

Memo Date: September 28, 2020
Memo to: Richmond Selectboard
Josh Arneson, Town Manger
CC: Ethan Tapper, County Forester
From: Andrews Community Forest Committee
Subject: ACF logging proceeds should be placed directly in the ACF Fund

Facts:

- As of June 30, 2019, the Town of Richmond had 26 separate fund accounts for 15 different town departments, committees or groups;
- The largest fund is the “Restricted for Highway Use” fund with a balance of \$688,275;
- The smallest fund is the “Recreation Tree Replacement” fund with a balance of \$237;
- The “Andrews Community Forest (ACF)” fund has a balance of \$24,696;
- These various town funds were established with the purpose of benefiting the Town of Richmond;
- The ACF Fund was established for the Town and initially funded by the Vermont Land Trust at the time the town acquired the forest;
- The ACF Funds were part of the VLT / Town of Richmond Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) dated 3/27/18, that states among many things:

“Whereas, the Vermont Land Trust raised \$30,295 to facilitate the Town’s stewardship and advance of the public use and enjoyment of the Land and the Richmond Town Forest (in addition to other donations that were raised to help fund the purchase of the land); Now therefore, VLT and the Town of Richmond...identity eligible uses for which funds ... can be employed... and...Fund overseen by the Richmond Selectboard in consultation with the Richmond Conservation Commission...

“The fund can be used for ... the Town’s stewardship of natural resources and public recreation opportunities at the Property: Planning, design, construction, maintenance, ...of visitor parking areas, public access points, ... design, construction of trails, Timber inventories, natural heritage assessments, habitat improvements, maintenance of roads, and other infrastructure costs.”

- The ACF Forest Management Plan, signed by the SB and Ethan Tapper in August 2018, states on page 22 (underlined): Any and all proceeds from timber harvested at the ACF should be used towards the maintenance of the ACF, its health and its recreational opportunities. It is recommended that at least 50% of the proceeds be specifically dedicated towards wildlife habitat enhancement, non-commercial forest stand improvement work, forest road stabilization and improvement and invasive species control.
- The upcoming forest management project at the ACF may generate between \$15-\$25,000 in revenues for the Town between September 2020 and December 2021 (with a break between March and August 2021);
- Forest management occurs infrequently, and it is unlikely that any future revenue will be generated from the ACF for 15-20 years;

- One of the main goals of the forest management project at the ACF is education and demonstration. There is a significant demonstration benefit to reinvesting resources and revenues generated from this project back into the ACF to showcase responsible forest stewardship. This demonstrates both a direct community benefit to the ongoing forest management work, and also a model for landowners to reinvest revenues from their own forest management projects into the long term health of their forests;
- At the 8/17/20 Richmond Selectboard meeting, during the discussion of the forest management contract, one Selectboard member raised the issue of having the proceeds from the forest management contract be deposited into the Town's general fund for general purposes. It was also stated that the ACF committee could then submit annual budget request to the Selectboard for review and approval, which would be subject to voter budget approval;
- ACF funds can be used to leverage other matching funds and grants in the range of 75% to 80%, with combined proceeds to be used for projects such as invasive plant management, wildlife habitat enhancement, trail design and ecological review of trail designs. Other funding sources include the Town's Conservation Reserve Fund, State and Federal grants and private donations;
- The ACF Committee has at least two near-term projects which will significantly improve access, public usage and ecosystem health at the ACF, but which will incur significant costs:
 - o Improving and expanding the ACF's recreational trail network. Due to a policy in the ACF's Management Plan to establish well-designed, well-sited recreational trails which avoid negative impacts to the ACF's ecology and sensitive/rare natural communities, the first step in this process will be issuing RFP's for trails designers and consulting ecologists. The rough cost of this project will be \$9-\$12,000;
 - o Also prescribed in the ACF's Forest Management Plan is significant invasive exotic plant management, the rough cost of which is likely to be around \$15-20,000 over 2 years.

ACF Committee Request of the Selectboard: For the reasons outlined above, the ACF Committee unanimously voted at its 9/28/20 meeting to request that the Richmond Selectboard authorize all proceeds from the ACF forest management contract with Brown's Logging and Maple LLC. be placed in the established ACF fund, with proceeds to be used for the ACF, overseen by the Selectboard, with consultation of Conservation Commission and ACF Committee, and not placed in the general fund for general purposes.