

Richmond Conservation Commission
Minutes of Jan. 9, 2018

In attendance: Judy Rosovsky, Mary Houle, Rick Barrett, Bob Low, Guy Roberts
Public attending: Lou Borie, Steve Libby, Alison Anand, Bob Heiser, Virginia Clarke, Kate Blofson

Minutes of 11/14/2017 approved

Minutes of 12/12/2017: wait til next month to approve.

Andrews Property Easement will be voted on by the Select Board on Jan. 16th

- A copy was circulated to commission members for review

Stormwater Soiree II: upcoming on Wed, Jan 31st, probably at Library

Request from Richmond Land Trust to use Conservation Funds for Purchase of Huntington River Gorge property

Steve Libby:

- RLT was born 22 years ago to sponsor swimming holes along our rivers to maintain public access.
- Since Irene, RLT also does a lot of river restoration
- Gary Bressor, owner of the Gorge property since 2005
 - Looking to put in the hands of RLT to maintain access and manage
 - Opportunity to conserve and manage
 - Agreement with Gary to purchase his 3.3 acres
 - VHCB will assist with funding
 - Though had concerns about safety
 - RLT hired Lou Borrie to prepare a management plan
 - Assessed practices on other lands with dangerous features
 - Submitted to VHCB for review at Jan 24th mtg in Berlin, VT
 - Need matching funds to facilitate VHCB purchase
 - Purchase price to RLT: \$20,000
 - Transaction cost: \$15,000 management
 - Total Budget: \$63,500
 - VHCB: \$30,000
 - Richmond Cons Funds: \$10,000
 - VRC funds: \$7000
 - Local fund-raising to close gap of \$10,000
 - Requires a letter of support from the Selectboard
 - SB waiting to hear a recommendation from RCC
 - RCC should write a letter to SB to accompany SB's letter
 - Judy offered to attend and speak on their behalf

Bob: Motion to approve application: The Huntington Gorge CRF Application Motion 010518: The CRF application received from the Richmond Land Trust for \$10,000, dated 1/2/18, to cover partial costs for the acquisition, conservation and enhanced management of the specified Huntington Gorge property and earmarked for survey costs and site improvements is approved with enthusiasm, contingent on receipt of funds to cover the remaining costs; contingency funds to be returned if unused; and for use by January 2019, with reapplication permitted should additional time be required. Amended to include the management plan and cited references.

- Mary comments that nobody could develop the land
 - Why can't the current landowner retain the land and effectively conserve it.
 - Understands difficulty in managing the safety, parking and other issues.
- Rick comments that at one time it was suggested to blow up the gorge with dynamite
 - Purposeful conservation is required
- Mary: what zoning protects the river's shorelines?
- Lou: while it may be unlikely to develop, there is question whether it will remain accessible to the public.
- Judy: transfer to the town will preserve the land for the life of the town
 - Also may provide for a management plan
- Bob: what would be a suitable sunset date for this offer?
- Steve: a year would be reasonable
 - Would like to close by early summer, so in RLT's ownership by summer swimming season.
- Alison: the town needs this "like a hole in the head"
 - Not a safe place to swim
 - Surrounded by poison ivy
 - What is the liability to the town?
- Steve: Town will not own and will not carry liability
 - Statewide Geologic Treasure
 - Management plan can actively direct people to swim and use the land in the safest areas, improving on existing signage
 - 3rd party ownership provides better platform for longterm access
- Lou: VT has a very strong landowner liability law
 - RLT still carries liability insurance out of prudence
 - Most of the properties RLT owns are on rivers
- Alison: encouraging people to swim there is an invitation for trouble
- Judy: hopeful that a more directed presence will help mitigate the risks
- Steve: Lou's research on other dangerous places, finding that it is a shared responsibility between manager and user.
- Rick: Can't just put up a fence; fencing creates an "attractive nuisance", presenting a challenge for management.
- Bob: please reflect that the RCC hopes to see that language is prominent in the management plan to discuss how safety will be promoted at the site.
- Motion for RCC approval of the application by RLT for RCF funding:
 - Rick, seconded by Mary
 - Motion is passed unanimously, contingent on the management plan.
- Kate B: re Richmond Master Naturalist Program run by Alicia Daniels
 - Expanded in 2018 from Burlington to Williston, Richmond and Bristol
 - Promoting a braintrust in the town for conservation
 - "layer cake" approach: hydrology, geology, flora and fauna
 - Here for 4 main things:
 - Who on the RCC would be interested in training
 - 6-8 field days, 20 hour volunteer project
 - Who here could lead trainings
 - Lead site visits, could extend to Huntington
 - Ideas for volunteer projects
 - Funding: possible match from RCF

