

## Andrews Community Forest Committee Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting, November 28, 2022

### **A: Roll Call, Confirmation of Quorum and Appointment of minute taker**

Present: Jesse Crary, Jim Monahan, Caitlin Littlefield, Nick Neverisky, Cecilia Danks, Amy Powers, Chase Rosenberg, Melissa Wolaver, Daniel Schmidt(zoom). Public: Melissa Levy (Community Roots), Jon Kart, Bob Lajoie, Nancy Zimney, Ian Stokes, Brad Elliott, Kit Emery. Zoom: Marcy Harding, Martha Nye, Robert Low, Jeanette Malone, Dan Wolfson.

Melissa W: minute taker

### **B: Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

CL: Proposing 6pm start for winter meetings. MW: Update on delivery of Arrowood report?

### **C: Review and accept minutes of October Meeting**

### **D: Presentation of Vision for Public Engagement Meeting by Melissa Levy of Community Roots**

Introduction: Melissa Levy of Community Roots has worked in rural economic consulting for 20 years and lives in Hinesburg. JM and MW were subcommittee to bring her on board as facilitator for public engagement process. Introduction of committee members.

Melissa Levy wants to hear our vision and topics for public engagement. She can form an agenda for the meeting based on what she hears from us. She presents us with a handout that outlines possible steps in public engagement process and how to form the agenda. Shares there are many different ways to engage public in this process and notes that the committee has worked to engage the public in the past. We now want to gain some input but also present all we have accomplished. NN agrees and shares we are a volunteer committee.

### **E: ACFC Questions and Discussion with Melissa Levy re Public Engagement Meeting**

**Agenda development:** Melissa Levy: What are we hoping to accomplish? Where do we want to be after this public engagement? What does success look like? JM: wants public to see the amount of work that has been done. Feels that it is important to show full work. JC: important that community feels that their voices have been heard. We know that we won't make everyone happy, but at least be heard and understand rationale and where the committee sits with decisions. CL: Getting actionable feedback. We want to have civil discourse around revised management plan. NN: We need to clarify what is actionable feedback. Says there are constraints, and we are not open to starting from scratch. CL: Even though there are a wide range of opinions, she says it is not time to critique everything. JM: Would like guardrails for feedback. The process is not starting from scratch. CD: this is a plan revision with 2 main areas. We haven't fully put the whole revised plan out for public comment. This is a chance for people to hear and comment. Maybe we don't engage with public this time on other parts of the management plan that we haven't changed. CD was on committee from beginning. Departure from concept map and changes in data and objectives of MP could be categories. CL: We are not seeking feedback on RFP.

CR: Prior to this, there was opportunity for town wide feedback. It feels like slippery slope with outsized voices/rhetoric from the people who have the luxury of time to give feedback now. This data has already been synthesized. NN: Idea of buckets for areas where we will take feedback. MW: input can be taken in several formats, and possibly on a range of topics. Acknowledge that some comments might not fit into what we are doing now, but people can still be free to make any comments they want to. We should listen with open mind. CD: There are specific issues that people don't feel we've sufficiently answered their questions. We should be explaining our choices instead of expressing opinions. Are we making a decision based on good information? What do we want to accomplish?

Melissa Levy: It is a big document: Pieces people will want to hear about are different management objectives: CL: People will want to dig in on trail design. NN: Says he is troubled by flavor of public comment. JC: Thinks there is a fair amount of misinformation. Wants to recenter public on what has actually occurred. Melissa Levy: Good opportunity to present key aspects and identify misperceptions right at the start. JC: There is growth of mountain biking in this town. We need to talk honestly about management plan and what we are doing to manage the use with the hope this will dispel some concerns. Melissa Levy: in my experience, it is good to get this on table. 1) Presentation of management plan on power point and posters so people can comment on paper or sticky notes. Ideas for dispelling misconceptions should happen at the beginning. 2) Breaking into small groups depending on issues. 3) The more engagement we can create, the more satisfied the public will be.

