

Minutes September 19, 2022

The Board of Trustees of the Village of Greenwich held a special meeting for an information session on the Thunder Mountain Forest Management project on September 19, 2022 in the Greenwich Fire Department at 60 Hill Street in the Village of Greenwich. Present were Mayor Fuller and Trustees Brown, Robinson, and Panza. Trustee Vandewater was absent. Also present were Attorney Kelly, Forester Jim Allen, and Treasurer Prime.

Mayor Fuller opened the meeting at 7:07pm by introducing the Board of Trustees, Attorney, and Treasurer. The Board of Trustees began discussions of forest management at the Thunder Mountain property approximately three years ago. It had been discussed under two previous Board of Trustees as well, but never acted upon. The purpose of this meeting is to inform the public on what the management plan is. Over the last year and a half, the Board of Trustees has spoken with 3 different foresters and evaluated what they believe should happen. In the end it was decided that an independent forester would be the best choice because they would not have a vested interest in the actual timber being sold. Jim Allen is currently working on his plan and marking trees to be harvested. The Board of Trustees toured the property in two shifts earlier in the week to visualize the project and speak with Jim about his methodology. There will be a tour scheduled for the public on Saturday, September 24 at 1pm for any interested parties.

Jim Allen is originally from and still resides in Ft. Ann, NY. He holds an Associate's Degree from Paul Smiths College, and a Bachelors in Science from Pace. He is a licensed forester in Vermont, is a member of the SAF society of American Foresters and has owned his own business since 2006. Additionally, he strives to take 12-14 continuing education credits per year. He has worked for the towns of Easton and Greenwich, Village of Whitehall, and Washington County. He is also a member of the Agricultural Stewardship Association Board of Directors. He is most interested in long term management, and sustainable forestry. The goal is to looking forward to the next generation, and is not meant for short term.

After the Village approached Jim, he spent 6 hours taking inventory and walking the property for tree analysis to determine if it is overstocked or understocked. The property contains almost every type of stand: plantation, naturals, and partials. There are a lot of poor health, and older mature trees throughout the property. Jim broke the property out into 4 stands based on type of timber and age of timber.

Next, he presented his forest management plan and his rationale for the markings he's made to date. Three of the four stands are over stocked. He suggests a rotational period of 12-15 yrs. The trees marked will allow for a lot of regeneration. The prescribed plan is not solely income based; it is based on longevity.

Stand 1 is a fully mature spruce plantation, planted approximately 70 years ago. There is little to no light reaching the floor, and this has created a habitat fit for invasive species to take hold. He suggests 2 patch cuts where every tree 2" or larger will be cut. This will open the forest floor to sun and allow native plants and trees to grow. He suggests leaving 5 acres with selective thinning to be used as control group to see the difference between patch cut and selective thinning. This would be a good educational tool. His hypothesis is that invasives will dominate in this control area.

Stand 2 is located at the top of the property, and the most mature stand. Jim estimates the oldest trees

may be 120-125 years old, but the majority are likely younger at 95 years old. In its current state, no regeneration is viable because no sunlight is reaching the ground. He proposes selective thinning, especially with the lower quality stems. This will create patches for new growth. Originally, he proposed a shelterwood cut which would be a more dramatic cut, and only leave very few mature trees for seeding. However, he ultimately decided for a more conservative route with selective cutting. There is one small patch cut proposed in the southern corner of the boundary.

Stand 3 is the largest with the most tree species diversity. Here you will find mature red and white pine, as well as many primary species. This is the patch that needs the most work because it also has the most trees that are in poor health. He proposed one patch cut of multi-liter pine, approximately 1-2 acres on the western edge of the boundary. There are many invasives that have already taken root in the understory such as multiflora rose. Currently, there is no plan to treat invasives, but it may need to be addressed as the project progresses.

Stand 4 is located north of the powerline and is the healthiest stand made up of young hardwoods. It contains 10–14-inch stems that just need to be selectively cut to release the healthy stems.

Mayor Fuller asked him to talk about habitat and animal life. Jim responded that there is not a lot of biodiversity up there—very few birds and deer. He has only observed squirrels & chipmunks by spruce stands. Since he has been on the property daily, he has only observed three deer on property, and typically there should be more than that. There is no understory for the deer to browse on, so they will just pass through. New regeneration will allow for a large deer population. The understory is not habitable for birds as it is easy for owls to see and prey on them. If more edge systems are implemented, it has been shown that they are great for biodiversity. It would also allow recreation users—hikers and bikers—to enjoy more flora and fauna.