- 12 -15 participants at \$400 each, with poss. aid
 - Matching funds from the town
 - Other ideas for funding
 - Lauren Esserman poss candidate for leader
 - Judy: what level of expertise is sought for leaders
 - Kate: fairly high level of experience desired with specific knowledge in particular topics.
 - Judy: send thoughts or would Kate attend another meeting?
 - Rick: Would like to see an application to the RCF
 - Has concerns about advancing funds to staff at beginning of course
 - Would prefer to see leaders reimbursed
 - Mary: would prefer to reimburse after the 20 hour volunteer program.
 - Clarified that \$400 would be a tuition for an educational opp.
 - Judy: put Kate on the Feb meeting
 - Bob: requests an application to the RCC by way of a plan
- Richmond Town Plan review:
 - Select Board determined that there isn't time to prepare before the March town meeting.
 - Alison: What would it take for RCC to support the plan
 - Bob: After the December meeting, the RCC comments were sent to the planning commission, which Alison hadn't seen.
 - Mary: the Planning Commission felt that it needed more time to review
 - Alison: many people were not happy with the organization
 - In November, the members of the town plan committee divided up the work.
 - Jessica re-worked and prepared a draft that members
 - Lock Park and Alison felt that this draft could be moved forward
 - Needed to be able to apply for grants
 - At Dec. Planning Commission meeting, Alison asked whether the commission would vote if recommended changes were made.
 - Decision was that more time was required to make the changes and submit a new draft.
 - Changes have been submitted, received by Jessica and are being added.
 - Alison and Bob discussed the need for specific details where requesting that certain properties should be restricted, to clarify whether the town is "taking" rights from the property owner and may lead to lawsuits
 - Virginia: the planning commission needs to decide whether the plan must be "bland" or whether the PC is open to taking some stands
 - Will the RCC weigh in on these issues
 - Can't fill the action items with study projects
 - Bob: the RCC reviewed a previous ArrowWood study to identify choice scenery
 - RCC chose 3 of 8 to advance in the town plan.
 - Virginia: add a list of the existing studies to the "action items" and direct the PC to review those studies and follow them.
 - Mary: Studies that were completed may expire and if not acted on, then must be repaid.
 - Mary: Plan will be an 8-year plan, no longer a 5-year plan.
 - Virginia: Planning commission will be discussing format at the next meeting, Jan 14th.
 - Then at a later meeting the PC will be discussing each section, placing comments in the appropriate section.

- Requested that the RCC should then attend.
- Bob Heiser: Andrews Farm and Conservation Easement
 - At the Select Board meeting on the 16th, the Deed will be reviewed
 - Judy: how to honor the Andrews family?
 - Bob: consider naming.
 - Bob: Updated appraisal came out at \$700,000, while the transfer is being done for \$400,000
 - Judy: Once the easement is in place, difficult to ammend
 - Bob: while possible, it is difficult to ammend, little motivation to ammend.
 - VLT would not be willing to ammend in any way leading to a reduction of conservation protection.
 - Getting the final package to the Federal Gov by mid-March is required
 - Bob Low: consider adding "education" to the list of "At a minimum, the Management Plans shall include..."
 - Bob H: this list ensures that there is no risk of resource impact, and that if education is not represented, then there is a violation of the easement.
 - Comments should be submitted before Monday the 15th of January
 - At this point any changes should be fairly significant, since the lawyers will be reviewing all changes.
 - This document will stand in perpetuity.
- SE Group's Proposal to Expand the Scope of their work to cover the complete Management Plan
 - Proposal to SB for Conservation Fund should be made soon
 - Should ask to reserve ~\$4500 to cover the costs and the max amount
 - Meeting on Thursday, the 11th with ArrowWood, SEG and Guy
 - Finalize the expectations and staging costs.
- Motion to adjourn: 9:25pm