

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Regular Meeting Agenda

July 6, 2022 5:30 PM

Richmond Town Center Meeting Room

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3039447485?pwd=Q0F6M3liL252NTVJSFRFCNUgyTUJkUT09>

Attending: Nick Neverisky, Jesse Crary (Chair), Caitlin Littlefield, Melissa Wolaver, Cecilia Danks, Amy Powers, Daniel Schmidt, Chase Rosenberg, Jim Monahan

Zoom attendees: Ian Stokes, Jon Kart, Jeanette Malone (no public present in person)

Notes: Amy

A: Roll Call, Confirmation of Quorum and Appointment of minute taker (Amy)

B: Welcome New Committee Members – Melissa Wolaver and Chase Rosenberg

C: Additions or Deletions to the Agenda: No

D: Review of minutes of May meeting

Jim motion to approve, Caitlin second. All in favor. 0 opposed/abstentions.

E: Public Comment

We heard from Brad Elliot, Jon Kart, Dave Furman, Nancy Ziminy (in Times Ink), Richmond Conservation Commission (written comments from each of the members aggregated in one document; as a reminder Trails sent a single response). All of these are in the record.

- Nick: pointing out two of Dave's points that seemed sensible to address: Codify in Management Plan that the trail plan is the only trails planned rather than taking it for granted. And season closures.
- Jesse: overarching, there still is discussion regarding a need for process and enough public engagement. Have we been clear enough about what process we intend for the MP process? We intend to have a broad public forum, including our trail proposal experts in attendance. We know that we will not make everyone happy in our process and we are trying to continually improve it but we continue to get push back. We do intend to address that at the public forum.
- Caitlin: how the plan relates to the conservation easement and if it's consistent. VLT will and has had a say in accepting this and moving it forward. I hope we can clarify this once and for all. Everything we advance will be approved by VLT. Jesse has continually engaged with Rebecca at VLT throughout the process and she is a sounding board and has been aware of every part of it. It is very clear in the management plan that VLT as the easement holder will need to approve the trail design as put into the MP. So I see that happening before we go further into the public engagement. Make sure that VLT is on board.
- Melissa: has the trail design been approved, or in the future?

- Jesse: not formally, because we want to seek their formal approval in the context of the final MP ... but she's aware of the original plan and the revised plan and VLT has confirmed it complies with the original easement.
- Jim: phased in trail approach. I feel that we've done that. The Urbanik Way has been there a year or two almost, the Meander Meadow trail and the small connector trail, that feels phased.
- Jesse: Jon and Dave F. What are the parameters we are putting on the proposal? Well, that is what the MP is, a chance to put those in writing.
- Nick: What are the boundaries of our responsibilities? There will always be specific community members for any trail plan who will have questions. We can't chase down answers to every single question, and yet we're not wanting to ignore questions.
- Jim: We can't answer the question about traffic flow. We don't know, but we just have to guess, it would be a multi-year study and that's beyond our scope.
- Caitlin: From a public process standpoint is there an external person like Josh or Ravi who might look at our process and determine whether we should be chasing down more question answers, or whether we're following a good process.
- Chase: We should attune to precedents we set. For instance, if logging comes up in the future, how do we apply the consistent process?
- Cecilia: We just need to respond, even with no answer. Adaptive management, id'ing what we don't know and collecting data to guide management moving forward. Example: not just say we don't know, but say, we will monitor this in X way, like counters on trails.
- Caitlin: bounding the universe of questions to which we respond--what is the scope of our responsibility
- Amy: and how to actually respond to questions--directly to individuals? In an upcoming public forum? In writing? Just a discussion like this?
- Cecilia: need to focus on the big issues driving the comments.
- Caitlin: which is what we did
- Cecilia: but for instance, Jon K suggests a specific map that might help people answer their own questions
- Melissa: Judy had comments on how to do the process in her remarks
- Ian Stokes, comment via Zoom: Better to record the meeting and make that available for those who can't come to the meeting or have hearing difficulties. The committee is pursuing a trail plan that is not consistent with the existing management plan. Need a trail plan that is consistent with the MP. Just one trail to connect to the SUNshine Trail. That would comply with MP, give people the impression of movement and progress, but still consistent with approved MP Is the committee willing to make a single trail using elements of the Arrowwood proposal.