Mayor Fuller and Jim Allen opened the meeting up for public comment and questions.

Erin Jaworski from Schuylerville uses the property year-round 3-4 times per week to run and mountain bike. Her interest is for recreation. She asked for clarification what the definition of over-mature is, the future plans for logging the property, and is Jim's prescription for logging or for nature.

Jim responded by clarifying that mature trees may not necessarily have a large diameter at breast height (DBH)—they can be large or small and equally mature and/or unhealthy. If nothing is done with Stand 3, you will eventually see a lot more dead tree standing, and a lot more invasives, potentially overcoming the dead trees. The proposed plan takes into account both logging and nature equally, and to allow for more wildlife. Erin Jaworski retorted that forest management is not permissible in the Adirondacks. Jim responded that most professional foresters will agree that more forest management should occur in the Adirondacks, but cannot be performed due to regulations. Lastly, Erin addressed the Board of Trustees to recommend they take time with this decision because you cannot undo logging. She suggested they look into the multi-use Kalabus Perry trails in Schuylerville which are maintained by volunteers.

Leslie Peck from the Village of Greenwich uses the property all the time with her dogs. She is concerned that there are more blue marked trees than not. She asked for clarification on why so many of the oaks were marked and who will pay for the logging. Jim responded that he looked at every tree individually, and determined its health and longevity. Health can be determined by checking for rot in the butt, seams in the butt, signs of leaf decline, and dead liters. The healthiest trees will remain. Selectively removing trees will create more sunlight to the floor for more regeneration. Some of the smaller DBH trees will be removed to allow the bigger trees to flourish and become healthier. The current seed stock will re-seed the floor itself, no planting will be performed. The village will pay for the logging out of the proceeds of the timber sale.

Dan Fowler from the Village of Greenwich wanted clarification on who will oversee bid process and what is Jim Allen's commission. Jim Allen and the Board of Trustees of the Village of Greenwich will oversee the bid process and Jim Allen received 12% of the sale proceeds.

Erin Jaworski from Schuylerville asked what the expected monetary value of the harvest will be. Jim Allen responded that it is unknown at this point because he is not done marking the trees yet.

Jim Ballard from the Town of Greenwich and also on the Board of the Battenkill Conservancy is always concerned with anything that might affect the watershed. Lorraine walks their dogs on the property regularly. He asked for clarification about what happens to the trees once they are removed, and ground scarification. Jim Allen responded that some slash and residuals will be used to protect the stands, the idea is to not use the trails, but to crisscross the trails at 90-degree angles. He explained the various methods of tree removal: whole tree, cut to length, tree skidding, and horse. Ground scarification is the process of turning the leaf litter over, scratching 4-6 inches into the soil in order to turn up the seeds. This process can occur any time of the year except when there is excessive frozen ground. Jim Ballard made the point that wildlife may be affected by logging, and should we do during nesting season.

Rodrigo from the Town of Easton asked for clarification on if opening the canopy will increase or decrease the amount of moisture reaching the understory. Jim Allen responded that the amount of water will not increase due to the good drainage on the property. They will be leaving slash for regeneration protection. Roderigo manages a 60-acre forest on his personal property. It was recently logged approximately 7 years ago and he has been watching it progress with increasing biodiversity. Rodrigo posed the question: how can you make the ecosystem better than letting nature run its course, how about letting it just be? Jim Allen has never said he is better than mother nature, but he is only trying to aid in the process by using his professional experience.

Max Ruderman from Schuylerville uses the trails three times a week. He asked for clarity about forest management: if you are optimizing for future harvesting, then how are you optimizing for biodiversity and health of forest? Jim Allen was not given time to respond to this question.

Max posed a question for Mayor Fuller. Is she concerned about the conflict of interest re: Jim will be getting more compensation for more trees marked. Mayor Fuller requested a show of hands of who lived in Greenwich. Her responsibility is to balance Village concerns, and a very common concern is high taxes within the village. Throughout her tenure, she is always looking for ways to bring more revenue to help reduce taxes.

