

Town of Richmond, Andrews Community Forest western gate

Narrative Description of DRB approval request for old VAST Trail gate installed on 11/21/20

Written by: Wright Preston, current chair of the Andrews Community Forest committee

In the fall of 2020, the Town of Richmond contracted with a Hinesburg logger to log the eastern portion of the Andrews Community Forest (ACF) under the oversight of the Town's forester, Chittenden County Forester, Ethan Tapper. The logger began logging around 10/15/20. On 10/29/20 the forester contacted me and shared that the logger was concerned about ATV activity along the old VAST Trail and the log landing and possible logging equipment vandalism. On 10/30/20 the forester and I meet on the western boundary of the ACF to flag and boundary paint that section. Fresh ATV tracks were found on the old VAST Trail in this section. Small "No ATV" signs were posted at the boundary of the old VAST Trail on 10/30/20. On 11/5/20 the forester emailed the ACF committee about possible ATV related vandalism to the logging equipment. I continued to monitor the continued ATV activity on the old VAST Trail.

The public's use of motorized vehicles, including ATV's, is not allowed on the ACF per the terms of the: A.) Conservation Easement, B.) ACF Management Plan approved by the Richmond Selectboard, and furthermore, C.) per state law, as an ATV rider needs written permission on his person to ATV on someone else's property. The Town has not granted such permission. The Committee felt action needed to be taken as per our responsibility to uphold the conservation easement and management plans which specify no public ATV use.

On 11/19/20 I sought approval from the ACF committee to install a two post, two section, 12' lockable, VAST style gate on the western boundary of the ACF. I installed the two-post gate on 11/20. (See attached photos.) The northern gate post is on the boundary line of the Kelly property and the ACF. The southern post is approximately 10' on the ACF side of the boundary. The gate was installed to allow the free flow of pedestrians on the south side of the gate (by walking around it) while obstructing access for ATV's. I notified the power line utility contractor of the gate's installation and I gave the lock combination to the contractor.

After the gate was installed, a non-abutting neighbor on Valley View Road notified the ACF committee that the installation of a gate required zoning approval and must meet certain boundary set requirements. Subsequent to that, it has been brought to the committee's attention that because the ACF is now zoned as "Public Recreation Facility", pedestrian circulation impacts caused by the gate's installation also need to be reviewed by the DRB. After the need for a DRB approval arose, the committee decided to open the gate and it shall remain open through the winter.

After the VAST style gate was installed the abutting neighbor to the west, Michael Kelly, asked that we consider relocating the gate a full 10' or more onto the Town's property. The committee and one or two neighbors are now reviewing different gate locations within the ACF and perhaps a different style of gate to better accommodate various types of recreation we want to encourage in the ACF. For example, we want to encourage foot traffic, but need to discourage public ATV use. Another caveat is the gate must allow VELCO to have access with their vehicles, so the gate system must be dynamic.

The ACF committee and the town requests the DRB approval for this existing gate, which is now open for unimpeded access and will remain so throughout the winter. The ACF is aware that we will need to return to the DRB again with the proposed location and gate style change.

Request for waiver of an engineer or surveyor site plan. The attached plan was drawn by the ACF committee chair.

The ACF is bisected by two parallel, adjoining east /west power utility easements that have a combined width of 250'.

Thank you for your time and consideration with this matter.