

Andrews Community Forest Committee
Meeting Minutes - Monday, Nov. 10, 2025
Town Center

Attending

ACFC members: Sam Pratt (co-chair), Brad Elliott (co-chair), Sonya Mastersen, Ian Stokes, Jim Cochran, Dan Wolfson (via Zoom), Julian Portilla

Public: Tyler Merritt (via Zoom)

Video recording and transcript:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/oeV51s8KCe2nmHloC9RfjIEqkpebhcWpKUC9KZQSYzz_8BRqi7D-O0rsHBtEBYGf.KvNm6b57kZnCZhWt?startTime=1762815740000

Passcode: RD#mq7@S

Committee business

Julian was appointed timekeeper and Brad the minute-taker.

Ian moved and Julian seconded approval of the October 27th minutes.

Town Plan

Ian noted that the Planning Commission has posted on its web page a first draft of Richmond's 2026 Town Plan for public comment. Earlier he emailed to ACFC members part of the plan focused on the Committee. Brad noted that a public hearing of the full draft would be held on Nov. 19, with further discussions by the Planning Commission in December and the final version due in January in time for it to be warned for a vote on Town Meeting Day.

Posting of ACF Trails on Trailforks

The Committee discussed inaccurate postings on the Trailforks of ACF trail names and their status. Ian pointed out that Trailforks is publicly maintained and thus subject to error. Tyler Merritt explained the Richmond Trail Committee's role in communicating trail conditions on Trailforks. Jim volunteered to use his role updating trail conditions at Cochran's Ski Area forest on Trailfinder to also take on that task for the ACF. Jim and Ian will get together to correct the information and set up a way to keep Trailfinder postings about ACF accurate and timely. They will also ask Duncan to change the link on the ACF website to go directly to the relevant Trailfinder page. Sam will put an update of the topic on the agenda for our Nov. 24 meeting.

Wet Spots on the VAST Trail

Brad reported that bikes are creating ruts on a wet section of the VAST trail, suggesting that we temporarily close that section to biking, and that our trail map reflect that. Tyler noted that section is on Maple Wind property, and our agreement with Maple Wind may not permit us to regulate recreational access to it. He also feels most of the traffic on Maple Wind's trails is heading to VYCC's trails. Sam suggested working with Bruce Hennesey on the matter while posting a short-term notice asking that people avoid that section due to the wet conditions. It would also be an opportunity to mention plans to reroute recreational traffic around that wet area. Ian registered concerns about user safety (particularly in freezing weather) on the Town's section of the VAST trail where that crosses the forest's central stream. Tyler suggested creating three new names for "Fields Lane to VYCC" trail on Trailforks to make it easier to close

sections, possibly with Bruce's ok, its wettest section as conditions dictate. Jim and Ian will include the topic in their discussion about Traiforks administration..

Management Plan Updates

Trail Approval Process (B6 – 6.2.3)

The Committee focused on the last two parts of this section needing review:

- Dan had suggested adding a policy to pace trail development trail development to allow three years for forests to recover from impacts on the “affected area” of new trails and for those impacts to be more accurately assessed. Suggestions had been made to quantify “affected area,” and to add stipulations about overall trail density and seasonal restrictions. After discussions the group settled on giving future Committees some leeway in deciding “affected area” on a case-by-case basis. The draft policy was accepted with minor revisions and included in a new subsection titled “Trail Impact Evaluation Period.” The first sentence was moved to lead-off the Recreation Section preamble.
- Brad presented references from expert sources showing wetland natural communities having wildlife values equivalent to those for upland communities. The Committee talked about the merits and limitations of using the generalized, 100-meter buffer distances recommended in Meredith Naughton's VT Fish & Wildlife Dept. meta-research report, along with other wildlife protective measures as trail consolidation, seasonal and temporal closures. It was noted that the State's mandated wetland buffers are sized to protect water quality and not their role in providing critical feeding and breeding areas for wetland and upland species alike, especially in springtime. The Committee discussed allowing springtime closures of trails near wetlands. A proposal was made to buffer wetlands categorized by the State as Class II (bigger than 2500 square feet) by 100 feet, and Class 3 wetlands by 50 feet. [Dan Wolfson had left the meeting by this point, between video time stamps 2:22 and 2:32.] Final discussion on wetland provisions, impacts on the VAST trail usage, and their best placement in the Recreation section will be taken up at the next meeting.

Next meetings

Dates were set for November 24 and December 8, 6-8:30.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40.

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Elliott