Luke Fronhofer from Saratoga asked what the expected monetary gain would be. Again, Jim Allen responded that he really can't put a number on it because the marking process is not finished. Mayor Fuller asked him to give a range if possible. He responded that the net revenue could be anywhere between \$40-\$100k. Luke asked if is there going to be an evaluation of the people who bid on the trees. Jim Allen confirmed that there would be a selection process and the Village has not finalized the bid process yet. It will need to be in both the public and the Village's best interest.

Dan Fowler of the Village of Greenwich interjected with a question of whether or not the net revenue would go over \$150,000. Jim said no, it is fairly safe that it will not be more than that.

Darcy May from the Town of Greenwich walks her dogs there four times per week. She asked if Jim was going to be the one doing the logging work, are we considering horse logging, will herbicide be used and if

there will be trucks on site. Jim Allen will not be doing any of the logging, as the jobs will be bid out. Horse logging is difficult considering the poor health of the standing and already fallen trees. Horse loggers will not likely bid on this project. Also, horse logging creates more ground compaction. There will be trucks up the main road but not on the trails.

Elaine Jaworski is from Albany but still uses the properties, and helps build trails. She is a doctor by profession, and understands Jim's job because she also gets paid more the more problems she finds. She asked the Board if they understood what the value of this forest is to the people who use it currently. It might be less than \$100,000 for the next 15 years. She is concerned that it will be difficult to enjoy the land if it is to be continually harvested. Mayor Fuller responded she did understand the value, and that you might be surprised at the amount of impact that amount of money would have on the Village budget. Elaine asked Mayor Fuller what monetary value she put on the forest. Mayor Fuller responded that there is no monetary value placed on the forest.

Trustee Panza interjected that this has been a very thorough process, and if it was solely about the amount of money for the Village, the process would have been a lot easier. He stated that everyone does not need to agree about it, and no one on the Board has ever denied that money wasn't a part of it. The Board has been very serious about making this decision, and educated themselves about what silviculture really is and what the options are. It is important to weigh all the options: natural, recreational, and financial. It's important for voices to be heard, so that the Board can continue to weigh all the options.

Trustee Robinson echoed Trustee Panza's thoughts, that she does not want anything bad to happen to the property as she has been going up there since she was in her teens. She is trusting Jim Allen.

Elizabeth Ellen is originally from Maine but now resides in the Town of Greenwich. She asked why the Board pick a realtor to do this deal and if there were any environmental studies done. Mayor Fuller responded that no environmental studies were performed but the Board worked with three other foresters prior to Jim Allen. Jim Allen responded that we also had a NYS Forester's prescription in 2012, which is a free service.

Gregg Edinger is an Ecologist from the Town of Greenwich. He asked if there could be a condition assessment and is worried that invasives may come into areas that aren't there now. He asked if we could not complete the entire plan, and just leave some parts alone. He was willing to help identify some areas that could be left alone.

Jim Ballard from the Town of Greenwich asked the audience if they realized how many trees is \$100,000 worth of trees.

Ellen Fronhofer from Town of Greenwich responded that it was 535 trees, which is four trees per acre. In stand 2, 125 trees are marked, which is approximately 10 trees/acre.

Jim Ballard from the Town of Greenwich remarked that he didn't care what you said, it was going to look like Spraguetown Rd. The focus of this thing is logging, not tree help. Jim Allen responded that this was not the case.

Rachel Clothier from the Village of Greenwich had a question for Attorney Kelly—is the property a park or is it vacant commercial? It is advertised as a park but listed on the tax map as vacant commercial. Attorney Kelly responded that he will look at the resolution and get back to her. He is not sure if they did

a proper park dedication or not.

John Smith from the Village of Greenwich thanked the Board for their time, and echoed Trustee Panza's sentiment that this is a good thoughtful discussion. He also echoed Rachel's comments, that this parcel boundaries have no designation and would like to hear that answer as well as if a SEQR was required. Attorney Kelly responded that if there was a designation, it was before his time as Village Attorney and that he did not believe a SEQR was required for a timber harvest contract, but will look into it. Jim Allen responded that it would be needed only if the town requires it. John Smith pointed out that parcel is not a designated wetland but it does feed into one. Jim Allen responded by showing the no cut zone around the watershed on the maps provided. John Smith pointed out that all four soil types found on the property are shale-silt soil types with no depth. He asked how scarification help with these soil types. Jim Allen responded that the scarification will happen in the actual woodlot and compaction is going to be limited to skid trails. John Smith asked the Board if anyone thought about using carbon offset/carbon credits to create revenue. Mayor Fuller was interested in this idea and asked if John would be willing to help the Village look into this.

