

Town of Litchfield, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting
February 8, 2021
Litchfield Town Hall
6:30 pm

In Attendance:

Selectmen: Steven J. Webber, Chairman, F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman, Richard W. Lascelles, Kevin A. Lynch and Kimberly M. Queenan

Town Administrator: Troy Brown

Also in Attendance: William Kunelius, Forester I (Virtual); Scott Rolfe, Regional Forester (Virtual)

Absent: None

Memo: None

1. Call to Order:

- a. 5:30 pm - Paperwork Review
- b. 6:30 pm - Chairman Steven Webber called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Review and Approval of Consent Items:

- a. A/P Manifest: 02/01/2021 - \$1,646,410.93, and 02/09/2021 - \$252,453.56
- b. P/R Manifest: 02/04/2021 - \$61,769.05, and 02/11/2021 - \$61,005.96
- c. Treasurer Reconciliation - December 2020
- d. Tax Collector Reconciliation - January 2021
- e. Town Clerk Reconciliation - January 2021
- f. Purchase Order M-21-04 - \$20,000 Portable Radios
- g. Report of Timber Cut Request (Map 15, Lot 14)

3. Items Added to Consent:

- a. None

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman K. Lynch) Motion to accept the Review and Approval of Consent Items.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

- a. January 25, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman K. Lynch) Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from January 25, 2021.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

5. Business:

a. William Kunelius, Field Forester-I and Scott Rolfe, Regional Forester:

Town Administrator Troy Brown reminded the Board that members of the community, at the last meeting, presented a report about the closure of trails within the Litchfield State Forest. Since the previous meeting, Mr. Brown contacted the State Forester and requested that he attend this meeting to provide details about the closure of a couple of trails. William Kunelius and Scott Rolfe both participated in the meeting virtually.

Mr. Kunelius requested that the meeting minutes show that he is not the State Forester. He is one of many Foresters within New Hampshire, and he oversees the Litchfield State Forest. Mr. Rolfe is the Regional Forester for the Southern Region of New Hampshire.

Mr. Rolfe started the presentation by stating that both he and Mr. Kunelius work for the South Region of the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Mr. Rolfe then commented about how the State manages recreation trails located on State Reservations. He mentioned that the State Forests have seen an increase in use and sometimes abuse because of the pandemic. He added that the purpose of the State Reservations is under several RSA's:

1. RSA 227-H:1 - Declaration of Purpose
2. RSA 227-H:2 - Protection; Improvement
3. RSA 227-H:3 - Purchase and Provision for Management
4. RSA 227-H:8 - Use of Land for Recreation Purposes
5. RSA 227-G:3 - Forest Management Responsibility

Mr. Rolfe commented that the Litchfield State Forest management is overseen by the Division of Forests and Lands Foresters within each region, unlike State Parks where the Foresters manage the trees, and the Park Staff manage the developed recreation areas.

b. State Forest Closures:

Mr. Kunelius explained that in the spring of 2020, he was scouting the stands and regeneration conditions within the Litchfield State Forest (LSF). He stated that while scouting the LSF, he noticed trails that were not mapped, multiple signs were posted, and a bench was located in the middle of the LSF. Mr. Kunelius informed the Conservation Commission of the rogue trails that were built.

Mr. Kunelius mentioned that in the summer of 2020, the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources initiated a State Forest inventory and monitored the LSF rogue trails for activity. Mr. Kunelius discovered that additional trails were being created off of the "Twin Bridges" trail and one more rogue trail in another part of the LSF. In the winter of 2020, the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources closed the trails down and placed signage explaining the reasons for closing the trails.

Mr. Kunelius continued his presentation by showing a map of the rogue trails versus a registered trails map. He explained the purpose of closing the paths and added that they were closed for legal and conservation reasons. Mr. Kunelius stated that the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has found that closing trails using flags has no impact. Because flags do not stop people from using trails, the State uses hinge cutting and flags to prohibit the trails' use. Finally, they install signs stating that the path is closed.

c. Restoration of Calvin's Loop Trail:

Mr. Kunelius reviewed the impact that recreational trails have on wildlife. He presented maps to the Board that showed the habitat sensitivity to trails and the "Corridor of Influence." He pointed out the trail "Corridor of Influence" covers 237 acres or 72% of the Litchfield State Forest. Mr. Kunelius showed the impact that recreational trails have on wildlife, if the two rogue trails were removed. Mr. Kunelius showed that if the Calvin Loop trail were reopened, then the "Corridor of Influence" would cover 227 acres or 69% of the Litchfield State Forest.

Selectman Lascelles asked who is responsible for the communication from the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He pointed out the lack of communication between the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and Selectmen. Mr. Kunelius commented that the State owns the property, and the trails' management belongs to the Conservation Commission. Because of this, the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources communicates with the Conservation Commission. He added that the State informed the Conservation Commission in the spring of the State's intention to close the trails. Mr. Rolfe stated that if the Board wanted the State to communicate with them in the future, the State would be willing to do so.

d. Timber Harvest Plans:

Mr. Kunelius reviewed the upcoming timber sale from the Litchfield State Forest. He mentioned that as part of the State Statute, he must inform the towns of a timber sale project. Mr. Kunelius said that the area that will be treated is an area that was last treated in 2004. The harvest will complete the silvicultural prescription for the stand. He added that the harvest is significant due to the presence of the Red Pine Scale in NH. Mr. Kunelius stated that the State Forest Health Specialist recommends the removal of all Red Pine. He then commented that the Project Area would consist of 50 acres, overstory removal, leaving three to five White Pine per acre and some White Oak left in the overstory.

