

Andrews Community Forest Committee Meeting Minutes April 29, 2024

Present: Ian Stokes; co-chair, Daniel Schmidt; co-chair, Julian Portilla, Chase Rosenberg, Brad Elliott, Melissa Wolaver, Cecilia Danks via Zoom; joined in person at 7 pm

Public: Kit Emery, Robert Lajoie. Zoom: Robert Low, Nancy Zimny, Jeanette Malone, Dan Wolfson, Sam Pratt, Lisa Miller joined at 7 pm.

Julian Portilla: appointed timekeeper. Melissa Wolaver: appointed minute taker.

Approval of April 5, 2024, Meeting Minutes: motion to approve: Julian, Brad: seconds. Minutes unanimously approved.

Report from Vermont Open Meeting Law (OML) training by Vermont League of Cities and Towns:

Melissa attended training and shared some highlights and action items for us to follow up on. Of particular concern to committee members is law 1VSA. 310(3). This law defines "Public Body", and VLCT lawyers stated that Open Meeting Law not only applies to committees, but also their sub-committees. Currently we have 6 sub-committees/working groups.

Cecilia challenged the accuracy of OML applying to sub-committees /working groups and stated that she has received opposing information from VLCT stating that OML does not apply to all sub-committees. Melissa shared that the VLCT lawyer said that OML applies to sub-committees even if their business is limited in scope and time. If several committee members are appointed to work on a task, it is a sub-committee. It does not matter if the number of committee members on the sub-committee is less than a quorum of the full committee; it is still a sub-committee and subject to OML. Brad watched the recording of the OML training and concurred that OML applies to sub-committees. Daniel noted that he doesn't think other town committees are having their sub-committees follow OML.

Action item: Daniel to confer with Josh Arneson, Town Manager, about OML.

Sub-Committee/working groups share outs:

Web page Sub-Committee update: Sam Pratt, Brad, Julian, Bob Lowe: Trying to have web page be more welcoming to public. Nice reorganizing of the ACF town page to help achieve this goal. Committee members think the reorganization looks good with a few small changes.

Action items: Add link to trail conditions page for trail closures and conditions. Duncan could create mockup for us to vote on.

Wildlife Stewardship Plan Sub-Committee: Brad, Chase, Sam Pratt: Consulted with Jon Kart, and had a meeting with Andrea Shortsleeve, VT Fish and Wildlife Biologist. She suggested encouraging bow hunting for deer control. Best practice for monitoring is to focus is on habitat, forest blocks for monitoring, not individual species monitoring. See link for details of sub -committee work. Daniel: Citizen scientists with I Naturalist app to assist with data collection? Bob Lajoie shared current deer regulations.

Action items: Sub-committee will cross-check what we have so far with Andrea Shortsleeve. Subcommittee to keep record in document of who we have consulted with so we can also post it in MP section of who we have had outreach with. Dan Wolfson suggests adding Black Bear beach stand.

Nest steps for the Wildlife Stewardship Plan: Continue to build detailed stewardship plan with tasks and strategies with specifics. Chase: Should be Embedded w/i management plan in the future.

Vision and Mission statement Update: Brad has been working on this and presents the document from the packet. Daniel: Thanks Brad and everyone who have worked on this - mission statement and vision are important. Second sentence highlights our goals: conservation, education, recreation, and forestry practices. Cecilia: What does "we" mean? Need to identify "we". Vision is community's vision. Mission: implemented by ACFC. Chase: Take off last two sentences of vision? Do we like it and want to keep it? Daniel: Together we strive to create a model of responsible land management. Cecilia likes last sentence with cultural heritage. Daniel: We need to define what we mean by "thriving". Jeanette Malone: likes the mission statement. Julian asks if anyone objects to anything so far? Nobody has objections.

Next steps/Action items: Work on this over next couple of meetings so that it can appear in management plan. Individually each person could make some notes and come with those to next meeting. You can also send them to Brad.

Road map presentation - Daniel: Next steps for management plan and what we will bring to Selectboard. We have some new things that are to be added to roadmap. Daniel has created new roadmap without dates. We will edit and try to add dates. Brad: Add to #5 cross-check with conservation commission and trails commission. Ian: Draft RFP and 2 cycles of public review. Between #3 and #4. Chase: How do we end cycle of public input? Cecilia: standard practice to have at least one more cycle of public meeting to make sure we got it right. Ian: RFP writer will be using all previous public comment. Julian: We need to resolve issues first. Daniel: could take a first crack at management plan integrating all we have been working on, as well as organizing. He can start right now on organization. Will not be re-writing language. Using RFP for guidance. Julian: When you find the controversial issues, we will need to bring them forward for a committee vote. Would Daniel be able to be paid? We will investigate. Submit to Selectboard Oct 2024? Brad: Date for completion of Wildlife stewardship could be finalized in June. Chase: Use next meeting to focus on Trail Stewardship Plan. Chase: Selectboard not expecting complete rewrite just areas we have been working on. Chase can collect further suggestions to Trail Stewardship plan. Ian: There is overlap from summer-sub-committee that could be synthesized.

Action Items: We will discuss Trail Stewardship Plan at next meeting. Daniel: Let's talk about how to process Trail Map within TSP at next meeting. Would like to show evolution of process.

MP 1 is currently approved document. All others in draft stage.

Next Meeting: May 20th, 6-8pm. Future proposed meeting dates: 6/24, 7/22 and 8/26.

Motion to adjourn Cecilia moves, Julian seconds. Unanimously approved.