

Minutes from May 20, 2024 Advisory Committee for Froelich Drive Property

Committee members in attendance: Michael Brooks, Sheehan Donoghue, Deb Seeger and Shane Zaruba. Jona Eliason Plum Lake Town Board Representative was in attendance. Will Maines was absent.

Guest was Sean Davison from the DNR in Eagle River.

Meeting was called to order at 4:08 PM.

Sean Davison passed out the Draft Forest Stewardship Management Plan referencing Town of Plum Lake property of 36.9 acres, Town 41N, Range 8E and Section 31 SENE. Committee references as Froelich Drive Property. His draft included a Topical Map for the land.

Questions of visual buffers, maintaining canopy and diversity and the default of 50' from right away on state highway N.

Discussed forest health and viability of future invasive species on property that should be addressed and not allowed to take over. Froelich Drive and Smith Street area has had some dumping and invasive plants were seen. There does not appear to be any oak wilt present.

The DNR has a whole policy on invasive plant species. Need to check with DNR Biologist on birds on the property, be aware in the spring of which species are nesting. Best not to identify two bird species on property, to keep confidential. There were no apparent eagle nests. Common birds present such as whip-poor-will, and evening grosbeak. Their population is declining but not on the endangered list. These birds typically are passing through.

Invasive species were found only in wetland area, on the southwestern corner of the property. Tamarack and Black Spruce can withstand some flooding. The wetland area is not useful for development.

If logging, usually they bring in invasive species. Option to bring in a licensed pesticide application which is renewable every year, must be certified to use chemicals.

Concern of red pine growing too close to each other. Fungus can spread to other trees, not usually found in Vilas County. Sheehan and Jona both expressed no reason for having pesticide license for Plum Lake if needed we would contract out the service.

Creeping Charley is localized, did spot some spotted maple weed. There is a concern around the pot holes with runoff into the channels by loggers.

Overall forest health some oak wilt present, a gall fungus, phomopsis gall, only on one tree that Sean observed. Random fungus kills trees, cut out the source or will spread usually by birds and insects. Loggers don't actively look for them, but if they find one, will take it out. There are a few dead pines on property, couldn't find reason or foul play, just need to monitor.

DNR goes into a property once every ten years, appears a number of people have been on the property probably hikers, Plum Lake does not allow hunters actively on city property. There are a lot of deer on the property, no fawns observed. Maple and balsam are farther down the food chain for deer.

Sean said the property on N and G is coming back from its last logging. School forests typically create plots with a six foot fence to show what can grow in an area.

Last timber sale on Froelich property was about 20 years ago, they did a good job of cutting. Appears most balsam fir trees taken out which is a good thing.

Page three of the draft shows Stand Data, where red pine is most plentiful, followed by white pine and a lot of balsam fir. Some red oak maple, balsam and birch but none are plentiful. Balsam fir is most dangerous for fires they grow low to the ground, in a fire they cause the fire to shoot up. Trails on the property that are mowed and used for hiking help stop ground spread of fires. Jack Pine trees are the most hazardous in Vilas County and prevalent off highway C.

Sean suggests we log the whole property versus smaller parcels since it is only 36 acres.

Second paragraph of the Stand Data explains basal area based on the diameter of the trees. Try to keep forests within stocking levels where the density should be. Within next ten years have red pine cut. Cutting the whole property and light thinning, 25% of trees maximum. Looking at damaged, diseased and overly dense areas.

We as a town should develop goals for the property on harvesting. Appears a total cut was done 120 years ago. May be about \$50,000 town would earn every 10 to 20 years from cutting. If property is developed Plum Lake needs a plan for tree population versus an arborist after the fact. Good idea to maintain a buffer around the property.

Sheehan asked if trails are currently visible? Sean advised looks more like seed beds now, not really visible, essentially there are not really good trails on the property now.

Still feel best access is off Smith Street where bulldozers would come in and go around the property; making a loop, deciding where we want brush cleared. Shane asked best time of year to do this? Sean replied fall and winter. Brush is usually not removed, makes it a higher cost. Typically move brush piles to specific area. What usually happens is to cut the trees, remove what is determined, bulldozer runs over remaining trees to compact it, regrowth in five years. Root system is usually 1 to 1 ½ times diameter of the size of the crown. For example roots of red pine trees usually grow straight down and not very deep. Whats our next step? Hire someone to thin trees? Who determines? Bids? What to cut?

Should complete an internet search for loggers who we want to receive bids from. Eliminate those not well rated or have issues. Determine entire property or part, sale of timber, does this have to be done at an electors meeting? Write a plan. Sean said his draft is based on one plot every acre.

A Consultant Forester (CF) from DNR has a list on website of those interested in working in Vilas County. Need to complete more specifics on logging and thinning. CF's looks at making a map, with roads, tell what trees to do, mark trees and finally instructs the logger.

A logger usually uses about 15' lane, prefer a wider road / lane of 50'. Creating a road path with brush off to the side. Critical to make sure wide enough fire / emergency vehicles can get in and out, and maneuver in emergency situations.

Two possible entrances off Froelich Drive, one by Smith Street the other Carl Eliason Drive. No other access available off Whispering Pines, Highway N or on west side of property, Gary Keller's property.

We need to determine:

1. where entrance will be
2. how wide of a road
3. selection on trees (first diseased, or depressed trees)
4. light thinning

Typical cost to put plans together is \$800 to \$1000.

Look at local loggers with good reputations. See who did Hwy N and G for town. Klessing (out of Eagle River) and Fink (out of Arbor Vitae) are two good possibles. Blue marking to cut trees, red boundary line and purple designates stopping point is a standard.

Next step for us? What do we want to go in there? Is town allowed to use money from timber sales to improve property? Can we earmark usage? Can we subdivide in the future? Sean advised schools do say money raised from logging sale goes back into improvements and or other designations.

Jona advised Froelich Drive is not up to code and must upgrade road first, and we will lose some of the property on the east side, for appropriate right-a-ways. Who pays for Froelich Drive work. Retain ownership of maybe 100' until road is done?

Making deeds restrictive or adding covenants is an attorney issue for future discussion. We need to not get out so far ahead of ourselves. This is the only piece of commercial property Plum Lake has left.

Shane presented to Kim several items to look at for us.

Brief discussion on the grant application for the Community Building and Town Hall.

There were no citizen comments,

Sean summarized a plan first from us, get more specifics, recommend practices, baseline of 120' right-a-way and determine net acres left. We then agree on a plan, board approves find forester (contract) to work with more in depth, then go to loggers for quotes. Don't want to take out too many trees, health of forest to 25%. Hiring a forester could be a year process. Hiring a logger could be a three year process because of their existing contracts.

Sean will send Shane a PDF the DNR has that may help us. Shane will distribute to committee.

Shane thanked Sean for the information and time spent with us.

Shane moved to accept minutes from April 16, 2024 meeting, Sheehan second. Motion approved.

Next meeting date and time TBD. If we have anything for the town board agenda give to Shane and Kim.

Sheehan motioned at 6:10 PM to adjourn, Michael second. Motion approved.

Submitted

Debbie Seeger