Mr. Kunelius commented that the timeline for the timber sale is:

1. Winter / Spring 2021 - Public notification, layout, and marking
2. Spring 2021 - Public walk
3. Summer 2021 - Timber sale showing and bid process.
4. Active timber sale - September 15, 2021 until March, 2022 & September 15, 2022 until March, 2023
5. Expect temporary closure of the parking lot and some trails for safety.

Selectman Leary asked Mr. Rolfe if the Litchfield Trail Group could be involved with the Spring Public Walk. Mr. Rolfe stated that they were more than welcome to attend; the Public Walk is open to the public. Mr. Kunelius commented that the State would place a notice in a couple of papers and provide the Town of Litchfield with the information to put on their website.

Selectman Lascelles asked if the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources generated revenue from the timber sale. Mr. Rolfe mentioned that the revenue received from the timber sale goes into a fund that supports his department. The revenue does not go into a State General Fund. Mr. Kunelius estimated that they would receive approximately \$50,000 from the timber's sale.

Selectman Queenan asked if hunting still occurred in the Litchfield State Forest. She was informed that hunting occurs in the Litchfield State Forest, and Mr. Rolfe promised that the loggers and hunters would be safe.

e. Planning and Construction of a Parking Lot:

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that he heard the State was looking into improving the current parking lot at the Litchfield State Forest. Mr. Brown pointed out that this area was becoming the center of the Litchfield. He mentioned the bike path, Musquash Conservation Area, and the local recreational areas. He noted that the parking lot deserves a lot of local input. Mr. Rolfe stated that the decision making is done internally by the State employees regarding the State Reservations. The State has their engineers and designers that they consult with.

Mr. Brown noted that he believes the residents of the town need to know what the plan is. He stressed that the Litchfield State Forest abuts the municipal complex, and Sawmill Park is down the road. Mr. Brown pointed out that there needed to be communication between the State and Town. Mr. Kunelius stated that he would entertain communicating the plans with the Town of Litchfield.

Mr. Brown asked if the State plows the parking lots of the State facilities and parks. Mr. Rolfe stated that the State does not plow their low impact and passive recreation parking lots. Mr. Brown then asked if the State would require the logger who won the bid process to regrade the paths. He mentioned that the paths are not graded properly, and the water does not drain properly. Mr. Kunelius commented that this might be something that the State can look into.

6. Public Input @ 7:40pm:

1. None

Public Input ended at 7:41 pm.

7. Items Removed from Consent:

None

8. Administrator’s Report:

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that the Town of Litchfield and the Litchfield School District had their Deliberative Sessions on Saturday, February 6. Mr. Brown stated that he would be working with the School District to put together the voting guides. Administrative Assistant Michelle Flynn informed Mr. Brown that the Town needs to provide the final draft of the voter’s guide by the end of the week. Mr. Brown reminded the Board that the Town Election occurs on March 9, this year.

9. Selectmen’s Report:

a. Selectman Richard W. Lascelles - Conservation Commission:

Selectman Lascelles discussed his duties as a member of the State Legislature.

b. Selectman Robert Leary Jr. - Budget Committee:

Selectman Leary mentioned that the Deliberative Session was on Saturday, and the Budget Committee will take a break for a while.

c. Selectman Kevin A. Lynch - Planning Board:

Nothing to report

d. Selectman Kimberly M. Queenan - Heritage Commission & NRPC:

Selectman Queenan mentioned that the Heritage Commission would meet remotely on Tuesday at 7 pm. She added that the NRPC would meet again on March 17

e. Selectman Steve J. Webber - Rec Commission & CIP Committee:

Selectman Webber mentioned that the Rec Commission would meet tomorrow at 7:30. Mr. Webber commented that he attended the Conservation Commission meeting, and they sent a note to the ZBA about the variance that they approved for a new gas station.

10. Other Business:

None

11. Non-Public Session:

Discussion: Chairman S. Webber requested that a motion be made to enter Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II(c) - Reputation.

Motion: (Selectman K. Lynch) Motion to go into Non-Public Session.

Roll-Call:

- a. Selectman S. Webber - Yes
- b. Selectman R. Leary - Yes
- c. Selectman R. Lascelles - Yes
- d. Selectman K. Lynch - Yes
- e. Selectman K. Queenan - Yes

Convened to Non-Public Session

7:50 pm

Reconvened Public Session

The Board of Selectmen reconvened public session at 8:57pm and Selectmen Leary / Selectman Lynch moved to seal the minutes indefinitely for reputation.

Roll-Call:

- f. Selectman S. Webber - Yes
- g. Selectman R. Leary - Yes
- h. Selectman R. Lascelles - Yes
- i. Selectman K. Lynch - Yes
- j. Selectman K. Queenan - Yes

Motion passed.

12. Adjournment:

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman Leary / Selectman Lynch) moved to adjourn the public meeting at 8:57 pm.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
BOS Recording Secretary

Approved by the Board of Selectmen:

Steven J. Webber, Chairman

F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman

Richard W. Lascelles

Kevin A. Lynch

Kimberly M. Queenan