Grace Peck from the Village of Greenwich asked if this plan puts a good image of our town, and why are we thinking about doing it now. Mayor Fuller responded that this plan has been in the works for over 10 years, and her responsibility is to the Village taxpayers, in hopes to create more revenue to reduce or maintain taxes.

Maura Henderson from the Village of Greenwich asked if there were any other active ways to raise money for the Village? Mayor Fuller responded that it is actually hard to create new revenue sources, and she does not want this meeting to get derailed on another topic, and limit it to plans for the Thunder Mountain Forest management project. She offered to discuss this at a later date.

Mike Jaworski from the Town and Village of Greenwich gave an idea to raise revenue—opening the brush and leaf compost pile at Thunder Mountain for a fee. Treasurer Prime responded that is a good idea but it is not possible because it is full. Mike suggested that the proximity to the school is conducive to educational programs. He asked if there was a plan for the money that would be profited. Mayor Fuller said that the Board has not gotten that far, but items talked about were putting a line into our budget for programs and upkeep of the property. Mike believes he has put over \$150,000 in volunteer hours and believes a good first step is to put a sign for Thunder Mountain on North Rd to let the public know there is a park there. He also asked if people would be willing to raise money for the park. Treasurer Prime responded that it is not permissible for the Village to actively fundraise.

Trustee Panza spoke about looking into grant funding for this property.

Ellen Fronhofer from the Town of Greenwich brought up the revitalization plan, and asked why it did not include Thunder Mountain. Mayor Fuller clarified that the revitalization plan needed to be within the BOA designation. Ellen maintained that Thunder Mountain Recreation Area falls in line with the goals of the revitalization plan.

Dan Fowler from the Village of Greenwich uses the park six times per week. He thanked the Board for their efforts, but believes they put the cart before the horse. He asked if the Board if they would consider having a subcommittee for this project and also put a moratorium on the goal until other options can be explored. Mayor Fuller responded that this will be considered but no decisions would be made at this meeting.

Jim Allen explained his next steps. He will complete the marking, and then get an estimate of value. Then the board will make a decision on going forward. Depending on the weather, Jim has 4-5 days of marking left.

Leslie Peck from the Village of Greenwich asked if it is viable to go back on the plan once the estimate is received. It is worrisome to her that paint was put on the trees and that is worrisome. Spray painting the trees feels scary.

Trustee Brown remarked that it is not a done deal yet. She requested that the public let the Board work through the process.

Paul Fronhofer from the Town of Greenwich would like to see a show of hands of who came to the meeting about reducing taxes versus the forest management project. He stated that the amount of people who came to this meeting not in favor of the forest management project really says something.

Kate Ziehm from the Village of Greenwich stated that as elected officials, your job is to be open to what you are seeing from the people who have put you there. She remarked that it feels bad when Mayor Fuller is defensive and it seems like this decision has already been made. She works with foresters every day and knows that everyone is doing the best that they can. She believes that Jim is not a bad guy. She acknowledges that he was hired to evaluate the forest for financial and natural gains. She believes what is missing is a clear goal of what that property is to the Village.

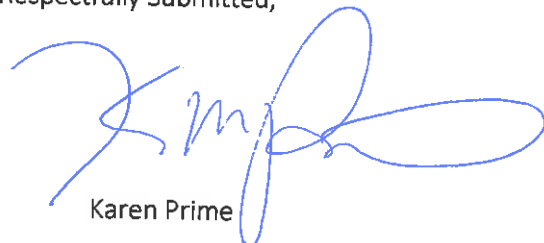
Claire Fowler from Village of Greenwich felt slighted that the public meeting was scheduled a week prior to when it was scheduled, with only 6 days to prepare and feels that the Village officials do not care about her.

Mayor Fuller responded by agreeing that it was not much notice for a meeting. The reason it was decided to be held so quickly is because people attended the regular Village Board meeting held on Monday September 21 and became heated about the situation. The Board felt that they needed to hold a meeting dedicated to this topic as soon as possible.

Mayor Fuller and Jim Allen scheduled a walk through for the public, this coming Saturday September 24th at 1PM. Another walkthrough may be scheduled later in October. Jim Allen is also happy to take calls or emails from anyone interested in speaking with him further.

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Fuller at 8:47pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Karen Prime