

**Town Forest Committee  
Minutes  
June 23, 2014**

**Present:** Sue Barnett, Peter Brewer, Paul Doucette, Shirley Smith (Sue had to leave the meeting at 9:30 and Peter at 9:45.)

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM. Sue made a motion to approve the minutes from May 9, 2014. Paul seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

**Recreational Trails and Associated Areas By-Law**

Shirley related that the Land Use Committee had expressed several concerns about the by-law. First of all, they didn't think it was fair to restrict campfires to only the scouts and as long as there was a permit from the fire department, anyone would be covered.

The committee was not aware of any permit specifically for campfires. Fire permits are usually issued for outdoor burning, are weather dependent, and have to be out by 4:00 PM. Shirley pointed out that requiring adult supervision would be most important. She had checked other town forests in the state and most prohibit camp fires. Some allow fires, such as confined to a stove or grill, for cooking only. Some towns require permission from both the Conservation Commission and the Fire Chief. She said the reason we allowed only scout troops is that they require 2 adults to be present at all times. Unsupervised young people cannot always be counted on to act in a responsible manner. Fires involve tremendous risk and this should be carefully thought out.

The second issue was hunting. The Land Use Committee wanted the by-law to say all permitted hunting activities, including hunting at night, are allowed that the state allows. Shirley had checked the state hunting laws and had found that they are complicated and could fill an entire book or two. They include rules for the hunting of numerous species of birds and animals; more rules for the various weapons such as different kinds of guns, primitive weapons, bows and arrows and even more rules for trapping. In addition there are different rules for different zones, (14 zones in all) plus rules for handicapped people. Peter suggested just adding a link to state rules and/or the Town Forest web page which already has a list of Fish and Wildlife hunting rules.

Shirley could find no Town Forest that allowed night hunting. There was no objection, however, to amending Section 3. a. of the by-law to read, The use of Town of Mendon Trails and their Associated Areas is restricted to the hours from one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset.

The Land Use Committee also wanted to insert, "Motorized vehicles may be used as necessary for the management of the Premises by the Town and for forest activities." The committee thought that the existing language, "authorized maintenance vehicles" would legally include management and forestry activities. If you are going to cite one particular use, then all should be cited.

It was decided that the best option would be to pass over the by-law at Town meeting to see if some kind of compromise could be worked out. Town Forests have a right to set their own Rules and Regulations and do not have to abide by state requirements for Conservation Restricted lands.

**Update on Public Hearing for Discontinuance of Town Forest Section of Tower Road**

Shirley had gotten the map of the area in question from the assessor's office and had written the Public Hearing Notice. She would meet with the Planning Board to set the date. Copies of the map and hearing notice were passed out to committee members.

**Southwick Trail Easement**

Peter had received the amended easement document from his lawyer and gave it to Shirley for review by Town Council. This would go on the warrant for a fall Town Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Shirley Smith