

RICHMOND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting minutes, Tuesday February 8, 2022

7:30 PM

Richmond Town Center Meeting Room, 3rd Floor – 203 Bridge Street, Richmond, VT

Commissioners attending: Max Krieger, Bob Low, Judy Rosovsky, Ibit Wright, Daniel Schmidt, Kit Emery; Kate Krieder

From the public: Brad Elliott, Jon Kart, Caitlin Littlefield

Appoint minute taker: Daniel Schmidt is taking minutes

Minutes approval: January minutes were approved. Some question about the status of December minutes? Bob has sent those minutes to Judy.

Agenda:

7:30 p.m. Public comments and introductions

7:40 Appoint minutes taker

7:50 Additions, amendments to agenda

Discussion of hiring a trail steward for Richmond

Max has been talking to Tyler Merrit on the Richmond Trails Committee because trails have gotten a lot of use, much more than in year's past. Max is proposing the idea that there might be the need to increase stewardship as use increases. Such as the RLT has done, in which they've hired a river steward to do check-ins, education, etc. In this instance, the River Conservancy is the employer. We've also helped the Lake Iroquois Association to do lake stewardship. So there are models for how we might do this.

We would want to increase trail stewardship, including trail maintenance, on town land, but also add a stewardship component. Questions to ponder:

- What entity could do this?
- Would the town need to pay for this?
- Could they be a Cochran's employee?
- Could it be a position supported by the town?

Ibit thinks it would be great if this person could document what is happening on our public lands. So that the person might be responsible for a wide variety of activities, such as trail stewardship, data gathering, and trail maintenance. On the other hand, perhaps there's value in focusing this position. This person could focus on stewardship and documentation but not on maintenance. A lot of maintenance needs to be done and it would likely be a much bigger job than any one person could do.

Other issues, in addition to stewardship, include parking at the round church. This is ongoing issue despite the 2 hour limited parking spots.

Judy is going to check in with Josh and Ravi about how we might approach filling this stewardship position.

Bob asks if there is any revenue source, such as logging that could support this position. We also have an information problem and we're in need of a kiosk that would provide information for the public but we would need to find funding for it.

One idea for fundraising would be to create a ciclovia (a pedestrian path created by closing a road to vehicle traffic) on Cochran road that would close the road to traffic (8-12 on Sundays) and open it pedestrians. This could be a fundraiser that could help support this position.

Daniel to talk to Cochran's and other Cochran's road residents to see how they feel about it.

8:00 Wetlands – discussion on rationale

Virginia presenting

Virginia has talked to the town attorney regarding wetland designation, and who is in charge of that, for Richmond. The attorney didn't want RCC to have to make decisions that are beyond their technical expertise as this might create future problems for the town. There was a general consensus that these were not decisions that the DRB could make decisions on.

One approach might just be for the state to dictate the wetland ordinance. But having a town ordinance makes it known to developers that this issue of wetland delineation is important to the town.

The attorney didn't think the DRB would be able to say whether a certain type of development would improve or hinder the functioning of the wetland. There is an important distinction between a lot that has a wetland where the development won't affect the wetland vs. a lot that has a wetland and development will affect the wetland. If development doesn't affect the wetland, it will be easy to get a town permit, and one doesn't have to get a state permit. If one does develop within the wetland or the buffer then a state and town permit is needed. And just for clarification, any development within a class 1 or 2 wetland needs a state permit. The attorney feels like this would be the best course of action.

Much of this has come about because of the Mobil station. They have asked to potentially develop into the surrounding wetland. They've asked to develop into the wetland buffer, which was granted with the caveat that they do some things to improve the wetland.

Comments and questions

Max: this feels like a good compromise. From a legal perspective, this feels like a good move.

Better to look, not just at map, but do some ground truthing so that the town knows what type of development might occur and the extent of the wetland. The state will make technical decisions, such as how big it might need to be. Which is based on a number of qualities of the wetland and is situational.

Gratitude for all the work that went into this document!

8:15 Winooski assessment

Jon Kart presenting

There was a proposal to do work at Beeken, which needed state permits. Do we want to engage in a bigger study that would identify what drivers are determining the current geomorphology of the river?

This would be a phase 2 geomorphic assessment. The question is whether we need this type of assessment or would we just like to get it done so that we can better manage the river?

To get state money we would need to assess a much larger stretch of river. So if we are going to pursue DEC money, we may need to go through another entity like Friends of the Winooski. At this time no one is certain how much this would cost. But it would be helpful information to have as we think about what other work might need to be done to the area around the Beeken property.

Question of whether there is the possibility of asking ArrowWood for an estimate? Or even getting a rough estimate of how much this type of assessment might cost? Judy will reach out to ArrowWood to get a cost estimate.

Bob asks who will write the proposal, but we need to get more information first (such as cost) and we can talk about actually writing the proposal during our next meeting.

8:30 Updates:

1) CRF renewal – status and next steps

Committee agreed to post on Front Porch Forum before the vote.

2) EAB tree removal –

They've treated 20+ trees in village over the spring and summer. They also removed some diseased trees and replaced them with other trees.

With the trees that have been taken down, neighbors have been asked if they wanted to use the wood. If not, the trees were chipped and spread on the hillside.

Millable wood is still TBD. The arborist will mill the wood and leave the rest for firewood. Could the milled wood be used for town center flooring? Other wood that isn't millable will be cut for firewood. And perhaps given to people who need fuel assistance.

The meeting about the town center on Thursday might be a good time to bring up the idea of how we might use the milled wood.

3) Vermont Master Naturalist completed tasks for Richmond – Judy to ask Alicia or Laura M.

This topic was tabled due to time constraints.

8:40 ACFC trail proposals – RCC involvement?

There have been trails proposed on the ACF. While this was approved in the original plan, problems have arisen. RCC has suggested that the ACFC should hold a public comment period (or a public forum) so that the public could voice their concerns.

There may be parts of the management plan that the RCC wants to comment on. Should we do that? And how might we be involved?

We don't know what the proposal is going to be, so this might not be the right time to chime in.

We would expect the selectboard to ask the RCC and trails committee to make comments on the final management plan.

Daniel Schmidt to ask the ACFC about the process for engaging in feedback from the other committees (such as the RCC or trails committee). Questions to ask: how would the ACFC like RCC to engage in the feedback process? What timing is appropriate? What might the process look like? If we can figure out the process then all committees will feel good about the opportunity to provide feedback and also know when and how that might occur.

ACFC is waiting to hear back from ArrowWood/Sinuosity to get feedback on ACFC questions. Then there will be some type of public comment. ACFC is still trying to figure out what this looks like. It's premature to figure out exactly what this public forum looks like but this is the work for the ACFC to do in the coming months.

9:00 Projects of interest to commissioners
Email to Judy before the next meeting

9:15 CRF – how to increase community involvement?
Reminder to post blurbs on FPF – Judy sent out the spreadsheet. This is information about the reserve fund.

The slide show that Bob and Brad created are now on the town website

What projects might we engage in that are beyond just land purchases. 21% of the land is already conserved and there are likely many other types of projects to consider. Let's see if we can do some outreach to see what other projects might be considered for the CRF.

9:20 Matters arising

9:10 Adjourn

Minutes (formal or informal) are due at the town offices 5 days after any public meeting. Please send me a draft within 5 days from this meeting (by 2/13/2022).