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April 9, 2019 Conservation Committee Meeting at Town Center Tuesday at 7:30 pm

7:30 meeting commenced. Elizabeth Wright chaired meeting

Members present: Jimmy Cochran, Kristin Nelson, Elizabeth Wright, Jack Linn, Guy Roberts, Mary Houle.

No public present for comment. No changes to agenda.

Minutes of last meeting approved with addition of Sue Morse's full name in minutes.

Master Naturalist projects discussed-project list. List previously presented and discussed at earlier meeting of the Consv Com.

Questions for discussion for preservation project at Volunteer's Green. Preservation of Vol Green involves river bank stabilization and vegetative plantings to a line to be delineated and established as planting limit, how long is the planting area, will it extend to the area where the Farmer's Market occupies space.

The project for Rip Rap at band shell along riverbank area was initiated while Lincoln Bressor was the Selectboard Chair some two years ago. Project for Rip Rap was completed at the band shell while Geoff Urbanik was Town Manager.

Some discussion related to an application to the CC for Conservation Reserve Funding for Rip Rap project and letter to Selectboard authored by Chair Judy Rosovsky discussed. Letter attached. Guy and Elizabeth suggested some changes to the letter.

Green Up Day is May 4. Plan to ask Town Clerk to place sign-up clipboard and map in Town Center foyer with the Green Up bags. Linda Parent, Town Clerk traditionally places these items for the volunteers to access. Jack Linn will kindly check in with Linda.

Certain members of the CC have agreed to post to FPF. Postings to Front Page Forum for Green Up will be done in advance of the upcoming event and will be inviting and encouraging to our strong and dedicated volunteers. Precautions and warnings about 'hazardous' waste are advised. Posters for Green Up were distributed and members will post around Richmond for general information about Green Up. There will also be posting to FPF after the event to thank all our volunteers.

The renewal vote for the Conservation Reserve Fund is due to be considered for the 2020 ballot. Prior to the ballot item, it is anticipated there will be several informational meetings to present the history and success stories of the CRF.

Guy Roberts reported from the Town Forest work he has done, specifically to the grant he wrote to construct trails on that property, the awards were to be named by the end of March. There has been no notification yet to this specific request. Brief discussion about permitting: Act 250, Wetlands, Stormwater, Fish and Wildlife. Also some discussion for consideration related to closing trails during mud season and sensitive wildlife areas for protection. Some information related to trail closings found on TrailHub.org.

Elizabeth represented the CC by attending the Land Trust dinner last week at Cochran Ski lodge.

9:10 Meeting adjourned

Letter from Judy R, Chair CC

Dear David and members of the Selectboard,

Thank you for your letter requesting Conservation Reserve Funds to retroactively cover the town's cost for the installation of riprap downstream of the Bridge St. bridge.

As you know, the Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC) has had several objections to this project. We do acknowledge that both the RCC and the Selectboard (SB) share the common goal of trying to address riverbank stabilization, and that we only differ in the methods used to achieve this end. Please keep in mind that to our minds it seems contradictory to install a material that will only serve to increase downstream erosion, when the erosion downstream is already problematic.

Other misgivings included that only one bid was solicited; that the town by-passed the budget process; and that the project doubled in length and cost and no explanation was provided for the expansion.

The receipt of the application created two additional issues: if we approved the use of CRF funds for this purpose, it sets a precedent for cost reimbursement, rather than for direct funding. And if the SB overruled us, it sets another precedent, as so far in the existence of the RCC, the SB has always respected the RCC recommendations.

Nonetheless, we considered the application with an open mind.

For the convenience of the SB, please find attached the SB application; Gretchen Alexander's letter, and my response to the Jon Kart's draft of the application.

We believe the application does meet several of the criteria for funding. Those include: A1, A2, A4, A5, A7, A8, B7, B8, D2. Several other relevant criteria do not appear to be met. Indeed, it can be argued that they would argue against funding. The lead example is B1, the criterion stating that the fund can be used if it "Preserves river, stream and wetland quality".

The RCC made several requests for further information in its initial rejection of the Application, indicating that a revised version certainly should be considered by the Town. The re-Application addressed several of these and is much stronger.

While recognizing that action need to be taken, certain RCC members continue to have misgivings about the impact of rip-rap, particularly downstream. While exactly what that impact might be for this particular circumstance is unknown, the literature is extensive with regard to negative impacts of such efforts to direct river movement. Several RCC members would have preferred a more in depth, literature-based analysis of the pros and cons of rip-rap and the rationale for choosing that alternative. One example is: [https://winooskiriver.org/images/userfiles/files/Stream Guide 1-25-2012](https://winooskiriver.org/images/userfiles/files/Stream_Guide_1-25-2012). As noted in Gretchen Alexander's memo of 3/23/17, downstream erosion is to be expected. The issue is acknowledged in the application, though there is no discussion as to why it should not be deal-breaker. At the same time, other RCC members felt that the benefit outweighed negative impact. It is recognized as one of relative values / a balancing act, as was recognized by individuals such as Gretchen Alexander in her memo of 5/25/17.

There certainly are valid arguments that rip-rap is (was) the best solution. However, the application would have benefitted from a point-by-point response to the alternatives described by Gretchen Alexander in her letter of 5/25/17, including do nothing but monitor (to figure out best solution); combine tow armoring with bank sloping and bioengineering, using hard armoring; include recreation access into the stabilization design to limit its further contribution to erosion, create a vegetation buffer. Thus, it is not entirely accurate to say there is no alternative.

