



would be allowed and if he thought if there was any jeopardy of that happening he would not have made a donation to the Vermont Land Trust to purchase that property.

Allison Hope advised that the Committee is asking for more time to explore every type of hunting that can be offered on that land and has not heard the Committee say that hunting would not be allowed in future years. The Committee needs to figure out how all uses can share that property safely and still have hunting.

Bob asked if the Committee was made up of any hunters. Allison advised there was at least one person was. Bob feels this process could have been moved along faster if there were hunters on the Committee to address these issues rather than wait another year. He expressed skepticism that if hunting is not allowed this year then it won't be allowed in the future.

Carol Winfield does not recall any particular use being guaranteed or promised. She feels that the trails should not be open to four wheelers or horses until the trails are ready for that type of use. Carol pointed out to get to the forest that most people would have to drive a car and that parking is at the school. Firearms are not allowed on school property and therefore access is problematic at this point. She asked people to be patient while the Committee works on the plan.

Bernie Fleury thinks the Town needs to put up safety zone signs to identify areas to protect the school and houses near the property. He feels hunting should be allowed and parking be made available that is not on school property so hunters can access the forest. Bernie pointed out there are many opportunities on that property and there is too much of this town that is posted for no hunting.

Tom Schmidt stated that his question about firearm hunting was with regard to access which is close to the school. His goal is to figure out a way for hunting to occur. Tom pointed out that there are trails on the other side of the road near the school that people can use for hiking during hunting season. Bow hunting affords people the ability to hunt year-round. While the logistics of firearm hunting are being worked out there is still an opportunity for hunters to hunt on the property with a bow and arrow.

Dennis Angiono expressed his concerns about where the line gets drawn. There is always going to be people that don't want this or don't want that. He feels that the taxpayers paid for this property therefore it should be open for legal uses.

Dennis Briggs is hearing that the major concern is with risk to the school. He pointed out that since the school was built there in 1967, that people have been hunting around the school with firearms and he is not aware of any problems that have occurred. He does not feel that the property is at risk.

Becky Roy your concern about hunting around the school. She knows that hunting did occur because her family owned land that abutted the school and it was not posted. Becky pointed out that hunters could park along the road, just like they do elsewhere in town.

Barb Peck asked if the abutters to the forest have been contacted. Marilyn advised that they have not because this just came up the shooting that put the school on lock down occurred. When the shooting incident occurred, people approached the Committee to find out what they were going to do about it – hunting across the road because of kids, teachers, etc.

Darryl Montague recalls that hunting has occurred on this property for a number of years. He, himself, has hunted on the land. He asked why this should change for even one year. The school has been here for 50 years, why is it an issue now? Yes, its public land but you can still walk your dog. He suggested that if people are going to hike the land, wear orange and your dog too. That land is owned by each and every one of us therefore should have equal access. Darryl agrees with Bob Bancroft stating that equal access was part of the understanding and that is why he supported the project.

Allison stated now that the ownership has changed hands and its everybody's land, it behooves the Town to take its time and make sure that we act accordingly and make decisions appropriately. This Board is well aware of having to go back and cleaning things up because things were not necessarily thought through. She wants to make sure if rules are going to be made, that the Town lets everyone know about them and that they are done in a thoughtful manner. Allison said that she has not heard anyone say that hunting will not be allowed on that land. She's okay with slowing down the process to make sure it's done right even if it takes this hunting season to do so. Allison pointed out that it takes longer for a group of volunteer citizens than an individual property owner to make these types of decisions.

Nick Rogers advised that he contacted Fish & Wildlife with regard to safety zones and was told that the zones cannot infringe on another person's property even if the property line is less than 500' from a dwelling structure. Allison advised that there are safety zones around schools, which the Town and School District discussed at the time of the transfer of the land.

Dan Strobridge said that the hunters he has run across over the years understanding where the animals are and understand that they need to be sure before they pull the trigger. He feels that the decision should be based on the 95% or 99% of the hunters that are respectful not because of a few that make a bad name for hunters. Dan doesn't want the Town to do something that will ruin something for folks that has been going on for years.

