a formal Town vote or show of hands would be taken due to the Selectboard's ability to make the decision. Moore suggested discussing the issue further at the next board meeting when there is a full board. Moore asked if there is a timeline on the grant use. Cooper suggested completing the process by the end of the year as an extension has already been granted. Bradford is also still discussing the issue.

Durkee provided statistics on the importance of the forest to both the State and the Town residents. Cooper explained that Audubon Vermont has completed studies on the land and indicates that the whole area is one of the most important areas for migratory birds in the State. Krussman explained the importance of the forest in respect to the rest of the State. The importance was due to the connectivity with the Fairlee Managed Forest and Bradford owned land for a total of 1,500 acres; as a source of filtration for the lakes and Connecticut River watershed; and the community interest in West Fairlee. Krussman also discussed the value of the wetlands and other natural resources and habitats throughout the properties. Krussman indicated that the funding money is returned if unused. Betty Dixon, the Linking Lands representative for West Fairlee also discussed the value of the forest. Several residents spoke to the value of the land, expressed a favorable opinion of the project, and warned of a repeat of the missed opportunity seen at Treasure Island. Moore suggested holding additional discussions at a public meeting. Cook suggested that the Town's people visit the land as well. Brigham asked if a selective cut made for forest management would cover the tax loss on the property. Cook indicated that it would more than cover the taxes. Krussman indicated that the forest could lend to economic development for the Town and additional information will be provided as it is obtained. The board thanked Krussman and Cooper.

Chief Jim Lanctot – Potential Coverage by Thetford Police

Chief Lanctot introduced himself. Pero explained that he requested that Chief Lanctot come to discuss police coverage in West Fairlee. Chief Lanctot explained that police certification in Vermont allows state-wide authority under the certification. Chief Lanctot explained that the police department can be shared by several communities, but

can be difficult to coordinate financials for the services. Chief Lanctot discussed shared police departments in other communities in Vermont. The ability for the Thetford Police Department to continue patrolling West Fairlee would be easily accommodated; however, the costs could be more difficult to negotiate. Chief Lanctot discussed the issue with providing hourly services to West Fairlee similar with the coverage currently offered with Orange County Sheriff's Department. Chief Lanctot also discussed the need for additional members of the police force for the additional shared coverage. The hourly coverage would need to be significantly increased to make coverage in 2010 worthwhile to the department. Chief Lanctot suggested further discussions between the Thetford and West Fairlee selectboards to hammer out the details. Petersen asked for clarification on costs. Chief Lanctot indicated that it costs approximately \$53,000 for a full time member of the department in salary, benefits, and equipment. Chief Lanctot estimated a take home salary of approximately \$34,000 included in that number. Chief Lanctot indicated that 13-15 incidents are responded to annually in West Fairlee. He also clarified that additional calls could be anticipated if additional staff was available to respond.

Chief Lanctot suggested that the project be discussed further. Moore asked if grant funds were available. Chief Lanctot indicated that there are all kinds of funds and discussed the process further including the necessity of guaranteeing funding into the future and coordination between the two Towns. Five years of service could be required after grant funds are utilized. Chief Lanctot indicated that call volumes increase when residents are aware of police coverage and discussed the potential for more grants. Petersen asked who writes the grants. Chief Lanctot indicated that he typically writes most of the grants. Chief Lanctot reiterated that a part time contract is not of interest to Thetford in West Fairlee and that shared services would be more beneficial. Chief Lanctot discussed the necessity of ensuring that coverage is not limited in Thetford in order to provide coverage to West Fairlee. The department staff and policies would need to be updated for coverage of two towns. Chief Lanctot also discussed the limits to coverage by the Bradford State Police barracks and potential benefits for additional coverage in West Fairlee. The board thanked Chief Lanctot.

Benjamin asked Pero if the board had approached Fairlee regarding police coverage due to the beneficial geographic relationship between the two towns. Pero indicated that the board has not yet. Pero discussed the potential for generating a shared department between several of the surrounding towns. Petersen indicated that the research of the existing coverage lead to the discussion and that Fairlee has one acting police officer as well as coverage by the Orange County Sheriffs department. Pero indicated that a representative from the Orange County Sheriffs department will come to discuss coverage at the first regular board meeting in June (June 7th). Pero discussed speeding issues throughout West Fairlee. Moore discussed issues with the speed of traffic by the elementary school while children are walking to school.

Minutes: Motion by Petersen to approve the minutes of May 3, 2010 as amended by Cray and Petersen. Brigham seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Hear and Act on the Reports of Town Officers and Committees: A discussion on establishing an energy committee will be held at the next board meeting.

Roads: *Road Signs/Ordinances:*

Blake indicated that they have purchased posts but do not have signs. Pero discussed the necessity for stop signs and speed limit signage. Moore suggested meeting with the Blakes to determine how many signs are required. Moore discussed the potential for requesting changes in speed limits with Blake. The Blakes discussed the speed limits and road quality. Pero provided the board with draft ordinances for enforcement of speed limits. The board will review the documentation and existing road signage. The Blakes discussed the esthetic issues, cost issues, and visibility issues of too many signs. Pero indicated that the Blakes donate a large portion of time to their positions as the Town road crew and suggested that the board review the roads with them. Pero indicated that when tickets are issued for speeding on Town highways or State highways covered by ordinances, a portion of the funds are returned to the Town. The tickets are only enforceable if the signage is appropriate. Petersen suggested targeting specific areas with appropriate signage. Blake discussed the costs associated with each sign and issues with keeping signs in place. Blake questioned whether signs can be placed on State roads without State authorization, and indicated that signs at intersections with State highways are typically provided by the State.

