

Special Cooper Select Board Meeting  
May 13, 2014  
Held at the Cooper Town Office

Attending: Daniel Ackley, John v, Scott J, Sandy, Julie Renaud Evans

Starting time: 7:30 p.m.

Agenda Item 1: Julie thanks the Select Board for holding the Special Meeting to hear her presentation. She lives in Coos County, NH and the Northern Forest Center is based in Concord NH. Julie then gave a comprehensive overview of what she does. The organizations goals are to have thriving forests and communities, and to keep forests healthy. Some of Julie's colleagues are responsible for tourism, supporting wood manufacturing, and keeping Maine's forests available to the public. Her work is primarily with community forests, within Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Projects vary greatly depending on community interests. Other organizations work with communities on things like fundraising and the real estate transaction details. Julie works with planning committees for a couple years, assisting while they decide what the priorities are. She brought some brochures of other projects that she has done. "What does a community need for a Community forest to be successful?" Julie also brought a couple of their annual reports for us to have to read over. They see the opportunities, the benefits, how good management and timber harvest can generate funding, recreational benefits, school benefits, social benefits. They also see economic benefits – for example, a quarry town in VT had economic benefit from bike trails. Another town harvested lumber and it has left them set financially.

Julie sees these projects develop in various ways. Tonight she is here to talk about the possible purchase of Twp. 19. There is a rich history of town forests in New England. Ownership is either owned by town or towns or on behalf of a town by someone else like a land trust. Julie gave an example of 4 towns who purchased a property along with a land trust partner, run by a trust committee. Julie reports there is a financial investor interested in purchasing Twp. 19. They are exploring the use of a New Market Tax Credits which is designed to benefit low income areas; to use this program the investor must provide a package of benefit for the region including economic benefits, environmental benefits and community benefits. It is all very conceptual at this point. 2 possible benefits that Julie sees are: 1 - a conservation easement, and 2 - watershed restoration. Management history of Twp. 19 has been varied. The Bridges need work. "Sunrise Economic Development" is partnering with them to bring the economic piece, likely some targeted training within the hospitality sector. Julie said the plan would be for 200 acres to be donated to communities. Dwayne Shaw and the Downeast Rivers Land Trust is a potential land trust partner. Wesley, Crawford, Cooper and Alexander are the 4 local populations to be served. The 200 acres does NOT include lake frontage.

Purpose of tonight to ask questions see what the level of interest is. Julie said this is all very preliminary. Phases to come would include such things as a planning committee, developing objectives, writing a plan, choosing a governing structure. These are all part of process.

Questions?

\*Are they looking for money from Cooper? Not in the initial phase.

Special Cooper Select Board Meeting

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\*What is the annual cost of ownership of the 200 acres? If the 200 acres is a conservation easement, that means there is no cost related to taxes.

\*Who is the private investor? Julie is not able to say yet. She can say it is a New England based conservation minded individual or group.

\*19,000 acres will be undeveloped. Doesn't that mean loss of economic development for our region? If it isn't taxable, but under tree growth, does that put our county taxes up?

\* Distance is an issue. We will need to drive over to Route 9, and then drive to Wesley to have access. John mentioned the private woodlot road, but there is no guarantee they will continue to allow public access on a private road.

\* Cooper does have a town breach that is town owned land.

\*Would the developer use local wood harvesters? Julie said she imagines so, but not sure if they have talked about this aspect yet. How much wood do/did they leave standing? Julie said there is no answer yet. She has walked the access road; it is currently a young mixed forest.

\* 200 acres shared with the other towns in a governing board authority: that means we may be out voted and have a commitment to pay our share of a project anyway.

\* Can Julie tell us about resources that we don't already have access to?

\* Summer people would probably be very attracted to a place such as this.

Sandy and John shared some of the history of grange and town office with Julie. Cooper's School choice was explained by John. The Cooper bus goes to Alexander and Woodland schools, but parents may transport students to a school in the town where they work.

Julie is looking for letters of support. She doesn't have two towns, and Alexander is waiting for answers to their questions first. John restated his understanding of the process, and he agrees that the developer is in it to make money. However, he sees that there is plenty of open land. John said that a community forest is an expense (even if the 200 acres a donation) as far as we spend to develop, like a camp ground.

Sandy asked what benefit to Cooper when we already have access to the Moosehorn Wildlife Refuge?

John sees a benefit in the community forest idea, and having the schools use it or maybe a scout camp?

Scott said he doesn't see a benefit; it is too many miles away. Distance is an issue. There is no easy way to drive there; it takes a half hour or more.

Sandy commented that the Town is already in debt until pay off the Town Office building.

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Discussion continued of how close this is to Daniel's property and Russell & Lynn's property on the back side of Cooper Hill.

Is there the potential to sell this land in the future? Answer: The Easement stays with the property, even if it is sold. The way the wood is harvested would be set up in the easement, and it stays the same every year.

John asked about the Downeast Salmon Federation? Answer: They want to be part of this project with a buffer area around all streams within this area. 1,000 foot buffer is already in use on Machias River, so they want the same on the East Machias River.

Sandy suggested this be brought to town meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Next Select Board meeting will be Thursday May 15, 2014, at 6:30 p.m.

[Contact information for Julie Renaud Evans](#) | Director of Forestry

**Northern Forest Center | *Thriving Communities & Healthy Forests***

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