

Minutes of the March 23, 2022, 7:00 PM, Meeting of the Town Forest Committee

Town Forest Committee Minutes

March 23, 2022, 7:00 PM

Members Present: Brian Forestal, Mike Jones, Brian McGrattan, Cathy Rooney, Rob St. Germain, Cara Hulme, Mike Morrissey

Members Absent: None

Public Present: Srihari Srivatsa, Jill Vernes, Vivian Vernes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

1. Scout Projects managed by Boy Scout Srihari Srivatsa and Girl Scout Leader Jill Vernes

Winter Street Stone Distribution Boy Scout Project managed by Srihari Srivatsa

Eagle Scout candidate Srihari Srivatsa described the project to the committee: Distributing 40 tons of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch crushed stone from McIntyre Loam, delivered by the DPW and spread out to create a $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick layer on the ATF's Winter St. parking lot. After the stone is distributed, the DPW would then roll the stone into the parking lot.

Srihari met with McIntyre Loam, and the cost of the stone is \$700, but with a \$300 donation from McIntyre Loam, the net cost is \$400. Srihari said he is lining up volunteers to manually spread the stone either on April 16 or April 23.

Mr. McGrattan suggested putting up signs prior to the event to indicate the parking lot will be under maintenance so that cars don't park in the lot. Mr. St. Germain said once the stone is delivered, the parking lot will be closed. He is also working with the DPW to arrange for their equipment to deliver the stone and roll the lot.

Girl Scout Project managed by Jill Vernes (Scout Leader) and Vivian Vernes (Girl Scout representing the troop)

Ms. Vernes has nine 5th grade Girl Scouts in their troop. She discussed the projects proposed at a previous ATFC meeting with the troop, the troop voted, and the winners were: Helping with the Fairy House event and Building Blue Bird houses.

Ms. Hulme is interested getting help with the Fairy House project. She expects about 50 houses for the May 7th event. Between May 2nd and May 7th, she will need help putting the houses out in the ATF. The Fairy House project is a community outreach project designed to get new members of the public out into the forest.

Ms. Vernes is also interested in an ATF exploration walk for the Girl Scout troop. Mr. St. Germain offered to lead a 90 minute walk with the Girl Scouts on April 3, when there are no leaves on the trees, to focus on the ATF landscape. Mr. St. Germain would then lead another walk 6 or more weeks later when the leaves are out, to show how the forest changed and use the leaves to identify the different tree species.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes of March 9, 2022

The Ashland Town Forest Committee (ATFC) reviewed and amended the meeting minutes of March 9, 2022. A motion was made to approve the amended meeting minutes and seconded. The minutes were approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye.

3. Expense submittals (if any) & Accounting Report

Expenses

Mr. McGrattan asked if the Forest Stewardship plan is underway, because the ATFC needs to be invoiced for \$980.20 by 6/15/22. Mr. St. Germain asked if the ATFC wanted the forester, Mr. Benjamin to direct bill the ATFC or to bill the Massachusetts DCR. Mr. McGrattan prefers that the ATFC be billed because the ATFC is the customer. Mr. St. Germain will contact the forester to review the billing process and set the date of the ATF walkthrough.

Mr. St. Germain submitted receipts and an expense report for \$265.01 for UTV winch repair and \$172.70 for hoses and buckets. This expense was approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. Mr. McGrattan will submit this expense to the town for reimbursement.

Mr. Jones submitted receipts and an expense report for \$759.58 for tree guards and a water tank. This expense was approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. Mr. McGrattan will submit this expense to the town for reimbursement.

Tree Planting Expenses

Mr. McGrattan reviewed upcoming expense estimates. Mr. McGrattan made a motion for the ATFC to approve expenditures by Mr. Jones for the following:

- Big trees from Bigelow Nurseries for \$2,929.40
- Small Trees from Musser Forests for \$144.90
- Planting Supplies from Lowes for \$180.00

This expenditure was approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye.

Tom Wessels Walk and Talk Funding and Payment

Mr. McGrattan reviewed the costs and donations for the Tom Wessels Walk and Talk Event. The Open Space Committee donated \$100.00, but due to accounting practices Mr. McGrattan reduced the cost for Wessels Event from \$1,042 to \$942 to account for the Open Space Committee's donation. Mr. McGrattan has the \$1,042 check for Mr. Wessels ready. Ms. Rooney will get the check from Mr. McGrattan to pay Mr. Wessels on April 30, the day of the event.

Accounting Report

Mr. McGrattan reviewed the balance of the DPW budget of \$688.55 which needs to be used in FY22. The ATFC funding is solid due to the DCR grant and the donations secured for the Wessels Event.

Mr. St. Germain made a motion to accept the Accounting Report Mr. McGrattan presented, Mr. Jones seconded. This was approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye.

4. UTV Wheels & Trailer Disposal

UTV Wheels

Mr. St. Germain reviewed the issues with the UTV wheels. The desired UTV wheels were back ordered, so the UTV was accepted with smaller wheels. The ATFC now has the bigger wheels on the UTV and the older, smaller wheels in the shed. Mr. St. Germain made a motion to give the smaller wheels to the Ashland Police Department, and Mr. McGrattan seconded. This motion was approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye.

