

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Minutes of Regular Meeting

January 27 2025 6:00 to 8:00

Present: ACFC: Ian Stokes; co-chair, Melissa Wolaver; Cecilia Danks, Brad Elliott, Sam Pratt, Wright Preston, Chase Rosenberg (co-chair), Julian Portilla

Town of Richmond: Tyler Machia, Richmond Zoning Administrator

Public: Kit Emery, Jeanette Malone, Dan Wolfson, Nancy Zimny

Wright Preston: appointed timekeeper. Julian Portilla: appointed minute taker.

Meeting called to order at 6.05 by Ian Stokes

December minutes

- Approved without amendments

January 27, 2025 agenda discussed

- Discussion and clarification of how the agenda was built
- Discussion about whether a motion has to be submitted in writing prior to a meeting. It appears not.
- No amendments to the agenda.

RCC update

- No RCC meetings since the last AFC meeting. No updates.

Trails committee report

- Discussion with Richmond Mountain Trails about Trailforks app (TF).
- Questions about how much control the town or the committee would have over what is published in TF.
- Proposal to bring the discussion about how to update ACF trails on TF.

Vacancies on the committee

- Several seats are coming open.

- RTC recommended Chase remain on the committee. He has not decided whether he will remain on the committee.
- Sam is the RCC committee rep.
- Brad is the RCC recommended nomination.

Discussion on updated memos by Tyler Machia

- On enforcement: Absent a zoning complaint, there is not an active search by the town for shutting down unpermitted trails on private property.
- On how to define a trail:
 - Looking through definitions in current town relevant text. 2.4 of the zoning regulations allows for trails anywhere BUT there is nothing in that section that mentions what zoning regs apply.
 - There is a definition of “open space” in section 7 that appears to apply to the ACF. But there are exceptions to open spaces if there are Conditional Uses.
 - ACF has Conditional Use (because it changed from ag to recreational) and therefore other regs apply, such as restriction on development or construction on land with grades over 20% is required to have engineering plans (with erosion and sedimentation controls).
 - Is a trail considered construction? If there is modification to the landscape with manmade structures, (stairs, berms, bridges, gravel) it’s likely a construction. There is no universal list of what constitutes “construction”, each item would be considered on its own merits.
 - Trails on slopes below 20% are much easier to approve.
- On what steps are needed to create and develop trails
 - ACF makes a proposal to select board (SB).
 - SB then decides whether they want ACF to submit the application for a site plan or if they wish to do it themselves.
 - Submits to Tyler Machia who then reviews:
 - Do you have a site plan?
 - Is it made by a professional?
 - If not, did you apply for a waiver?
 - Does it have proper buffers?
 - Does it interact with any of the erosion and sedimentation restrictions?
 - Tyler puts it on the agenda with at least 20 days notice.
 - Goes to Development Review Board (DRB).
 - DRB makes a decision, usually approves.
 - Or issues a continuation (maybe because slopes, erosion control, public scrutiny) and asks for further information. Tyler Machia would communicate what is needed to AFC.

- If DRB approves they have 45 days to make a decision. Decisions can be made in public or executive session.
 - 30-day appeal period.
- Brown's Court took 4 months, give or take.
- Powerline trails are in the 35% range. But because it is pre-existing, they can be used.
- Trails over 20% need an erosion and sedimentation control plan prepared by a licensed engineer.
- Tyler Billingsley is a licensed engineer who has worked for the town in the past.
- How do the regs here affect the abutting trails?
 - If it's on private property and recreation is incidental to the property, there are not regulations that apply.
 - VYCC is conditional use because they're not private property.

Preparation for communication with planning commission

- Need two volunteers to interface with Virginia and Keith to share information
 - Brad and Sam will interface.
 - Will review the town list to see what is relevant for AFC. There is a preliminary list generated through correspondence between Ian and Virginia from Dec 26 2024.

Discussion of big picture direction of the AFC

- Shall we wait to complete the MP before discussing a Trails Plan (TP) or shall we do them in tandem?
 - Some believe we can work on both in parallel. Others note that MP objectives and content won't change with the new version and so can design a trail plan that aligns with goals. All new information to be included in the new MP should be weighed when creating the new TP.
 - Others believe we have to wait for a new version of the management plan to more closely guide the decision-making process about how to make a trail plan. There is new scientific information to include in the management plan.
 - Others note that it would be wise to consult with the SB prior to developing an MP or a TP. They may have other considerations than AFC such as liability. They may give guidance about how they want the committee to go about it.
 - Perhaps can make a two-phase plan, one that integrates new information into the plan and proposes non-mechanized trails first, perhaps up to the ridge.
 - Some think we need more information from engineers on erosion and sediment control to understand what's involved including costs and such.

Comments from public

- There are specific wildlife concerns that need to be taken into consideration such as habitat and migration patterns. A great deal has changed between the first MP and the revised proposal. New MP helps to define what minimal impact is. There should be no TP until MP is completed.
- Building a house without a plan creates lots of problems. And by the same logic, need a plan before we put a trail plan in place.

Structuring a consultation with the SB

- AFC will write to the SB with an update on what we've done and where we are in the process.
- Seek guidance from SB on whether to complete MP before including a TP or including the TP in the MP to submit to them.
- AFC members will seek to find a licensed engineer who can speak to integrating erosion and sediment control plans into a TP and who could perhaps offer estimates or ranges or what kind of budgetary implications such a trail would have.
- Chase and Ian will write an email to request clarification from the SB to this effect.
- Chase and Ian will attempt to find a licensed engineer to inform the committee about TP options

Next meetings:

- Feb 24 meeting is cancelled
- Special sessions called for Feb 10, March 10
- March 24th is next regularly scheduled meeting
- Each AFC member will make comments to the draft MP circulated for Jan 27 meeting. Members (and public) will send to Ian for integration.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25