

MP2 Public Feedback Meeting

Sam & Brad's notes

7/16/26

Times approximate

7:35

Max Krieger: former RCC, current RMT board member

- Plan misses the mark in a few key ways: doesn't reflect original intent, doesn't believe it represents the majority of the town's wishes
- Missed opportunity here
- Committee had worked with Arrowwood and Sinuosity in the past
 - Unique collaboration, not something that happens frequently
 - Environmental consultants agreed to plan
 - Consultants were not re-contracted for that work
 - Tossing out expert opinion
 - Doesn't reflect the community
- Importance of trail connectivity like Sip
- Ask Arrowwood / Sinuosity to come back after fine-scale assessment

Jon Kart clarified that the exports were told they had to make the Sip connection

Merrick Gillies:

- Just moved back from Bolton (to Richmond), served on the planning commission in Bolton
- ACFC's disconnect with the community, who haven't had a chance to be involved. No interface with the public.
- Plan is not inviting to users
- People are not currently using the forest, especially families and older people
- No room for meaningful recreation in the South
- Feels like there will be too many hurdles to develop trails in the future
- Challenging for people to see the vision for the forest without a possible future trail map

7:44

Melissa Wolaver:

- Former member of ACFC and current RCC member
- Couple of points to highlight
 - Department of Forests and Recreation has developed a stewardship guide: recommends doing exactly what this plan has done
 - Hinesburg does this (three separately managed sections)
 - Disagree that the majority of people would not benefit from this plan

- Dissenters should provide objective data to prove otherwise

7:46

Tyler Merritt:

- Served on RTC (25 years), served on ACFC for the first 3 years
- In 2017, was asked to scout a connection to Sip as a part of the process (before the plot was purchased)
- Interconnectivity to neighboring lands was a key part for funding
- Asks that the SB direct the committee to do something specific
- Also recommends that the SB interview all former ACFC members
- Eliminate no biking above power line in the plan: arbitrary and political choice
 - No science to show that hikers or bikers have any effect on wildlife
- The plan has it backwards:
 - You want to have pedestrian trails on easy terrain closer to the parking lot. Pedestrians won't go on the steep, rugged terrain in the north
- Revisit compromise that Dan and Caitlin came up with:
 - Eliminated two of the three trails to Sip
 - Designate "spaghetti trails" as pedestrian only
 - Allow school buses to drive up to log landing
 - Lower/mid trails for pedestrian only
- Third: steer committee to use the scientific information available to them (in reference to Arrowwood's information)
- Impose a timeline. This is taking too long
- Submitted comments from community in paper form
- Explained connectivity to Sip
 - Sunshine land is designated as "forest legacy"

Current plan offers no substantial recreational opportunities

Greg R (SB): is it fair to summarize that opposition to the plan is that it doesn't allow biking?

Tyler: "the science doesn't show that a biker is any more disruptive than a hiker"

- Trails on Cochran and Chamberlain are private, ACF is public and should allow more public access
- Kiosk doesn't show trail connections to Milo White and Mobbs

Greg: Asking for someone who might represent the conservation

7:57

Ian Stokes: Just finished a 3 year term on ACFC, would like to submit comments as a member of the public

- Dispersed access is allowed, and Ian has used them. Others ski, snowshoe, etc
- Ian has found numerous ways of reaching the ridge, has connected to VYCC as well
- Encouraging the SB to recognize the current plan, with some minor improvements
- Noted the tenor of the committee
- Committee has had procedures for public feedback
- Materials have been available in the packet as well
- Encouraging people to read the plan AND the FAQs document

8:01

Judy Rosovsky:

- Wanted to mention to Tyler and other members of the biking community
- Part of the reason the parcel was purchased was because of its connectivity of the Chittenden County uplands
- Important connection for wildlife from the forest to the Winooski
- Judy and Tyler discussed in Bob Heiser's office and she was reluctant to make any agreement about trails
- When the trails were designed, they asked for 1, but were instead presented with 3: uphill, downhill, and multi-use
- Kept RCC out of ACFC discussions until there was something to vote on
- There are not many good places to put trails that will not cause environmental harm
- Concerns about steepness, susceptible to erosion
- Accessibility

8:05

Marcy Harding:

- There was a bear this morning
- Would like to mention the importance of the wildlife habitat
- There is so much wildlife that is dependent on this land
- Wildlife can't be here to speak for themselves
- Supports this plan over previous iterations
- 2023 meeting at CHMS: distinctly remember and have looked back on line: Arrowwood's Dori Barton made it clear that had her firm not been explicitly asked to put in a connecting trail to Sip its recommendation would not have included one
- If the plan doesn't pass, ACFC should (1) go back to ecological experts (Arrowwood or others) and ask them where trails should go and then (2) go to trail builders and ask them to draw up a conforming plan (not tell them how to make a trail connect)