Carol Winfield doesn't feel that stones are being thrown at honest hunters by advocating for waiting a year, it's about logistics. It is not legal to park on roads or right of way. Where are they going to park so they are not on school property with a firearm? The school has use of the trails, therefore it's understandable that people are nervous in light of the change of the environment and mass shootings. Let's get the rules and safety zone signs in place to put people's mind at ease. We all own this land.

Bill Cleary feels that people are passionate about this issue because hunters as a group seem to be being backed into a corner. The available land for hunting is shrinking and its especially important to have close places to hunt. Lives are busy and people don't have a lot of spare time. His hunting time is fragmented with an hour here and hour there. With regard to the stop gap measure (waiting one year), Bill feels there is a lot of skepticism because once it goes down that path it never returns back to the way it was. He asked how the community will be informed about the changes. He wants to make sure there is public outreach going forward and that this is not the last time hunters get to be heard on this issue.

Marilyn advised that the plan needs to be completed by January 1, 2019. The Committee is asking hunters for suggestions on how the Town can make this work for everyone. Tom was helpful on the Committee because he is a hunter and knows the regulations. Bill asked if the Committee announces its meetings on Front Porch Forum. Marilyn stated they do not but can.

Tom Schmidt said ideally, he would have liked this to have been resolved months ago. There are so many things to address. Closing off hunting on the eve of the activity is something he wanted to avoid. He abhors the idea of restricting lawful practices that are part of Vermont's heritage. He would change his mind tonight about firearm hunting if an access could be identified. Tom asked if there is any access that would be suitable or if someone could offer one. It's the only thing needed to allow hunting for this season.

Bernie Fleury pointed out that hunters can park at the town common and walk up the road to access the forest.

Dan Strobridge does not see a lot of cars parked along the road when people are hunting. He suggested closing the forest off for hiking during hunting season. Hunting has a long tradition in Vermont and he feels it should not be prohibited.

Darryl Montague asked if the tractor turn around that could be used and could be designated as a parking area.

Kat Morgan asked are there other places in Vermont where there is town land adjacent to a school, where they allow or don't allow hunting. Did the Committee reach out to those communities for guidance to see what they did? Koi advised that she has not seen any example pointing out that this situation is unique. The Committee can consult with the Land Trust to see if they are aware of any.

Paul Roberge advised that the State allows hunters to use archery equipment during rifle and bow season. Is that going to be acceptable? It was noted that bow hunting is allowed. Paul pointed out that muzzle loaders are not by definition a firearm therefore someone could legally park on the school property and hunt in the forest.

Koi advised that no weapons are allowed on the school property.

Dennis Briggs pointed out that a bow is considered a weapon therefore a person can't be on school property if they are carrying a bow. He asked what the difference is between a bow hunter accessing that property or a rifle hunter accessing that property?

Allison stated that that is a good question and pointed out that this is why this conversation is taking place. There are obviously a lot of gray areas and a lot of nuances with hunting and these are all questions that will need to be answered and the Town will need to be super clear.

Paul Roberge asked when the plan will be voted on. Allison advised the next forum is November 9<sup>th</sup>. She added that what is being discussed tonight is what they need to do for this year. There were some good points brought up that were not thought about before. At this point, a meeting date has not been set.

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison Hope, Chair  
Selectboard

Nanette Rogers  
Town Administrator

**October 16, 2018**

**Proposal regarding:** 2018 Firearm Hunting Season at Maple Shade Forest

**Submitted to:** Westford Select Board

**Submitted by:** Westford Town Lands Long-term Management Plan Committee

**Request:**

On October 3, 2018, the Westford Town Land Long-term Management Plan Committee voted to request to the Westford Select Board that no firearm hunting take place on the Maple Shade Town Forest parcel for the 2018 season. This would mean that the MSTF would be closed to all hunting, with the exception of bow season. The committee is concerned about public safety due to the proximity to the Westford School and limited access points. As a result, more time is needed to consider how hunting can safely occur on the property. This should be considered a temporary arrangement in advance of the MSTF's upcoming management plan.