Trailer Disposal

Mr. St. Germain reviewed the issues with the current UTV trailer. It is not designed to carry the stone and dirt over the ATF trails as the ATFC desires. The current UTV trailer doesn't have the necessary clearance needed for the ATF trails. In the past Mr. Forestal suggested using this trailer as a water only trailer, but this was rejected because it doesn't have the clearance necessary. Mr. Forestal also said the current trailer dumps unexpectedly when the dump catch hits an obstruction, but this could be corrected. Both Ms. Rooney and Mr. Forestal suggested the ATFC keep the current trailer for a while to see if there is still use. Mr. Forestal thinks the current trailer still has some utility because it is rated at 1,000 pounds. Mr. St. Germain was concerned about where to store the current trailer if a new trailer is purchased. Mr. St. Germain said the ATFC has not yet agreed to use the current trailer as a water only trailer.

Mr. St. Germain discussed the disposal process with Ms. Jen Ball, Assistant Town Manager. Mr. St. Germain made a motion to dispose of the current trailer, Mr. McGrattan seconded. The motion did not carry 1-4-0 by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: No, Mr. Jones: No, Mr. McGrattan: No, Ms. Rooney: No, Mr. St. Germain: Aye.

5. Tools, FY 2022 Additional Expenses

UTV Trailer

Mr. Forestal showed the ATFC an improved trailer option from Ohio Steel 4048PS-ATV, with a 12" clearance, 15 cubic foot bed, 1,250 pound capacity (which is higher than the UTV is rated for towing). Amazon charges \$458.94 for this cart. This trailer might need a 1 7/8 ball hitch, and buggy has a 2" ball, so that would need to be swapped out.

Mr. Forestal made a motion to spend up to \$600 to purchase the Ohio Steel 4048PS-ATV trailer, side stakes and accessories, Mr. St. Germain seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0 by a roll call vote: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye.

Mr. Forestal will discuss the Amazon purchase with Mr. Jones, who has the ATFC's tax free Amazon account.

Chain Saw Chains

Mr. St. Germain requested the ATFC purchase additional chain saw chains. Ms. Rooney asked if the ATFC can get the chains sharpened over at Monnick Supply. Mr. McGrattan said Amazon charges about \$22 for three chains. The ATFC has a \$50 cap on maintenance costs, and chains fall under this cap, so the ATFC does not need to vote on this expenditure. Mr. McGrattan will discuss the Amazon purchase with Mr. Jones, who has the ATFC's tax free Amazon account. Mr. McGrattan will account for this expenditure on the Accounting Report.

6. Public Programs

Upcoming Public Programs

Mr. St. Germain asked the ATFC for descriptions for the Public Programs they are running. These will be posted on the Town's web site.

Food at Public Programs

Mr. Forestal asked about the policy if he ran a bike ride through the forest and wanted to order pizza for attendees, could he use money earmarked for public programs, to purchase food? Mr. St. Germain asked if the pizza is required because municipal money would be used to pay for the pizza. Mr. St. Germain said water for ATFC work projects a necessity for safety reasons. Mr. McGrattan voiced concern about the ATFC providing food for recreational events because it sets a bad precedent. Mr. Jones said he would feel more inclined to provide food and drinks for work projects, but not for recreational projects.

Mr. Forestal said in the past the ATFC said public program funds could be used for food at these types of events, now the ATFC has further refined the policy to pay for food at work events, but not at recreational or entertainment events.

Mr. Forestal made a motion for \$63 to purchase pizzas for the bike ride event, but after the discussion outlined above, Mr. Forestal withdrew the motion.

Barberry Pull – April 2

Mr. Jones wants to move the Barberry pull to April 2, and he wants to use the Friends of the Forest (FOF) list to recruit for this event. Mr. Jones wants to pull Barberry near the proposed North Trail. He said similar ATFC events have pulled 1,000 plants in each of the last 2 years, and we have currently pulled 100 plants this year. Besides using the FOF list to recruit workers for the event, Mr. Jones will work with Mr. Forestal to post event information on Facebook.

Fairy Houses – May 7 (12:00 PM to 3:00 PM)

Ms. Hulme expects about 50 houses from 5 different schools and wants to put these in the ATF from the Winter St entrance to the Bungalow. Ms. Hulme has distributed tree rings to the schools and requested the houses back by May 1. She asked the ATFC for help putting the houses out between May 2 and May 6. Ms. Rooney offered additional Fairy House supplies including pine cones and greens for any other participants who want to build houses on the day of the event, May 7. The event is 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM on May 7.

Tree Planting – Currently May 7 (9:00 AM to 12:00 PM) but may move to April 24

Mr. Jones is running the tree planting event from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM on May 7. The ATFC suggested people park on Pine Street, and not in the Winter Street lot due to the Fairy House Event. Mr. McGrattan suggested digging the holes on earlier weekends, because this is the task that will take the most time.

Mr. Jones will call Bigelow Nurseries to see if they can ship the trees to be available to plant on Sunday April 24.

7. Planning 1 – 2022 Projects Quick Review

Not discussed.

8. Planning 2 – Trail redesignations Discussion

Not discussed.

9. Old business: Comments and Questions on updates and ongoing projects

Not discussed.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and was seconded. Approved 5-0-0 vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Future Meeting Dates: April 13, April 27, May 18