The application would have benefitted from input from downstream land owners, for example Chuck Farr, recognizing their land could be adversely affected. It is not clear that those landowners have been part of the loop.

Some RCC members were concerned about the precedence in funding a project for which funding already has been identified. In some cases, funding received has led to reduction in the request for CRF funding, the Andrews Forest project a recent example.

The question was raised as to whether the Project more normally would be covered by the Town General Fund.

Page 3 of the Application indicated there are to be new plantings. Indeed, RCC is most interested in discussion of additional stream bank work, as referenced at the top of page 5 of the application and as suggested in the Alexander 3/23/17 memo. Current efforts to develop a proposal, including funding from other sources such as the State and Friends of the Winooski were described at the 3/12/19 meeting. RCC expressed enthusiasm for such a project and was interested in receiving a proposal to use CRF funds.

At one point during the fervent discussion of the application, a possible solution to avoid the retroactive funding occurred, which was to re-direct the requested amount of CRF money for use on the further downstream erosion. But Jon Kart insisted that he had the funds to do that work and did not need ours. After a great deal of discussion, including input from Jon Kart and Josh Arneson, and knowing that the town has the money to cover the costs of the riprap without RCC funds, the exhausted RCC approved a motion

to recommend to the SB that \$20,000 of the CRF be used to retroactively cover the costs of the riprap.

We respectfully request that the SB keep in mind that though we reduced the amount the SB requested, the town does not urgently need the money but the RCC has several proposals in the works for use of the CRF for other projects. We understand that the SB can override our decision, but we hope that in the same spirit of compromise that led us to approve any money for riprap, that the SB will agree to the reduced amount and not set a precedent of overriding our recommendations, and added bonus plus, leaving us enough money to complete the pending projects.

Master Naturalist presentation of Project List proposed by coordinator and the 16 participants of the first MN 2018 program held in Richmond. Projects are for the participants to take part in to actively participate in 20 hours of service for the completion of their course in a specific conservation activity for the Town of Richmond benefit.

1. **Nature Walk Series:** Offering a Vermont Master Naturalist Nature Walk Series in Richmond natural areas over the next year. We envision a series of five (+) walks on different topics such as birds, trees, herps, tracking, natural communities, cultural archeology, wildflowers, geology, etc. that match the season in which they are offered. The Richmond Conservation Commission requests that the new town forest be featured in this series. We would also like one or two of the walks in be in the Gillette Pond area including areas of interest to a Girl Scout audience. This VMN team will scout routes, publicize, and lead the walks or find local experts to guide the walks. These would be listed on a poster or flier, so people could pick and choose from a selection of options – or come to all of them.
2. **Richmond Town Forest Wildlife Monitoring Project:** Picking up where the Field Naturalists left off, this team will monitor wildlife in the Town Forest. This would include large mammals, but could also extend to places like vernal pools. A couple of you have already talked to the Field Naturalists about a design.
3. **Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Planning:** This team would work with Judy Rosovsky to assess the best strategies for responding the Emerald Ash Borer before this invasive pest reaches the Town of Richmond. This project will include activities that educate people about Emerald Ash Borer from articles and flyers to a public presentation.
4. Richmond Trails Ecology Assessment
5. **Twin Hills Girl Scout Camp:** This team will do a two-part project. The team will conduct background research on the natural resources and human landscape history of the Twin Hills Girl Scout Camp property near Gillett Pond. Then, they will identify areas of need for Scouts looking for projects to do [e.g., camp property field guide for visitors, citizen science, hands-on natural science research, and/or service projects to improve the camp infrastructure (such as trails) and improve access to relevant sites.
6. **Winooski River:** This team will do a project centered on the Winooski River, with a specific focus to be determined based on the team's capacity and interest, as well as the town's needs. Ideas for this project include working with state river management personnel on a long-term Winooski River management plan; creating an inventory of and recommendations for culverts along the river; designing and planting vegetation near recently installed riprap on the Town Green; researching the pros and cons of riprap and monitoring downstream effects; and studying the role of Ostrich Ferns in the floodplain forest and the impact of harvesting. Other ideas include working with Friends of the Winooski River to organize a fall river clean up, and studying the gravel bar near the town green and how it is used by fish. This team should contact Friends of the Winooski River to align with their efforts and goals.

7. **Willis Hill Property next to CHMS:** This team will design a program to monitor wildlife with middle school students on the Richmond Land Trust's Willis Hill property behind CHMS. Science teachers at Camel's Hump have done some preliminary monitoring, and would like to design an expanded program, including
8. Herps crossing how to integrate wildlife cameras into the data collection. The teachers involved would also like to find ways to have students who are collecting the data communicate their findings to the larger Richmond community. (There was also interest in involving other Richmond Master Naturalists in the herp crossing work that CHMS is doing.)

Project List to be returned to graduates of the Master Naturalist program for ranking their preference
CC preference identified as 1,2,3,4,6 and 8 with 5 and 7 as lower priority.

Lake Iroquois Association Jamie Carol introduced LI information and follow up related to the 2014 Eurasian Milfoil study. 1990 was the first discovery of the milfoil in LI. The request for chemical application to treat the milfoil menace was denied. Other considerations to 'treat' the plant invasives was divers and the application of Benethic barriers to smother the plant

Members names for our new 428-acre Community Forest to be forwarded to the Selectboard for appointment to the committee for management of the Town Forest.

Next Conservation Committee February 12, 2019 at 7:30 in Meeting Room of Town Center building
9:15 adjourned

Pete Thomas walks and Talks to be held on Jan 26, 2019