

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Regular Meeting

Agenda

March 27, 2023

6:00 to 8:20 PM

Richmond Town Center Meeting Room, 3rd Floor – 203 Bridge Street, Richmond, VT

Meeting available online or by phone as well

Attending Committee members: Daniel Schmidt, Nick Neverisky, Chase Rosenberg, Amy Powers (taking minutes), Cecilia Danks, Jim Monahan, Melissa Wolaver; Jesse Crary (on Zoom, chairing) (not present: Caitlin Littlefield)

Attending Public (all via Zoom): Ethan Tapper, Ian Stokes, Nancy Zimny, Melissa Levy, Bob Low, Jon Kart

Agenda Request by Ian: Add a timeframe for the public comment period on the revised management plan. The heading of Feb 27 minutes is the date as Feb 27, 2022. To be revised.

Minutes approved: Cecilia moves to accept Feb 27 minutes with revision stated above. ALP second. Approved by all.

Ethan Tapper, proposing 2 projects on the ACF, both already funded: Received funding from Habitat Stamp Program, Dept Fish and Wildlife, to improve habitats. This summer Ethan will be working in various Chittenden Cty sites. Both of these are extensions of work already done, and are already prescribed in the management plan. Ethan would supervise both. Ethan will tell MWFarm. Also will do education about this and Nick offered to post on town site.

1) Invasive plant control at ACF. \$5k for invasive species south of the powerlines - left side of the road and below the landing. Could leverage this money for additional money from the Richmond Conservation Fund for the invasive species control to make funding go farther. Invasives timing: anytime June - Sept. Jon Kart will work on the Conservation Fund application, and shouldn't affect the timeline much. Pesticides would be administered by Vermont Coverts as a contractor. Might also work with Bob Hines, VT habitat restoration.

2) Crop tree release, habitat improvement--going back into areas we worked on in 2020-21 to release oak trees and their delicious acorns for critters to munch. Specifically targeting White Oak. Process: cut small trees, open crowns, leave trees on the ground. \$5K granted for that. Best chance of tree release mast crop stuff would be early June because could hire a good logger before they're busy. Cecilia: how does it intersect with Abenaki? No black ash. Mostly cutting small versions of diseased beech, aspen, red maple. Invasive removal will be mostly chemical, backpack sprayer, mostly cut stump, some foliar. One trail closed for 24 hours.

Committee agrees this work is covered in MP so the selectboard does not need to be consulted. Cecilia moves to support Ethan Tapper's recommendation to do White oak release thinning this spring and Invasive species removal in the lower portion of the forest this summer, and it's in accordance with the existing management plan. Chase seconds. All in favor.

Prep for public engagement meeting this Wednesday:

- Agenda Overview: Melissa will MC the event and keep timing. Nick will have a primary role in slideshow presentation with a few slides by Cecilia. Timing added to the first slide.
- **Panelists:** Cecilia will sit on panel to help with questions on the Abenaki part. No separate Abenaki panelist. and/or Scott. Will panelists be able to hang around and be in the smaller groups? Yes.
 - Jesse: Our purpose for this meeting is tied directly to the proposed revised MP. So panelists are those involved in the decisions. Group affirmed that the role of the panelists is not to prepare remarks, but just be available to answer questions. Raw list of questions was provided in advance. Confirmed Panelists:
 - Arrowwood: Aaron
 - VLT: Rebecca
 - Abenaki piece: Scott and/or Cecilia
 - ACF: Caitlin
 - Hinesburg Town Forest: Pat Mainer (having dealt with analogous challenges as the forest has evolved)
- **Discussion of the public's pre-submitted questions:**
 - Discussion of how to include all questions and whether to summarize what's been submitted or ask them directly. Too many questions to ask each directly, and also there is redundancy. Daniel: The tone of many is not inquiry-oriented but snarky or leading or judgy (example: what's the ecological benefit of letting dogs run free?) Nick: some are almost a nasty tone. Cecilia, maybe people should know that it's being presented to us in this toned way? So people feel heard. MW: Tone was not constructed to get at respectful dialogue. ALP: We could upfront say that some of the question tones were changed to promote more inquiry and dialogue and respectful space and leave it at that.
 - Decision to make an initial effort to lump them and cull redundant questions and reframe the question tone as needed for a more productive, curious dialogue that allows for diverse perspectives; and at the intro to the panel to state that we noticed the tone and framed questions for productive dialogue.
 - Daniel thematically organizes, and then other ACF to support in coming up with the questions that encapsulate each. (Chase, Melissa supporting; Cecilia will take indigenous theme) Task: make one question out of all the ones you receive. Ideally something like 8 themes/questions total so we have time for each question and also time at the end for people who don't feel their question was represented, or thought of new questions. Some questions can be prepared in advance by panelists with easy answers, some left more open.
- **Review of Open House Content Blown Up:** Melissa W. shared the maps.
- **Opening/mingling role at 5:45pm:** everyone should be on board to help people get oriented, look at the maps and items, get food, talk about the process, and be sitting and focusing by 6pm.

- **Review of PowerPoint and Proposed ACFC Presenters**
 - Cecilia made 4 slides, Nick and Cecilia are presenting

- **Review Break Out Session Process**
 - Discussion figuring out the way to structure the break out sessions: weighing in on the revisions...or rose, bud, thorn (excited about, what threat you see, opportunities)...give people thinking time, to write down how they're feeling, weighing in on how they feel about each area...too far, far enough, and why...having the sessions come out with recommendations for the MP revisions; Do people agree and if not where they'd go; committee members can answer more nuanced questions about the plan
 - Decision: small group sessions will start with the facilitator giving ground rules, then inviting folks to reflect and write on paper prompt sheets if so desired. Then go around and share reflections as noted on the paper prompt sheet. Share reactions to what you've heard, questions remaining. Facilitator: give voice to all, notice quieter people.
 - Decision to create a Facilitator Cheat Sheet so members understand the process/role to play during breakout groups (Melissa Levy will do)
 - Decision to make a paper feedback form, Jim creating: Name (optional) Town, Comments, Celebrations, Concerns about tonight's engagement. Jim will make this as a Google form for the live stream watchers to complete and submit, and Nick will post the link to that Google Form. ***We need to tell people on camera during the event that they can do this and they can find the link on the website.***

- **Timeline/next steps for public comment**
 - As a committee we'll provide a final proposed MP for selectboard, that will occur within a SB public hearing. A month in advance folks would know there's a hearing on this topic.
 - What are committee's next steps immediately following the hearing? Melissa will collate and bring together the material we receive from the meeting to help us refine what we're getting out, ideally for the end of April. Committee will review all the input after the public meeting.

G: Follow Up Items from Last Meeting (5 minutes)

RCC Panel Discussion Report – Daniel/Melissa

H: Forestry Stewardship Program for Children (Scouts of America/Richmond) - Brief discussion of Scout master asking Amy if we had anyone to do programs with the scouts so they could get to know ACF. Jesse will add to the next available agenda (once we're out of the MP updates push) for the committee to get into the picture of how to get the younger generation engaged in, enjoying, and invested in the town forest, including this specific request.

I: Public Comment (5 minutes) No public comments.

J: Scheduling of April ACFC Meeting: usual time, April 24, 6pm. School break week but should work anyway.

**** PLEASE NOTE – MATERIALS RELATED TO THESE AGENDA ITEMS (IF ANY) WILL BE POSTED AND AVAILABLE ON THE ANDREWS COMMUNITY FOREST WEBPAGE AT <http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/richmond-town-forest/>**