Class 4 Roads

Durkee offered to rake the roads in rough spots and add material where necessary on Class 4 highways including Bear Notch and Buck Hill Roads for use by the ATV club. Pero asked if waterbars or ditch work would be conducted. Durkee indicated that they do not have the equipment for full road work maintenance. Moore asked if the club is covered by insurance. Durkee indicated that the Town has signed agreements for litigation insurance coverage for ATV use on Town land. Durkee suggested that a new form be signed before the work is completed. Durkee also suggested obtaining grant funding for some material purchasing and work, and completing additional work in wet areas (i.e. including installing a bridge). Durkee suggested making Buck Hill Road a trail instead of a Class 4 road to prevent vehicle access. Blake discussed issues with liability issues for the Town if the selectboard gives permission for completion of the work and the insurance required for the road crew. Petersen suggested that the board wait to make a decision until the full board is present. Durkee will provide the board with an additional copy of the agreement with the ATV club.

Highway Grant Applications

All of the Town's highway grant applications have been submitted including: \$175,000 for paving Wild Hill and under structures, Beaver Meadow \$22,000, and an amendment to the Beanville culvert for \$35,000. The board will wait to hear back.

Scrutton Hill Culvert Work

The Blakes indicated that the culvert work has been completed.

Old Business: *Community Building Work for Town Office Temporary Relocation*

Brigham moved to authorize the use of funds for the temporary relocation of the Town offices from the mobile unit to the Community Building. Moore seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Town Recycling/Solid Waste Collection

Moore indicated that the proposed land in Fairlee for the Town recycling/solid waste collection area is actually a cooperative between Thetford, West Fairlee, Lyme, Strafford, and Vershire. The land is utilized for fire department training drills and could possibly conflict with collection dates. Concerns were also expressed regarding increase in traffic to the area. Moore indicated that West Fairlee pays \$399 in taxes to Thetford for the land. Moore also indicated that the Town Clerk remembered an attempt to utilize the land for the same purpose in the past unsuccessfully. Moore suggested installing a fence around the existing facilities behind the Community Building. Blake discussed issues with snow removal around fencing. Moore will follow up with the discussion. The solid waste collection issues were discussed.

Community Building Leach Field

Blake mentioned that one of the barrels protecting the leach field has been moved onto the field. Blake suggested installing jersey barriers but recalled that the suggestion had been made in the past and turned down. Brigham moved to install a jersey barrier. Petersen seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

New Business: *Land Record Scanning Seminar/Reserve Funds*

The Town Clerk has requested board authorization for the use of reserve funds set aside for the electronic recording of Town records. The funds will be used to purchase equipment and sending the Town Clerk to a land record scanning seminar. Moore indicated that the Town Clerk has been depositing her personal money into the reserve funds. Moore thanked the Town Clerk for her contribution. Brigham moved to authorize the use of the funds from the reserve accounts for the stated purpose. Moore seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Community Building Entrance/Handicap Accessibility Work

Pero provided the board with information on removing material from around the public Community Building entrance, backfilling with stone material, and purchasing concrete for the project. Pero provided estimates for the work comparing plain concrete and colored concrete. Pero found that colored concrete costs an extra \$180. Pero suggested using plain concrete. Petersen indicated that the satellite dish cable would need to be avoided. Pero indicated that two laborers would be present to locate the cable. Pero also provided cost estimates for installing a handicap entrance at the front entrance to the Community Building. Pero estimated total project costs at \$2,100. Blake suggested installing a wider walkway to the front of the building. Pero clarified that the proposed walkway is currently 4 feet wide. Blake suggested widening it to 6 feet. Petersen suggested removing the dead bushes out front of the Community Building concurrently. According to Pero, the additional two feet of walkway would cost an additional \$100. The handicap requirements were discussed. Petersen discussed issues with the rear

handicap entrance to the building due to an elevated lip at the door. Petersen suggested adding additional cement to the entrance. Moore moved to appropriate the money for the walkway and handicap access to the Community Building totaling approximately \$2,200. Blake asked about the material requested for the eaves and drainage around the building and suggested combining the material load with the work proposed by the village improvement society. The board reviewed the financial statement for the project funding. The motion was seconded by Brigham and the vote passed 3-0. Pero abstained from the vote.

Sign Orders: Brigham moved to sign orders. The motion was seconded by Peterseon and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Correspondence: Correspondence was reviewed by the board. The Basic Emergency Operations Plan was reviewed and signed by the board as provided by Two Rivers Regional Planning Commission. A letter to Rebecca Chalmers regarding the placement of fill material along the roadsides was reviewed and signed by the board.

Financial Statements: The April 30, 2010 Town financial statements were reviewed.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting: Highway Ordinances, Orange County Sheriff Meeting for Police Coverage, Recycling Facilities, Energy Committee, Community Building Leases (Executive Session), Foodshelf Space Improvements/Window Replacements

Upcoming Events: A second West Fairlee Clean Up Day has been scheduled for Saturday, June 5, 2010.

Motion by Brigham, at 8:30 pm, to adjourn the meeting. Moore seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Lewis-Poulin
Selectboard Clerk