**Background:**

As a provision of the Vermont Land Trust conservation easement, Maple Shade Town Forest requires a long-term management plan to be in place by January 2019. As part of the effort to establish this long-term management plan, the Westford Town Lands Long-term Management Plan Committee was put in place by the Westford Select Board in March of 2018. The committee is made up of seven members and has representation from the Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Westford School and four additional community members. At this time the Westford Recreation Committee is not represented.

In order to accomplish the task of developing a long-term management plan for the Westford Town Lands that includes both the Misty Meadows trails (school trails) and the Maple Shade Town Forest at the Jackson Farm, the committee has been meeting monthly, educating themselves and gathering community input. Along with talking and walking with experts regarding education, wildlife habitat, wetlands, recreation trails, and forestry, the committee has been holding a public engagement process that has included:

- Dot Democracy booth at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration
- Three community walks
- Name contest at Westford School
- Community survey

As a result of these efforts, the committee has recognized that Westford's approach to hunting on the MSTF must be somewhat nuanced. Our biggest concern is that the MSTF is directly across from our school and as of now the only access point for the land is integrated with the existing school parking lot (firearms are not allowed on the School property). This arrangement will require a higher level of communication and engagement with the community to allow access the MSTF without bringing firearms on school lands.

The committee is committed to working with the community to develop a plan that supports Vermont's rich hunting culture, the accompanying land uses and our school community, but needs time to accomplish this. The committee will be working over the next two months to inform the community of their findings and continue to engage them in a dialogue that will co-create a vision for how hunting can

safely happen on the land. This vision will be outlined in the forthcoming Management Plan for the MSTF and Westford School property.

**Westford Long-term Management Plan Committee:**

Chair, Koi Boynton, Westford Planning Commission  
Marilyn Thomas, Westford Conservation Commission  
Kurt Sherman, Westford School  
Rosemary Shea Cobb  
Michelle Gates  
Will Dunkley  
Tom Schmidt

**Committee Advisors:**

Ethan Tapper, Chittenden County Forester  
Cara Montgomery, Vermont Land Trust  
Melissa Manka, Westford Town Planner  
Sarah Pinto, Chair of the Westford Conservation Commission

**Addendums:**

Westford Town Lands Community Survey Results

TOWN OF WESTFORD  
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING  
GUEST LIST

Date: October 16, 2018

Name (please print)	Address
Marilyn Thomas	284 Covey Rd
Becky Roy	Old #11 Road
Dave Havalice	Old #11 Road
Sara Havalice	Old #11 Road
Robert Brauncroft	409 Brookside Rd
ERIC LONEY JACOBSEN	158 HUNTLEY ROAD
William Cleary	56 Beaver Pond Rd
Wayne Brown	138 Huntley Rd
DENNIS ANGLINO	14 GREENWOOD LANE
MATT WANSKARIZ	34 SNOW HILL LANE
Paul Roberge	41 Brookside RD.
DENNIS BRIGGS	31 GREENWOOD LN.
Joan Schmidt	771 Woodsteflow Rd.
Ray Geddens	22 White Church Ln
Lori Johnson	"
Nathan Headee	926 Osgood Hill Rd.
Luke Paulior	540 Cambridge rd
Barb Peck	1088 Rte 128
NEA MEEHAN	1088 Rte 128

TOWN OF WESTFORD  
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING  
GUEST LIST

Date: October 16, 2018

Name (please print)	Address
Patricia Hechmer	34 Maple Tree Lane Westford
Carol Winfield	57 Boufford Lane
Dave Gaudin	130 Huntley Rd Westford
Lee McClemey; KATHERINE LATTIMER	61 Sanctuary Rd, Westford
Bernie + Sheryl Fleury	20 Common Road
Darryl Montague	173 Pettingill Rd
Don Peuliot	29 White Ch Lane
Sean Cushing	24 Audry Lane
Christina Scanlon	113 North Rd
Nicholas Rogers	933 Osgood Hill Rd
Cecelia Billings	933 Osgood Hill Rd.
Connie Demay	191 Old #11 Rd. Westford.
Harmony Cism	926 Osgood Hill Rd.
Marty Scanlon	113 North Rd
Daniel Strobbridge	205 Pettingill Road, VT.
Hoi Boynton	5 Wildberry Lane
Eric Ford	5 Wildberry Lane

Cat Morgan

2103 Bte. 128