

RICHMOND CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes for Tuesday March 9, 2021 7:30-9:30 PM

Attendees:

RCC commissioners:

Bob Low, Judy Rosovsky, Max Krieger, Ibit Wright

Members of the public:

Bradley Holt to express concern for the Hillview parcel.

Colin Low to present application for CRF funds.

Wright Preston, on behalf of the ACF steering committee, to support Colin Low's CRF Fund request.

Public comments and introductions

Bradley Holt, in particular, spoke about his deep concern about the sale of the Atwood property and the future of that land, particularly on the north side of Hillview Road.

Appointed minute taker: Ibit Wright

February 2021 minutes were reviewed and approved.

Addition to Agenda:

Colin Low's request for CRF Fund for a bench and two picnic tables at the Andrews Community Forest

Bob Low recused himself from this discussion and the vote.

Colin explained that he is working toward being an Eagle Scout and, toward that end, he would like to coordinate and participate in building two picnic tables and a bench for the Andrews Community Forest (ACF). The picnic tables would go on the log landing and the bench is for the upper meadow. This project was developed with the cooperation of the ACF Committee.

Judy had shared with us in an email that it would be easier and faster for all concerned if the CRF could pay for the tables and bench, and not the ACF special funds.

Wright Preston spoke saying that Colin is the applicant for the CRF funds and had been working with the ACF Committee. Colin found a surveyor who affirmed the intended locations for the bench and tables are indeed within the ACF boundary. He confirmed that it is the desire of the ACF Committee to use CRF money for this \$500 conservation and recreation Eagle Scout Project.

Before this meeting Wright had forwarded to Judy, who forwarded to all of us, the ACF Committee meeting minutes from February 11, 2021, and Colin's DRB application on behalf of the Town and the ACF Committee. The application gives details on the tables and bench and their placement location. Wright also forwarded to us the Site Plan Application submitted to the ACF.

Judy acknowledged this is an uncommon way to seek funding, but Colin's proposal fits the A2 and A4 criteria for CRF funding. We determined there needs to be no sunset date for this project; we know Colin and the Boy Scouts plan to construct the tables and bench right away--by the end of March or early April.

Ibit asked about the requested round number of \$500. Colin confirmed the \$397 cost estimate for the project materials. The ACF Committee had agreed and then all of us on the RCC acknowledged the wisdom of the \$500 request to include a cushion of money, in case the material costs changed, to prevent the need for an additional funding request.

The vote was unanimous to recommend that the RCC recommend to the Selectboard that they support this request.

EAB Grant match - CRF application by Caitlin Littlefield of Richmond's EAB Task Force.

Judy presented an overview of Richmond's EAB Task Force proposal because Caitlin could not be present. RCC members had been sent their proposal via email.

Then Judy introduced the following motion to be approved. It was so moved by Bob and seconded by Max.

EAB CRF Motion 030921

The Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC) enthusiastically recommends approval of the proposal from the Richmond Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Task Force, dated March 7, 2021, requesting up to \$20,000 in Conservation Reserve Funds to carry out the first phase of its EAB Response Plan, to cover the required match for the attached grant received from the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry (UCF) Program, together with anticipated costs based on estimates from multiple ISA-certified tree service providers. to sunset three years from date of approval.

In doing so RCC recognizes responsiveness to CRF priorities most particularly relating to protection of natural resources, scenic and environmental values, together with the leveraging it has permitted to obtain the UCF Program.

Bob reiterated this is a cost-shared project required by the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry (UCF) Program also funding this. We set a sunset on this grant for 3 years, but we all recognize the EAB Task Force is eager to get going on the Response Plan activities.

The vote on the motion was unanimous to recommend that the RCC recommend to the Selectboard that they support this request.

Update on Gillett Pond - presented by Bob

- \$750K dam project cost still being used.
- The dam remains fully permitted.
- The State recently extended the dam permit by a year, via email.
- Dam construction will likely be next summer.
- Funds raised to date include private donor commitments and the \$150K and \$75K commitments from the Town Richmond and Town of Huntington, respectively, all totaling \$500K.
- Remaining to raise is \$250K.
- Richmond Land Trust (RLT) seeks to raise \$75K (of the \$250K) in the continued "Silent Phase."
- Then "Public Phase" will be \$175K.
- RLT will reapply or apply for an extension of the \$150K CRF proceeds to the RCC, then Select Board.

It was recognized that we have \$315K in the CRF. We wondered whether this includes the \$150K going to the Gillett Pond dam. Judy will ask Connie in the Town Office about this.