8:09

Joy Reap:

- Was on the planning commission in the past
- Wanted connectivity in town and to keep people off the road
- As a parent of a 15 year old, would like to see children stick to trails, not major roads
- Want to point out that we have lots of trails on private land. Trails can go away very quickly if they're developed

8:12

Bob Galvin:

- In support of the balance the plan strikes
- Appreciates the science
- Wildlife populations of many species are in real danger. This land that we're a part of a continentally wildlife corridor that is important especially considering climate change and wildlife moves northward
- Appreciates the science in the plan
- Strikes a good balance, acknowledges
- Pushing back against the comments that bikers aren't
 - Journal of landscape and urban planning, 2018

8:13

Penny Rand:

- 26 years in Richmond, grew up in Middlebury
- Want to say that those wilderness areas do allow biking
- We have wildlife even in town
- Her understanding is the Andrews did the protection that they wanted — prevented it from being built on / developed
- Town purchased it as a place where the wildlife and people could be
- The town doesn't even have a recreation committee — there are no public trails in town except the section along the river
- Finds it really hard that we cannot protect birds, wetlands, etc while having trails
- Protected right of way just to the north of ACF and we need that in the town
- We bought this land, the Andrews did the work by conserving it. We can allow a few more trails while allowing wildlife to continue to
- Owe the town and the children

8:17

Gunner (Gunther?) Ernie (?)

- RMT board member (and something conservation related)
- Feels like this proposed plan does not strike a good balance

- It should be a balance, and feels like the balance here is about connectivity: trails vs wildlife
- There are protections already that are enshrined in the easement, those should be enough
- Feels like a major form of recreation is being excluded from the forest
- Would like to see the committee go back, look at the recommendations, and move forward with carefully sited trails to connect to Sip
- Things there is room for both

8:21

Chelsye Brooks:

- 1: the parcel and the landscape
 - Lives on the other side of the ridge
 - Super steep in areas, many streams, wetlands, and vernal pools
 - Wetlands not shown here are big enough to be state protected (Class III)
 - It's hard to see the the amount that is going on in the forest that doesn't initially meet the eye
 - Forest helps dramatically with stormwater storage and dispersal
- 2: the plan
 - Trail connectivity: Sip of Sunshine is a forest legacy project through the state and there is a easement through the state. They can't say no to pedestrians. They do not have to maintain biking access. They could change their minds or the property could change hands
 - The right of way for the Sunshine forest legacy land is located in the middle of wetlands. They were delineated in 2025 by Dori Barton of Arrowwood environmental
 - The existing trails in Sip of Sunshine go directly through the wetlands (or maybe the buffer).
 - No idea what traffic may be doing to those wetlands
 - Banking on mountain bike trail connectivity is not the most holistic way of looking at things
 - Could still technically put in a trail that could connect, the plan does not preclude this
- Feels that the plan is well-balanced

8:26

Jim Cochran:

- Met with Tina Heath (wetlands) about existing wetlands
- Minimal trails is an approved use per the state
- Wetlands are not a deal breaker

8:27

Nancy Zimmy:

- 43 year Richmond Resident
- Many way that folks want to enjoy this forest
- Some folks are looking for exciting and challenging uses
- There is a huge boom in outdoor recreation, especially since Covid
- Increase has been led by mountain biking. It's fun, healthy, convenient, and makes money. Put on the gas pedal for recreation
- Wants to remind residents of the easement: "permitted human uses were contingent on not damaging its natural resources"
- Wording of the easement also says: "if conflicts arise between uses, the natural protections should take precedence, at least in some areas"
- Things that the spirit of the conservation easement is telling us to look out for the natural resources
- It's a quandary: balancing conservation and recreation. This is not unique to Richmond
- How has ACFC managed this? Pretty amazingly, even if it's taken a long time
- Parts of ACF are considered by Vermont Conservation Design as a highest priority forest block, and ecologically critical for wildlife. That's worth preserving
- Committee has brought up to date science
- Also feels that the committee has helped show the community that trails are not as benign as people would like to think they are
- When you're doing something you love, you tend to ignore information you don't want to hear
- Committee has attempted to acknowledge and mitigate
- Complexity is better than simplicity. Simplicity is convenient but isn't in the best interest of the parcel
- There are mechanisms in the plan for building new trails. They just have to adhere to the guidance
- Happy that the committee is resisting the "gas pedal" of trail users
- We're the only ones who can speak for the animals. We're going through their kitchens and bedrooms. If we're pushing them out, there's an assumption that nature is infinitely resilient
- Glad that ACFC has taken a long but thoughtful look at all of this and human exceptionalism (that our human lives matter more than animals)
- Didn't do it on the basis of emotion or allegiance, did it on facts
- Aligning with VCD as well (state-administered)
- Approves of the zoning approach, believes its in line with the conservation easement
- This plan is for everyone, not just for a single group
- Start low, go slow when you don't have all of the information
- This is a great start

