

**Brandon Planning Commission
at the Brandon Free Library
April 30, 2015
Special Meeting Agenda**

Call to Order

Brandon Forest Forum: Public Access, Private Lands, Thursday, April 30, from 6:30-8 pm in the Brandon Free Library.

While we have a large, state-held Wildlife Management Area, most of Brandon's woodlands are privately held. In addition, access to the Green Mountain National Forest is largely over private lands, with just a few exceptions. Even our Town Forest has no public access point in Brandon.

Brandon's forested areas are part of the wildlife corridor stretching from New York, U.S.A., to New Brunswick, Canada. Many Brandon residents log and sugar, and both residents and visitors hike, bike, snowmobile, bird-watch, hunt, fish, and use forested lands to recreate in other ways that are both enjoyable and beneficial to our local economy.

State law protects private landowners from liability when they open their lands up to recreation, but many are unaware of these protections. Still others have had bad experiences with disrespectful visitors, while some visitors have had run-ins with unhappy landowners.

Grants and other programs are available to help landowners stay on their land and manage forests in a comprehensive way, but many are unaware of these resources.

The current Town Plan does not well address the vital resources of our forests and urban tree cover, whether as private resources for timber or as public goods for recreation and wildlife. This listening session, facilitated by Jim Donovan of *Broadreach Planning & Design* and paid for by a state Municipal Planning Grant and a state Canopy Grant, is one way we are trying to make the Plan better reflect Brandon residents' values and vision for public access and private woodlands ownership.

Adjourn