JM: Wants people moving around and having back and forth dialogue. Three possible focus areas are: 1) Trails 2) Indigenous 3) Revision of management plan. Melissa Levy: Are there other high level ways to break this down? Other challenging areas? Brad Elliott: Trail design and other topics could be broken down into even smaller categories for discussion such as: Terrain, latest research on trail impacts, and safety. Melissa Levy: User balance might be a category. This group could discuss multiuse challenges. Breaking into small groups might be a great way to do it.

Estimate on numbers who might attend: 100 to 120 people? Maybe less. CD: depends on how we advertise JC: public engagement is important in terms of what selectboard is looking for. Melissa Levy: with that many people, we could have some interesting groups. Presentation of plan and key pieces. Posters on different management objectives. Trails design: we will need maps.

How long do we have for the meeting? 2 hours? CL: 2 hours minimum. JM: Can it be structured such that people don't have to come to whole two hours? Maybe make part like an open house with big posters and opportunities to leave feedback. We may be able to structure 15 minute committee presentations, some small group discussion and posters with sticky note feedback. CD: start twenty minutes early with time for people to walk around? Then do sticky notes.

Melissa Levy: A possible simple agenda could be: first 20 minutes walk around, etc. 15 minute committee presentation, and 1 hour of small group dialogues. MW: It would be best to have Melissa Levy facilitate small group dialogue on trail design vs. a committee member. CL: Have VLT there as part of presentation. CD: we need other experts at the meeting because of the conflict between conservation goals and recreation goals. VLT, someone from state, on what is latest science. Melissa Levy: will need facilitators for all of the small groups. NN and CL: Both state that committee members don't have the expertise to handle divisiveness that will come up on some topics. CR: Is there value in graphic representation of public process that has happened so far? Melissa Levy: that could be a poster with its own with timeline. Melissa. Levy: What we don't want to do is inundate with information.

Melissa Levy: Ground rules for meeting will be really important. I have ideas about how to develop those to get people in the right frame of mind.

CD: Powerpoint: management plan and objectives for key points that have changed and the change in those areas. Melissa Levy: What are the pieces that are up for discussion. CL: opportunity to represent what has been done. Cecilia: great opportunity to bring more and new people in. Melissa Levy: You can show the breadth of what is going on in the forest: AP: revision process was focused on trail and indigenous. Melissa Levy: I feel there's a way to introduce forest and focus discussion on particular areas. The revisions are the guardrails and this is where we are asking for feedback. CD: other topics can be submitted and considered at other revisions. CD: We could have power point slides blown up and put on the walls. Melissa Levy: the committee should start to think about what are on powerpoint and posters. Around 15 slides or posters would be good that can also be shared on website. Melissa Levy: I can start to draft an agenda and list what pieces we need to accomplish.

**Where:** VYCC or Camels Hump the school. Jim already has someone working on CHMS. DS: There are other spaces but barn is unheated. AP: Library community room? MW: Richmond Congregational Church? Possible zoom capability. CL: Parking issue and possible hybrid option would be challenging. Presentation piece could be done on zoom, and possibly have breakout group on zoom. AP: What is the messaging we will use to encourage people to attend the public engagement meeting?

**When:** CD: March? JC: we will need period of time to synthesize results and prepare to make recommendation to Selectboard after public engagement process. Add two months time to afterward at the least. DS: we re committing fully to process that is more than revisions to management plan. Melissa Levy: the discussion we are proposing is focused on the management plan revisions, if we don't want the meeting to focus on other issues, this is the time to decide.

