

## **Andrews Community Forest Committee Minutes**

### **Regular Meeting**

**April 28 2025 6:00pm to 8:30pm**

Attendees: Melissa Wolaver , Ian Stokes (co-chair), Brad Elliott(co-chair), Chase Rosenberg, Sam Pratt, James Cochran, Julian Portilla, Cecilia Dank (online)

Minutes taker: James Cochran

Time keeper: Chase

Public: Sonya Masterson, Chelsey Brooks

- **Minutes from March 24 approved**
- **Management Plan draft due on May 22<sup>nd</sup>**

#### **Updates from Conservation Commission**

- Conservation commission would like to weigh in on management plan. Sam feels this can happen concurrently with the selectboard's review.
- Conversation on how finished/polished the management plan is for the June 2 selectboard meeting.

#### **Updates from trails committee (Chase)**

- No updates. Last meeting was a work day on river trail.

Public Comment Period:

- None

Consideration of applications to serve:

- Ian pointed out that there are 3 vacancies. Chase and Melissa's plus 1 unfilled. Ian pointed out that there are 3 vacancies because Chase, Cecilia's and Melissa's three-year terms are up, without re-applications. One vacancy is assigned to a member of the RTC.
- Cecilia was looking into whether she should reapply. She missed the deadline to apply, but could still reapply given a lack of volunteers. One vacancy is assigned to the Richmond Trails Committee
- Sonya Masterson is present and has applied to serve on the committee.
- Sonya spoke about her moving to Richmond recently (the old Andrew Farmhouse) from Winooski and has helped in various roles with small government in her past and is excited to be a part of the process.
- Julian asks about prior work in small government and familiarity with management plans

- Sonya feels that the current character of the ATF should be preserved and any changes thoughtfully considered. Keep it as unchanged as possible given peoples ever changing ideas.
- Chase points out the ATF is the town's biggest tract of publicly accessible land and many townspeople don't have their own private forest area for recreation. Committee members should be considerate of what the needs of the community might be.
- Brad: How do we find balance between governing premises... which are: protect forest function, provide recreation, conserve open space values, and do so through public governance. Recreation and ecology are in tension. This tension is built into the conservation easement.
- James motions to recommend Sonya, Sam seconds, everyone is in favor.
- Ian will communicate Sonya's recommendation to the select board

## **Reminder of Code of Ethics: The second part has to be done after June 1st**

### **Management plan edits**

- **Ecology section**
  - Ian: has made a structural change to the draft management plan between the last meeting and this one. There is now an A section and a B section.
  - Brad: Last meeting was background for ecology, this meeting should be actual ecology goals/ objectives.
  - Sam: noticed that the Appendix is confusing, the ecology appendix has duplicate info. Ian will remove 6 pages from appendix that are duplicates.
  - Ian: Looking at ecology recommendations/comments in green and black text which is what has been there all along.
  - Mellissa pointed out that the "black" text has been changed and has not "been there all along"
  - Chase has issue with B5.3.2, specifically that biking should be only below the power lines.
  - Ian: Can we make changes "midstream" (during the period after the management plan is set)?
  - Conversation about using the VAST trail, or power lines as a demarcation for permitted/restricted uses.
  - Sam: dispersed will always be allowed since it's in the easement. Sam feels that VAST is a better border than powerlines, has more flexibility.
  - Julian brought up that perhaps the management plan could be more general, and have additional regulations that spell out specifics as needed much like the relationships between laws and regulations.
  - Ian, Should we use the VAST trail as a demarcation, and should we use this concept of demarcation?
  - Julian: The easement allows for mechanized recreation, we want to recreate in the forest, this is allowed in the easement. The vast trail,
  - Sam: The current text calling out the VAST trail is trying to use the science to it's fullest effect. "Here are the inappropriate places to put trails."

- Julian: Where trails are placed has a temporal effect as well as spatial. There could be strict controls on when trails are used, not just where they go.
- Ian would encourage a motion to include the VAST demarcation to be included in the draft for the selectboard meeting
- Cecilia would like to not see the vast trail as a hard demarcation. Would like to see a more rigorous set of guidelines for how and where trails are placed.
- Melissa, B5.4.2 line 7 hemlock stand specificity: 70% canopy might be too specific for the management plan. This type of comment is too specific for MP
- Brad: the VAST or Powerline demarcation is a practical tool to accomplish the compromise of ecology vs recreation.
- Cecilia: Reminds committee that SE group felt that properly constructed trails would be better (less environmentally impactful) than skid roads.
- Jim makes a motion to not set a demarcation line in the management plan and to seek alternative language for locating in the ACF.
- Chase seconds
- Cecilia questions if the vast demarcation is now off the table?
- Julian feels that the committee should come back with a specific proposal for how to site trails.
- Sam: Sam motions that we postpone this conversation till next meeting
- Jim withdraws motion
- Melissa requests that the original text in the recreation section be included in the packet
- Sam feels that we should focus on creating a set of guidelines for trail building instead of focusing on the management plan.
- Agenda is set for next meeting on May 19
  - Melissa moves to adjourn
  - Sam seconded