

Andrews Community Forest

Monday, April 24, 2023 – 6 pm – minutes -- Zoom

Present: Jesse Crary (chair), Cecilia Danks), Amy Powers, Caitlin Littlefield, Nick Neverisky, Daniel Schmidt, Melissa Wolaver (not present: Chase Rosenberg, Jim Monahan)

Public: Nancy Zimny (remote), Jeanette Malone (remote), Daniel Wolfson (remote), Brad Elliot (remote)

VELCO: Devon Snyder (arborist and land manager, VELCO), Jacob Watrous (sp? access manager, VELCO), Elizabeth Morris (VELCO)

A: Roll Call, confirmation of quorum and appointment of minute taker

Appointed minute taker: CL

B: Additions or deletions to the agenda

None

C: Approval of March 27, 2023 minutes

No discussion of minutes; DS moves to approve; CL seconds; vote: 7Y

D: VELCO report re: maintenance of powerline poles, road improvements, veg management

- Every 4 years do maintenance in this path
 - Danger tree removal in ROW edge
 - 5 mature trees on ACF property to be removed
 - July - sometime this fall, 1-2 days
 - will put up signage
 - Integrated vegetation management, which includes but is not exclusively herbicide
 - Mix of herbicide, manual removal, mowing, etc.
 - “Ultra-low volume” glyphosate product applied w backpack sprayers to “incompatible spp”
 - custom mix for application to deciduous trees
 - active ingredient is glyphosate, also escort and polaris which “assist” in the uptake of that ingredient; thinvert is the “carrier” which is an oil that holds product to the leaf – don’t have to drench the plant
 - birch, maple, ash, oak – any tree spp tall enough to reach wires when mature
 - < quart herbicide per acre
 - crews certified to apply

- no human/dog activity should be endangered
 - July - Sept over the course of 1-2 days
 - Can also target invasive plants under ROW permit
 - cut-stump application as an alternative?
 - labor intensive, usually near places where aesthetics are more of an issue
 - They're in touch w Maple Wind farm for adjacent property; Devon will reach out to confirm that where they have easement over ACF and may graze cows won't require special consideration (eg given any organic certification)
 - Comms w public
 - FPF,
 - Any Qs: Devon Snyder: 802-345-6075
- Jacob: access improvement
 - Will use landing as staging ground
 - Structures to be worked on thru fall; prep work in May - June
 - 104 full replacement
 - 106 replacing cross-arm
 - Need to access structure on far side of ravine
 - must cut stream down to lessen slope, install blocks, then lay down temporary timber mats (there all summer); some materials left on site as construction pad
 - restoration
 - seed/mulch road
 - reinstall waterbars
 - 700 ft worth of new road
- Seeking permanent access easement
 - VELCO would buy rights to always/forever use this access road to get to equipment and structures
 - \$6500 is approximate
 - This would help avoid, for example, transfer of ACF ownership and removal of existing access road, build or leachfield on top of it, etc.
 - JC: how could someone impinge upon easement right as it is?
 - This would be site-specific. VELCO still maintains easement of access, but this would stipulate that the road corridor could not have anything built on it
 - CD: who's responsible for maintenance of that road?
 - VELCO will maintain/fix when it's using it but otherwise not coming back in regularly to maintain; if there's a big storm event, usu it's the landowner that maintains
 - CD: only concern is related to plausible environmental impacts – eg major storm event leads to creation of vernal pools w T&E spp
 - NN: can we install a trail that, for example, goes across
 - yes, no problem. It's structure, stone wall, etc.
 - We'd need to say yes to this by the end of the year but then this offer will expire
 - JC: what's physical work required for permanent easement
 - Surveyors would put in benchmarks, develop new plat, have town sign, cut check (VELCO covers that surveying)
 - No broadening of the road
 - typical language is 25' from road to ROW
 - NN: Do we need to engage VLT?

- Yes VLT CE has relevant language
 - Grantors is Andrews Family
 - Grantees is VLT/HCB
 - CL: Flagging for future consideration: might Maple Wind use these improved roads (access, VELCO) in the future rather than cutting thru neighbors?

E. Discussion and review of facilitator report on public meeting feedback

- Scheduling subsequent mtg
- What's our process for
- NN: want input from the Selectboard in terms of following the mgmt plan
- CD: does not take our mandate as to implement mgmt plan as written but rather to advise; sees MP as guidance
- JC: envisions us ACFC as subcommittee of Selectboard so are we shirking responsibility by not setting forth recommendation?
- MW: we're taking temperature of SB
- CL: want to maximize likelihood that SB accepts plans
- JC: maybe value to having pre-public hearing w SB to elaborate on process, challenges we're navigating, essentially a preview of where we stand
- DS: could test multiple alternatives – eg plan as is, plan as it could be (eg only one trail as connector, no loops, etc.), and other alternatives. Beta test our product internally before bringing it to the SB
- AP: in most extreme hearing from others that we need to go back to the drawing board and engage other experts, not just tinker on edges; so there's concern about trialing multiple options as being flaky w it?
- CD: need not just a map but also a trail mgmt plan – how do we build it out, how to we maintain it, what's monitoring, when are closures; couldn't vote for what we have now without having a trail mgmt plan
- JC: envisioned this revision as almost bare-bones to advance and get to the public engagement. Would like to see how collectively we feel about the strength of the product after we get into the details of trail mgmt. Wants ACFC to stand up unanimously at SB
- DS: how would we present full product to the SB but then also having accompanying trail mgmt approach that may allow for some change (eg phasing in of trails). CD: don't see this as incompatible. CL: strongly support phasing in approach.
- JC: we already know what some of the feedback would be at a public hearing and it will be strongly dependent upon, for example, whether or not we advertise map
- NN: some concern about the phase approach b/c 1) there's some data we can gather but we won't be able to meaningfully gather data on wildlife impacts and 2) continuing this process in which we have essentially immovable grps of the community. More open to phased approach if there are some very clear things we're going to measure that say "if - then".
- JC: what are the things we haven't spoken to yet in the mgmt plan that could help us get at a framework for a trail mgmt plan
- DS: will look for trail mgmt plan templates

F. MMU Day of Service

- JC: May 18 May be too late to get anything on the books this year, but good to discuss for future years
- DS: at bottom of Urbanik Way, it's missing puncheon
- AP: clear-out Urbanik Way w rakes?
- DS: BMPs are to remove leaves off trail b/c the more organics you have on top of mineral soil the muddier and slipperier it gets and people cut off the trail; VYCC could prob provide rakes
- CL: could do invasives removals – prob need to engage Jon Kart or Ethan Tapper
- MW: would be glad to lead students
- JC: will send email to see if there are still openings

G. Bird habitat and forestry walk in collab w RCC

- DS: at RCC mtg, excitement around momentum generated by wildlife/conservation panel discussion. Energy to do more community engagement but not around trails per se. What about just a community walk to look at the patch-cuts, coupled w a birding walk. Has contacted Ethan and someone at Audubon for a walk some upcoming Sunday in May before full leaf-out. Will keep committee posted on dates/details. Will alert RCC to ACF being interested in formally co-hosting

H. Committee member re-appointment

- AP, CL, NN all seeking re-appointment
- CD: did anyone else contact the town to throw hat in the ring – the town advertised
 - These three letters were the only ones received, so led to believe that nobody else did
- AP: are there any term limits?
 - Nobody can recall anything related in the bylaws
- CL: reminder that we have specified in the revised mgmt plan that we'd reach out to local tribal members in the case of future openings
- CD: moves that we support the reappointment of Amy, Caitlin, Nick; DS seconded; 7Y