- Nick: to the first question re: trails being consistent with the management plan...it's a complicated document and I hear your point about this taking a long time and that creating unsettledness in the community. I don't see a m=path that is more consistent than what the MP says. It says to be careful, it says build loops, it says connect. So I'm personally struggling with the challenge of moving forward when in fact the MP does say to do a loop up high, down low, connect to Sip of Sunshine, do I wish we could just start moving forward and be done with the question of whether this is in compliance with the MP which has been addressed, and is When people are concerned about the alignment with the MP They're focused on ecological concerns when the MP also calls for the trails of this order.
- Ian: I thought the reason to create a new revised MP was to accommodate the arrowwood plan.
- Caitlin: if there is any deviation of any degree from the Concept Map triggers a revision. And it's being characterized as us pushing a revision that is b/c we are making dramatic changes. Which is not true. An MP revision is mandated with any kind of trail network design unless it was strictly the concept map which was not ground truth so it was inevitable.
- Cecilia: Is there a line on the Arrowwood map that aligns with the concept map that we could just get started with. People are concerned that there are now two trails up there.
- Jim/all: no. We can't go with 'close enough' and just go for it, we have to stick with what the ecologists walk. Not just 'similar'.
- Nick: the ecologist looked at the Concept Map and said this is really a bad place ecologically to put the crossing there, etc. So to implement the Concept Map would be to go against ecological practices.
- Jesse: I've had this discussion with other folks in different capacities who have different but related confusion. I think that the committee's written responses to the comments make it very clear that we're going through the process because we view the trail design that's proposed as superior to the concept map by a lot. Otherwise, we would have just done the concept map, no MP revision, etc. But that would not be ecologically acceptable or even feasible for reality on-the-ground trail building.
- Daniel: put the questions in a parking lot or holding place. In addition to Nick and Caitlin's summary doc, it could be an addendum with 'here's what we can't answer, or will answer down the line' so at least people can see they've been heard.

What should the process look like moving forward?

- Chase: Once the process is detailed, if we had a graphic or flow chart we could show the public where we are and what's coming up showing what step we're at.
- Cecilia: wondering what the public presentation will be when we do present, so I think a flow chart would be helpful in that meeting and dual purpose for reassuring people along the way
- Amy: four purposes: 1) present at the SB and for public comment; 2) reassure the public who have questions about the flow of the process; 3) use in the MP itself; 4) serve as guideposts for us

F: Report on Circulation of ACF Report Responding to Public Comment (5 minutes - Nick)

- Nick has posted on Front Porch Forum, FB, and Instagram

G: Update on Communications with Arrowwood re: Scheduling further Ecological Review of Trail Design (Caitlin and Jim)

- Jim: This discussion will address the question of whether Arrowwood has been re-engaged, and whether multiple seasons have been included in their analysis. Caitlin and I have engaged with Aaron and they will do a scan of the network that they proposed with the exception of Ridgetop in August. \$3500 to do the full ecological review. Four to six weeks, estimating. Maybe we'd have a report by late September.
- Caitlin: this checks off two boxes: limited assessment not in all seasons; the 50 foot fine scaled evaluation. These are two points brought up in the comments.
- Discussion of the connectivity to VYCC - at first they said just use the VAST trail, with some upgrades. So I wonder if they'd still recommend that That's not included in the \$3500. Estimate. Jim and Caitlin are concerned about going back to them again. We're not planning on further developing that trail, and it passes through wetlands so we'd have to do substantial development of that trail, and may include permitting, etc. With VAST we're not changing anything about the property so it's not included in the revision of the MP. Proposal that the necessary analysis and upgrading of the VYCC connector as a future To Do item. Hold off on the review of this. Focus now on just the network as is. Seems important to pursue at some point and doesn't feel essential at this point.
- Caitlin response to Jon K question online. We gave a 200' buffer but additionally calls for a fine-grained 50' review. Their current plan strove to work within the 200' buffer and they are now going to do the 50' review. 200' is understood as desired but the MP acknowledged it's not always possible, Arrowwood used professional judgment, and they provided shape files with the buffers they used and those are on the website. The exact numbers are there.
- Jim motion, Caitlin seconds: Motion to approve Arrowwood coming in August for no more than \$3500 for a fine scale ecological review of the trail network (minus Ridgetop), applying to the Conservation Commission for the funds. All in favor, no opposition, no abstentions.
- Jeanette Malone: if there are connections using the VAST trail and the VYCC trail, you might be using the VYCC monitor barn parking lot. Jesse: The VYCC has made it very clear that their parking lot is not available at any time for parking. Caitlin: acknowledging the question about other parking areas increasing traffic at ACF. Jeanette: There was an issue with Chamberlin and now there's a new parking area that has emerged, for instance. So I believe it will be an issue in the future, accessing recreation in the town. Jesse: Ravi has expressed that it would be great for ppl to be able to access the ACF on foot/bike from town in the long-range but it's long term. Cecilia: good point to attend to over time and put in our 'parking lot'. There's a section on p. 9-10 about parking. We'll keep an eye on that. The committee will monitor use over time, etc. So we'll attend to that as we review the MP. Caitlin: I hear the concern that it's a multi-use hotspot, and others are concerned about it being a Mtb mecca, and I think it's a small amt of hand-built trails, and it's not going to be a Cochrans or a Kingdom Trails, overrun with Mtb bikers.