### **F: Public Comment re Feedback and Thoughts on Public Engagement Meeting**

Ian: Focus on issue on how to improve management plan. Habitat conservation at risk. Loss of species, while human population increasing - 30% by 2030 leaving 30% to other species. Chittenden County Uplands Project is important part of ACF. Competing demands of conservation and recreation. Easement focuses more to conservation than recreation. !). Please agree that written comments will be accepted. 2) members of public in small groups. 3) We have expert citizens. 4) Estimates for numbers of users and counts for miles of trails. Brad Elliot: Presents committee and Melissa Levy with handout signed by a number of community members. Confirms mutual interest in collaborative process: 1). Good advertisement 2) experts in the room, 3) long standing concerns that still need to be addressed 4) map showing proposed trail routes with sensitive areas and buffers on the same map 4) sufficient time to review revised management plan by public before meeting. 5) include line numbers in documents 6) record meeting. Bob Lowe: Process: 1) everyone should be encouraged to submit their comments in writing 2) Someone to write down issues that come forward. 3) Listen to public 4) not in favor of small groups or power points. Jon Kart: The public still have questions that haven't yet been answered by the committee. Hope to have all experts in the room to answer questions. How committee square the answers given by experts? We would benefit from experts and interchange rather than having the committee reporting back on what the experts say. Wants to ask questions from experts on state of current science. Marcy Harding: Focus on management plan and trail plan. Discussion must be grounded in the conservation easement which is heavily weighted toward conservation, though

recreation is to be included. What is contained in easement should be provided to the public at the meeting.

**G: Take Away Actions for ACFC and Subcommittees in Preparing for Public Engagement Meeting**

Melissa Levy: Wonders if there's a mechanism for people to ask questions ahead of time. Could be useful to the extent that we can prepare for questions ahead of time. CD: Maybe we co-sponsor a meeting on the emerging science first before facilitated meeting on management plan. Informational evening on the science?

NN: Where is balance on science/education vs recreation, and management outcomes. Where do we put the slider between those two? CD: Some people in the community feel like all the information has not yet been shared. Emerging science could be a separate meeting that focuses on the new science. Adaptive management could be incorporated into management plan. We might have new information that might inform our decisions. This would be a separate discussion. CL: This extends beyond ACFC. Get trails committee to co-host a meeting. DS: RCC coming up with speaker series on this topic. RCC might be group to lead this discussion and ACFC stick to the original plan. JC: thinks this makes good sense. Judy has spoken to Jesse. CL: Could trail committee co-sponsor? Brad. Elliott: Richmond Land trust could be co-sponsor. Melissa Levy: makes sense to do that piece before ACFC facilitated meeting. JC: We won't set a date for the ACF public engagement meeting now. We will wait for educational meeting to be set first.

Melissa Levy: I will plan to draft agenda. I also need messaging and marketing language. Discussion on what posters. What are the key pieces to present. Think we need both power point and posters. They can be the same. How does committee want to divide up? I will send out agenda and script. What are key points we want to be making at each topic. What else can I be doing? Committee needs to sort out sub-committees. Power point slides could be on topics like indigenous, timeline, etc. I will also write materials/equipment list.

Nancy Z: Problem is because mountain biking is so popular is why we are having this discussion: Popularity that needs to be addressed. New science around human recreation and impacts on wildlife.

**H: Review of further revisions to draft Revised Management Plan based on Discussion at November ACFC Meeting**

JC: We will have a revised clean version. We need a working document to go into public meeting. Public comment so far: Robert Low sent in comments so far. All public comment will be processed with public engagement process. Nancy Z: Please include my comments to the town website. CL: We need process for what public comment is included on website. I don't think we should be putting them on the website. NN: Putting them all on website? Volunteer role. I don't know if I can get everything onto the website. CL: I think policy shouldn't be that everything goes on the website. JC: Posted Bob Low's because it was so extensive. Should have treated more equally. AP: Error having put Bob's up. They will all get sent to committee members and acknowledged. CD and CL: We will encourage multiple avenues of communication, and written comments to be submitted beforehand.

**I: Consideration of Approval of Revised Management Plan for Use in Public Engagement**

**J: Scheduling of December ACFC Meeting**

Next meeting December 19 @ 6p. Zoom meeting? We will need to have Zoom meeting or find another room since this room is in use on that date and time. With a 6pm meeting start time, the meeting will need a conservative agenda.

Possible items: Melissa Levy update, Daniel's report from RCC, approving text for revised management plan for public engagement, Arrowood report.

Arrowood report may have just been completed. Jim has just received email today.