



From: bill.weale@[REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Tad - Forest Board Friday's meeting
Date: July 13, 2020 at 5:46 PM
To: Lynne Fitzhugh [REDACTED]
Cc: Peter Berger peter.berger@fairleevt.org, Arlene Guest [REDACTED], peterg [REDACTED], Fairlee Town Administrator townadministrator@fairleevt.org

I, too, wish that this project could be stopped. But short of *asking*, which I'm going to suggest tonight, I don't want to risk what I hope is real and frankly unexpected progress in cleaning up this governance mess. Redstart has been un- if not mis-informed regarding the stewardship required and Limlaws don't deserve to be squeezed by problems which have been caused solely by the Town of Fairlee itself.

The loss Lynne mentions is obvious to anyone looking at the town reports. But how much they show is an understatement and how it occurred is worse than unconscionable. "Road building" has been built into (buried in) recent logging contracts —logging contracts which have never been available to anyone outside the forest board until after the right to the trees and other forest products has been signed over to the loggers.

After 4 hours of meeting last Friday, Tad received for the first time the logging contract for the current project. I also asked Mr. Matthews for and received detailed information regarding the contract completed late last year, which included building the haul road up Knox Trail. (More on that to follow**)

I had preferred to wait until the Treasurer's office had checked to make sure I hadn't made any stupid mistakes, but I'm confident that during the past 10 years, the Forest Board has outspent our **total** receipts from logging by over \$1,300. Doesn't sound like much when you say it that way? Consider this: if no logging at all had been done during the past 10 years, we would have \$37,000 more in the forest trust funds.

Wait, there's more: our net logging proceeds during that time period appear to have been \$36,383.03. Our forestry services and road building expenses have amounted to \$34,066.92 and \$3,636.36 respectively during that period. These numbers comprise the net operating loss of \$37,600+. According to GL reports I've asked our Treasure to run, Redstart has been paid only about half of what has been charged to "forestry expenses" during that time period. I haven't had time and I don't know if we possess the information to be able to track down the balance of the reported "Forestry" expenses.

It's important to know also that this Forest Board fired our County Forester in 2010 because he would not approve of the plans to "improve" Knox Road, which was done by this board last year and because, according to a Forest Board member at the time, "...he wouldn't let us cut anything." The full services of the Orange County Forester cost the Town of Fairlee nothing.

It turns out that avoiding all logging during the past 10 years not only would have saved us \$37,000 in out-of-pocket expenses, but also we would still have substantially more than \$36,000 worth of commercially valuable standing timber.

About the current logging contract, a copy of which Tad received late Friday afternoon? Tad gave it to me to look at Friday night. After scanning and emailing it to Tad this morning, I looked at it for the first time. Buried in the last of 29 terms is the provision that the logger will spend an amount not to exceed \$6,700, which "will be ultimately paid for by the landowners and the value will be deducted from the first stumpage payment(s)."

Before the SB ever even knows a logging project is in the works or has the chance to question and understand what is being planned, our town has been committed to a substantial expense which will be deducted from a revenue which has been conveyed to our Town Treasurer as a **Gross** Stumpage Receipt. This is wrong. It is deceptive, whether the road building is acceptable or not.

Today I was accused of hiding, of "holding things back for weeks." I have been on this for weeks, well over 400 hours and literally some sleepless nights. I couldn't and still don't believe anyone intentionally meant all of this to happen. Honest research is driven by curiosity and a desire to learn, not by a pre-conceived agenda. You truly don't know what you'll find. First you try to accumulate all of the facts and documents you can. You still don't know what you have. What I've listed above is the tip of a very large iceberg. I still don't know what we have. My intent is still to gather what we can and to publish it in a way that folks can browse through it all and understand it, if that's possible.

I still don't know or even pretend to understand what we have. I'm just the messenger. And I still don't believe anyone in our town intended this situation to develop.

One last bad news/good news experience:

Last Friday Markus, Bryce Limlaw and the Forest Board carefully explained the logic behind the Knox road building project. The goal was something they called "daylighting." Jim O'Donnell suggested it and Markus said it was the first time he had tried it. It made a lot of sense, if you felt that type of road was needed. And I accept that different foresters can have different opinions for good reasons. The real frustration here is that there was no opportunity for any outside opinions or inputs. Our five-member board has 5 members who all think pretty much alike. I've read nearly 7 years' worth of their minutes. All votes unanimous and the minutes indicates no intra-board "spirited" discussions. Also, they tell Markus what they want and if Markus can justify it professionally, it's his duty (he works for the FFB not the SB) to

arrange it.

If I had heard about this idea, I would have (and I did over the weekend) Googled a three-word search, “forestry roads daylighting.” My first hit on that first search would have been (and was) the URL below: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/Fact-Sheets/Daylighting-Roads-and-Trails-to-Create-Edge-Fact-Sheet>
After fully reading the one-page description, I believe I could have sold that version on the idea of daylighting to anyone. I’ll always wonder how Markus and the FB would have responded, if they had had the opportunity.

Bill