Andrews Community Forest

Monday, November 30 2020 – 7pm – minutes

Present: Cecilia Danks, Ellen Kraft, Caitlin Littlefield, Tyler Merritt, Jim Monahan, Nick Neverisky, Amy Powers, Wright Preston (chair)

Public: Eric Axelrod (Wood for Good), Peter Halvorson (Valley View neighborhood)

Appointed minute taker: CL

Amendments to the agenda: none

Public comment: none

Minutes approval

September 28, 2020 minutes still to be completed and reviewed.

Logging update and access improvements

First check for ~$2500. Some sawlogs, lower-grade material, Tim selling firewood out his truck, too.

Mud on main road presenting challenges. ET proposes ding gravel/ditching/culverts/laying fabric for ensuring access now and into the future on main skid road between landing and woods. ET will draft CRF grant (EK, AP will review) for Conservation Commission review Dec. 8th. CD makes motion to allow for ET to complete those access improvements (following option #1), so long as he gets CRF. TM seconds. Approved (8/0/0)

Wood for Good

EA and sons initiated firewood donation program last year, donates to all Chittenden County. Jericho-based farm donated space where equipment for processing and distribution happens. Currently have two (soon to be three) splitters. All volunteer-based. Some tree services donate trees. Aiming for 100 cords this year, but have 5 acre site – could do many, many more cords. If people ask, they get wood (~1 cord/family). Hope to distribute April – May.

We pay cutting/skidding cost ($75/cord) to get to landing (we've reserved right to do so for up to 50 cords) and that would be deducted from stumpage he'd pay us (currently ~$12/cord firewood). We'd also have to pay for trucking (~$40/cord by truck), unless we could find volunteer or perhaps Wood for Good could cover transport. So we're talking about $75+$12 = $8/cord 7 or $75+$12+$40 = $127/cord.

Ash needs to remain within confirmed infested area. Which may only be Richmond – but maybe bumps into Jericho.

Should tell Tim for his planning how many cords we want left behind by ~January because he has his own firewood business. Going rate for lots of logger on landing is $90/cord.

EA indicates we could earmark most for Richmond. CD suggests Richmond Food Bank may be good avenue.

EAB Grant

CL reports town received $15k grant from Urban and Community Forestry; CRF will match $15 -- $7k of which is not yet accounted for. Soliciting ideas. Maybe that's focusing on River Trail, maybe that's creative demonstrations in ACF. Welcome any/all suggestions, including of artisans/woodworkers who

ATV use on ACF – new gate

Tim (logger) reported ATV activity. Had fuel caps removed from logging equipment. WP saw heightened activity, esp. on western boundary. WP put up gate. WP says it has stopped traffic.

PH and WP had exchange re: ensuring gates are more pedestrian-friendly. PH has shared photos of desired, friendlier gates. PH expresses that he and neighbors are not seeing the sort of ATV activity and are generally dissatisfied by the gate. Need to ensure gate can allow for snowmobiles and VAST groomers. Also pole gates (e.g., with one boom that swings out) can be deadly if people plow into them.

NN will join PH to evaluate potential alternative designs. Or consider removing 1-2 trees to enable 30-36" passage. CD wants it to be welcoming, but not break the bank – removing a tree or two may do that. CL concurs. AP asks PH if welcoming sign may help. Yes. Many people – not just neighbors – access and use forests.

In general PH speaks to general sense that public feels that ACF is coming under tighter control and that people aren't able to do what they may want to do (e.g., disk golf). Brief discussion re: continuing to engage residents in a manageable way to ensure we're meeting needs/desires. There was substantial outreach during ACF acquisition. Do we need to regularly re-engage?

Survey pins

Missing multiple logging pins. Surveyor has estimated $450 to find and/or set four survey pins. This is area where we're logging and having ATVs entering area. Unclear precisely where boundary with Maple Wind is. May/may not ask Bruce of Maple Wind if they'd split cost; regardless will reach out to inform. CD revises motion re: access improvements CRF. TM seconds. Approved (8/0/0)

Snowmobile access

Local residents (Pratt) seek to use (now unmaintained) VAST trail in ACF. Due to explanation below, they would be doing so as private individuals, not as VAST members.

Has been part of VAST, but landowners on Gov Peck have closed access from their land and so VAST is no longer maintaining trails across ACF reports JC. So if folks are using VAST trails, they're doing so as private users and not VAST affiliates. In which case we wouldn't be receiving any of the benefits associated with being under VAST – e.g., maintenance, protections, defense coverage for any liabilities that arise on the land. In general, VT has very friendly statute affording statutory protection if someone

enters land and is harmed, unless they're harmed by intentional act of landowner. But in event of ATV or snowmobile onto ACF and having accident, the town would be included in lawsuit – so what you don't have under the statute is any indemnification for the costs that it would take to defend that (e.g., attorneys, etc.). Unless town has insurance coverage for our land, we'd have that cost exposure. JC concerns from legal perspective – statutory language sounds great, but injury would get litigated as to whether it rises to level of an intentional act. JC will talk with Josh and town attorney to see how this is viewed from town perspective and whether there are protections we don't know about. Could also seek to understand how much more adding insurance would cost.

Ecological Trail Design

CL reports we received three intents to bid. Proposals due Dec. 15th .

UVM Service Learning

CD went with UCF not ACF project for her course; let's discuss options for fall next meeting

ACF update for town report

EK volunteers to start drafting. Due early Jan.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 (next meeting Dec. 28th)