

Andrews Community Forest

Monday, July 31, 2023 – 6 pm – minutes – Zoom

Present: Nick Neverisky (chair), Cecilia Danks, Caitlin Littlefield, Daniel Schmidt, Ian Stokes, Melissa Wolaver, Julian Portilla, Chase Rosenberg (remote)

Public: Nancy Zimny (remote), Paul Hauf (remote), Chelsye Brooks (remote), Bob Low (remote)

A: Roll Call, confirmation of quorum and appointment of minute taker (2 minutes)

Appointed minute taker: CL

B: Additions or deletions to the agenda (1 minute)

Resignation

C: Approval of June 2023 minutes

No discussion of minutes; CL moves to approve pending several spelling corrections; MW seconds; vote: 8Y

D: Resignation

NN and CL are resigning; public explanation given via FPF

E: VELCO

CL will need someone to hand-off VELCO comms after SB mtg Aug 7 in which the permanent access easement will be considered. MW volunteers.

F: Trail committee appointment

Trail committee assessment of declined appointment at SB: very unprofessional. Didn't even vote on Paul. Expressed views on ACF in general and dismissed him. No precedent for that. Trails committee co-chairs seeking alternative and equitable process.

IS: troubling communications suggest there needs to be more face-to-face

CD: worth watching SB video of declining Paul's nomination?

JP, CL: yes

Paul Hauf: beyond feeling personally backed into a corner, feels that SB was out of touch with what is happening on the ACFC.

G: Management Plan sub-committee

next meeting

H: Trail Stewardship Plan sub-committee report-out

CD: We need to decide what to do about farm road, among other frequently used forest roads? If we want un-roaded areas, then we need to block them off.

DS: What's our role as the committee? Prefer not to have "no" everywhere. Think it's ok if folks still use roads, trails

MW: May be faced with question of trail mileage if we don't officially close or mark

CD: Need to meet our management goals (eg saying that we have certain areas we won't have trails). Not doing our job if we don't offer guidance (also totally understand not wanting to have no and red tape everywhere). If they're truly being used as trails then we need to be including it in mileage.

CL: Which roads? western road going up to wetland, farm road, logging road Ethan uses. Can we just include on map "maintained trail" and "unmaintained trail" and that the hope is that ppl would use trail network and that we're hoping to minimize concentrated traffic elsewhere.

CD: We need to explain why.

IS: map at kiosk indicating allowable uses

NN: Suspects once there are trails, folks would likely use those more than the overgrown

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CL: Other than proposed trails and where present-day VAST trail connects, designate all other areas of the forest as trail-free. This strengthens our recent addition in the MP that essentially says "it is our expectation that the proposed trail network constitutes the extent of trails to be developed". This specifically calls for reserves and is consistent with what we've heard from the community.

JP: supports, esp given small property; it's neat and tidy

NN: for palatability of getting this passed, may be worth including

MW: supports – we need more neat and tidy

DS: potential connection to VYCC using VAST – make sure we retain language that accommodates that

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CL: Dana's climb as foot-traffic only, as well as spaghetti trails (Rocky View and Cascade). Not only responding to calls for non-bike trails but also because terrain in that area would be tricky for putting in bike-able trails.

DS: User conflict is minimized on upper trails, too, as one would climb up East Climb and descend on Hemlock Valley; lots of signage, too. And we can build trail in a manner than means people are forced to scrub speed

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DS: Kingdom Trail does seem to allow eBikes – need to update language in TSP.

CR: Let's just eliminate mention to Kingdom Trail.

JP: Remove the word "compels" – easement doesn't do that.

IS: Is requiring people w mobility needs to contact that ACFC to ask for permission or at least alert – is that inconsistent w spirit of ADA?

JP: Seek counsel on what's permitted

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CL: Proposing closing upper trails during deer wintering as well as during deer hunting season.

CD: Back in 2018, hunters didn't want any hunting closures. Made it clear they just wouldn't hunt deer if there were recreationalists up there all the time. Therefore didn't decide to parse use in the past.

MW: In effect, upper trails would be closed Oct thru April if we abide by hunting season closures and deer wintering closures. Those early closures are

NN: Increasing deer harvest rate could improve forest regeneration. That would call for keeping people out. Some community members also don't want people up there at all. Closures can achieve that

DS: Need to be clear, not ambiguous about closures. eg "this is closed to everyone but hunters" to help avoid potential for user conflict.

CL: Everything above powerlines closed during regular deer season, East Climb, Hemlock Valley, and upper Middle Connector are closed during deer wintering.

JP: That means East Climb, Hemlock Valley, and upper Middle Connector are closed for regular deer season thru April 1.

NN: call it rifle season; PH: yes, use rifle

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CL: non-hunting recreation not allowed north of powerlines?

DS: trails below the powerline are very limited; let's remember how much this is going to limit headlamp-based recreation in the fall if we shut down nocturnal recreation?

CL: is it sufficient that we have closures for hunting season

CD: Can we leave nocturnal uses open for special occasions? eg bioblitz

NN: Just bound it by hours?

CD: Can say "discouraged" not "prohibited" and give reason why – wildlife.

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CL: propose to keep dogs on leash at all times – for user conflict and because we know they’re enormously disruptive to wildlife

MW: MP subcommittee went one step farther and said no dogs above powerlines

DS: supports that

CL: none north of powerlines may be very hard to swallow, esp as that’s where the only foot-traffic only trails.

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Other items to be continued...

I: Future committee

IS: We need to identify new chair

DS: next mtg prob has to be entirely devoted to rebuilding the committee

CR: wants equitable process across town committees to avoid politicization; volunteers to facilitate next committee mtg and distribute an agenda.

CL: SB is looking to change our committee membership appointment process. May want to check in with SB first before deciding next steps.

CD: SB should understand intention for our existing appointment process in the bylaws

DS: meet in interim and then we can go to the SB.

J: Public comment

Nancy Zimny: don’t know how aware people are that animals use this land 24 hours a day and they became crepuscular/nocturnal because of us. So when I hear that people want to change word from “permitted” to “discouraged” or they want to get out after work – please try to remember the context in which we find ourselves today. We need to support biodiversity and nature not to give humans more recreational opportunities in terms of time of day but whenever we can to protect our own future as well as the animals. I think that gets lost in a lot of the specifics here. Really struck me when discussing that humans just want more recreation time.

Meeting adjourned

Next meeting: August 14th