

Approved 12/11/19
TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECTMENS MEETING
Wednesday, November 20, 2019 4:30 p.m. -5:40 pm

Present: Selectmen Skipper Manter, Kent Healy

Also Present: Manny Estrella, Greg Pachico, Chris Bruno DCR State Forest Supervisor, Karyn Lothurd DCR MCSF, Joshua Nigro DCR Fire, Aaron Whiddon DCR Fire, Dave Celino DCR Fire, Kathy Logue, Louisa Hufstader, Richard Salzberg, Tara Whiting-Wells, Janice Haynes

Minutes: *S. Manter said they would postpone approving the minutes of November 6th until all three Selectmen were present.*

State Forest Fire Plan: Skipper Welcomed the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Fire members and had them introduce themselves. He said that a concerned citizen had brought to their attention the condition of the fire breaks in the State Forest and they had asked the DCR folk to come and address the issue. Kathy Logue spoke as a resident expressing her concerns about the area on the map of Skiff Lane, Otis Bassett and Oak Lane roads where they end in the State forest. She believes that the fire breaks that parallel the bike path that runs behind all those roads has not been mowed down in years. She was concerned about evacuation from those neighborhoods in the case of a wildfire in the State forest with prevailing winds blowing towards the residential areas.

Chris Bruno spoke about the progress they have made with catching up on maintenance over the last few years. Their priority has been parking lots and clearing trails for visibility and safety. Dave Celino said that they had been out in the forest that day and drove the bike path that Kathy had mentioned. He agreed that it could use some care. He spoke extensively about what the DCR does. He pointed out that there is a program called Fire Wise that the Hopp's Farm road is recognized for in which DCR educates home owners on creating a safer landscape situation around their homes in fire prone areas. He also gave kudos to Manny and the other Island Fire Departments for the work they have done educating their members and all the training they do. Manny said his two main issues were that the maintenance of the mowed fire breaks from the West Tisbury School down to State Rd and the fact that the fire tower was not manned every day in the summer. Dave said that with staff shortages they only man the tower on 'High Index' days (low humidity and high heat). Manny disagreed with that policy and pointed out that the State says they should have 6 brush breaker trucks and the Island really only has 2. They count on early warning from the tower, especially in the summer when many visitors do not know where they are reporting from to help with that shortage.

Skipper asked if there was a schedule for work to be done? Was there a written 5 year plan; something they could have? Dave said they do have a 10 year Fire Management Plan to Id target areas but no specific schedule. He invited the Selectmen to schedule a site visit of the area with them and the Fire Chief to see what they have done and to lay out the projects and make plans for what should be done. Skipper stated that he would like to see action and not what they have already done. Dave said they would work with Manny on the fire tower issue. He said they have requests in for additional signage for the trails and a new gate from the Hopp's Farm neighborhood into the forest. There was discussion about the pros and cons of burning vs. mowing and an explanation of 'Forest Treatment'. Manny asked why they didn't schedule their prescribed burns during the burn season here on island (January – April) when the weather was damper and there were less people on island. Dave said their burn crews didn't start work for the season till mid-march and there were always lots of places on the list. There were also DEP restrictions that limited the windows they had. Skipper stated his appreciation for the work that had been done.