Judy wondered whether the Gillett Pond Committee needs to send a new CRF proposal, or a cover letter. We all agreed that a new proposal is unnecessary. A new sunset date can be automatically set after Wright Preston, on behalf of the Gillett Pond Committee, sends a cover letter to the RCC that officially updates us on the fundraising for the dam and the intended construction timeline. Then we'll recommend to the Select Board to approve the new sunset date of 3 years out.

Conservation Reservation Fund (CRF) – publicizing and scope

We're all pleased the use of Town taxes for the CRF was approved for another year.

Judy shared that she spoke with Brad Elliott. Together they reviewed the Vermont State statute on Conservation Reserve Funds. Towns are responsible for approving what their own CRF's can support, or not. The State cannot tell us how to use the funds.

Max emphasized that we as the RCC can only recommend approvals, or not, for CRF proposals. The Select Board then makes the final decision.

We briefly discussed that we might think about publicizing the CRF via FPF or *Times Ink* so that Richmond residents and committees know the variety of ways the CRF money may be used and how funding might be requested. We need to make important the sharing of information with townspeople about the CRF to encourage applications and so we can continue to have their support, particularly if we are going to have to continue to vote about it each Town Meeting.

Discussion about Concern over Fiddlehead Overharvesting

Judy shared that last year a Richmond resident reported to her seeing people with out-of-state license plates digging and taking fiddlehead ferns---whole fern plants. Over the years many people have seen people with huge bags of fiddleheads--clearly taking more than legally allowed. Judy wants us to look into posting signs on the properties where the desirable ferns grow to help educate and persuade people to follow the rules. She said Jon Kart has expressed a desire for help putting up signs. Someone suggested a "fern alert squad."

Bob asked whether this issue about monitoring and policing had been brought to the Select Board (SB). Judy said we might be able to get support from the State Fish and Wildlife Service. She will talk with Josh about getting time for this issue at a near future SB meeting.

Max and Ibit volunteered to post signs about the rules on fiddlehead collection.

Max said that when he asks the Richmond Trails Committee about fixing the deteriorating bridges on the River Trail off Cochran Road he will talk with them about posting signs there.

Concern over Buttermilk Plans in Richmond Village

Judy brought to our attention that the Buttermilk Phase 4 building and parking plans call for a parking lot in the 100-year flood zone on land that is most probably a wetland. (This is just east and over the bank above the post office parking lot.) Flood waters reaching that paved parking lot would then likely flow right down to the town office lot and flood the post office and town office building. We all looked at the Creamery's Phase 4 map and agreed this should be a big concern.

Judy said she will attend a DRB meeting to express concern on our behalf about the Creamery's plans.

Discussion about the Pending Sale and Future of the Atwood Property off Hillview Road

Judy explained the proposed sale of the Atwood Property to Hillview Heights LLC (Robert and Tammy Avonda of South Burlington). We looked at the map of the property at the south end of Hillview Road.

Bradley Holt expressed great concern for the proposed sale, parceling of the land into 9 lots, and building of houses. He thinks the Hillview residents and other abutting neighbors might well be interested in getting involved in the sale and future planning of this property.

Judy is an abutting landowner. She thinks the land is valuable as a wildlife corridor and as open space for farmland. She shared that Bob Heiser (Richmond resident and on staff of the Vermont Land Trust--VLT) has sent a letter to Josh Arneson. VLT can help guide Richmond in purchasing the land.

Bradley is open to helping people organize and fundraise to purchase the entire 270 acres, but he is most concerned about part of the property on the north side of Hillview Rd.

A DRB meeting about the sketch plan has already happened. We discussed the importance of Richmond residents commenting early and often about this project to the DRB. We decided we as the RCC want to be party to the DRB hearings about this sale.

Bob Low asked Bradley what he wants to have happen. Bradley replied that he hopes to see the involvement of many people who care about this property so there can be creative and successful conservation strategies to save it from development.

Bob thinks we ought to seek support from the Richmond Land trust and continued support from Bob Heiser.

Judy said she will communicate with the RLT and the VLT and will express our keen interest in weighing in with the DRB.

Green Up Day Planning and RCC Recruitment

We briefly discussed the fast-approaching Green-Up Day, and how we might communicate via FPF and/or *The Times Ink*. newspaper about our desire for help with leadership with Green-up Day efforts, and how this might be a way to yield additional people who might also be interested in joining us as RCC members. We need to get serious about seeking additional RCC members.

Ibit and Judy will work together to draft text for FPF and Times Inc. for these dual purposes.

Matters arising - No other matters arose.

Adjourned by 9:30

Minutes Respectfully submitted by Elizabeth Wright