8:39

8:39

Adam Morse (main st):

- There's a lot of debate here
- Studies can be pushed one way or another
- Thinks there's more work to be done to improve this management plan
- To get data on that, it should be voted on by the town
- Doesn't want to go through all of the science
- Not a fan of how it restricts certain uses. Will not use the town forest without connectivity
- Will use the many other spaces that do have connectivity
- Works in this field (conservation/rec? Double check)
- Would like to see more conservation values on private land
- The forest is being conserved already, people should vote on it

8:44

Paul Hauf (pleasant st):

- Sees this as a culmination of a bait and switch
- Thinks back to 2017 FPF postings noting recreation was mentioned to get support/funding
- Nobody uses the trails, they've voted with their feet. Nobody wants to work on the VAST trail
- Important to look at the plan as how we've got here
- Look at the FPF postings from when Nick and Caitlin left, blaming on Jay
- Applied to ACFC, encourages folks to go back and listen to the meeting where he applied
- Doesn't think that anyone is going to be able to build a trail based on the current map
- Don't think that the current rubric is going to allow any trails to move forward
- Dispersed access is the most intrusive. Feels like people are talking out of both sides of their mouths
- Take a pledge to not go anywhere that the trail parameters dictate. Swear off recreating anywhere that violates the trail parameters
- Feels like everyone defending the conservation
- Feels like this should be put to a town wide vote, and that the preexisting plan should be put forward for a vote first

8:50

James Patterson (Waitsfield):

- Grandmother is Ellen Andrews - unique connection
- Trail builder and designer. Would love to take his kids to see the land on bikes

8:51

Jon Kart:

- Richmond resident, mostly trail user but occasional biker
- Wildlife Biologist for the State, mainly here as an appreciator
- Spent a lot of time walking onto ACF back in graduate school. Has known the plot for a few decades
- Wants to thank the committee for putting together the plan
- Not managing the plan for bikers vs wildlife
- Many Richmond residents who will never set foot in the forest
- Shouldn't be hitting max speed from the get go
- Corrections:
 - Studies show that mountain biking have less impact than hikers. Use matters
 - A trail perfectly sited will still have an impact. Can't say it categorically won't have an impact
 - Amount of use matters most. That's why trails have a larger effect.
- Suggestions
 - 1: Lots of actions in the plan. Some are aspirational, some are day to day. There should be a schedule/way to organize the actions. Having a checklist would be really helpful
 - 2: There are a number of places in the plan where it refers to monitoring and adaptive management. What stipulates a change? Criteria/triggers are necessary for when action needs to be taken.

3: Pick a few places in the forest where access is planned and do annual thorough assessments8:57

Jeanette Malone:

- 30 year Richmond resident
- Provided nature programs for kids; read many recreation plans
- Serves on RCC
- Following since 2021. Sees great potential for conservation and recreation
- Supports the plan, feels like it supports conservation and recreation
- Noting that after the first steep climb, it's quite accessible
- Southern trails connect to RMT and VYCC
- Northern part would remain quiet and support low impact use
- Habitat enhancement thanks to Ethan Tapper
- Most management plans are moving toward a two-zone approach
- As the town grows and recreational activities increase, it's important that the forest remains protected

9:05

Greg (SB): Offsite status and where they are. Sympathetic to connectivity. Recognizes the importance of the NS corridor

Suggested seasonal closures to mitigate impacts

First stop after Burlington, don't turn it into a big park

9:10

Bard (SB): core issue is sip of sunshine.

- what would a connecting trail look like that meets the parameters
- what would the volume look like? 5 is very different than 100
- what would it take to find something palatable to all members of the community (conservation folks, bikers, and the current residents (wildlife))

9:10

Dan Wolfson:

- This plan takes a different approach: rather than putting trails in first, this is giving the roadmap to answer the question
- Misconception: There can be nothing in the northern section
- If we follow this plan, we can have something sustainable

SB will talk with Josh, Adam about next steps. Stay tuned.