H: Review and Discussion of Draft Revised Management Plan (Subcommittee)

- Cecilia, Jesse, Daniel, Amy divided the work.
- Cecilia: working on language around Indigenous rights; still working on the old cultural history didn't have anything before 1800/white owners, so working with Richmond Racial Equity to add that, another page or so
- Jesse: language about building in the new trail design proposal

- Daniel/Amy: going through and making more global edits, consistent language. Daniel: The point of many of the preambles are not clear to me.
- Next: we'll meet as a subcommittee, and identify questions for the big group, what should we do with various sections. Try to simplify it before unleashing it. Then release a full draft to the committee.
- At the end will put the old and the new into MS Word so that people can compare the two and see all changes highlighted.
- Caitlin: We have to revisit it every 10 years, so leave it as we want to find it in 10 years.
- MP subcommittee will also Draft public outreach to give to the public and then selectboard

I: Update on VYCC Project List for ACF

- Daniel and Jesse have been in touch with Kristen at VYCC, she came to our meeting before about water work that VYCC crews are ready to do. They sent a proposed project list after walking the land with Daniel. But where we are today is they have minor initial work to have a crew go in today to work on, and then they'll come back a few weeks from now for more substantive work.
- Two VYCC agreements where the town has to sign off. Jesse has been in touch with Josh on who has to sign off.
- This is paid for by VYCC, DEC funded.
- Projects:
 - Improve water bars in the road, need shoring up, pretty easy, just need to reshape
 - Install mini check dams - getting a lot of erosion, so there's a good example where waterfall is receding upstream as it erodes, and the check dam should stabilize that (except if catastrophic thunderstorms get in the way)
 - Perched culvert - water pouring down and then the culvert will fail, you can shore up with stone armoring or you could remove the culvert and have a hardened stream bed, stream flowing over top of trail
- Jesse makes Motion to ratify the work done, Dan seconds: all in favor, 0 opposed.

J: Report on ACFC Finances/Account Balance (5 minutes - Jim)

- Jim looked at the books, anything we've done we've gotten from grants, so we've pulled out of the kitty; we used logging money for the ecological study, we paid for Wood for Good; \$33,468.00 is the balance
- "Somebody" is going to write an application to RCC
- Ethan got an invasive grant, 5k we think.

K: Update on Donations to ACF in Memory of Geoff Urbanik and Discussion re Application of Funds (10 minutes –Nick and Jesse)

- Interest expressed from two entities in memory of Geoff--received one already. Tree or bench or undecided is what will happen with it. Jesse and Nick handle communication with the donors.
- Could be funds used to fund an eagle scout project if that showed up.

Next meeting is on the regular schedule

5:30 July 25 is our next meeting

- Jesse calls motion to adjourn, approved.

** PLEASE NOTE – MATERIALS RELATED TO THESE AGENDA ITEMS or MINUTES (IF ANY) WILL BE POSTED AND AVAILABLE ON THE ANDREWS COMMUNITY FOREST WEBPAGE AT <http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/richmond-townforest/>