

Richmond Conservation Committee Meeting

November 14, 2017

Commissioners present: Rick Barrett, Mary Houle, Bob Low, Kristin Nelson, Guy Roberts, Judy Rosovsky, Ibit Wright

Public: Jimmy Cochran, Ali, Tom Cochran, Alicia Daniel, Fritz Martin, Lou Borie, Brad Elliott

Public comments – Response from Cochran’s to public complaints about visible clearing on former Washburn land. The Cochran’s regret clearing excessively, though they had all permits in place. How to move forward? Perhaps invite business community members to planned conservation summit, create guidelines, suggestions or hints for conservation minded developers; or could use state guidelines. Some of this is in draft NR section of town plan.

Guy Roberts -attended Association of Conservation Commissions meeting-brief summary related to re-forestation and forest fragmentation

Fritz Martin-Member Richmond Land Trust--At recent Richmond Land Trust meeting they discussed their mission. The RLT noted that many groups have formed that parallel the ideals of the RLT and there might be a benefit to have joint conservation summit to bring together Trails Committee, Recreation Committee, Western Slopes Business Association, Vermont Youth Conservation Corp, bike groups, Cochran Ski Area.

Some of these folks might have overlapping missions, however there is little group interaction unless a big issue comes up. Jimmy Cochran of the Cochran Ski Area generously offered their ski lodge for such a meeting to take place.

Lou Borie of Richmond Land Trust-Presented information about upcoming sale of the Huntington Gorge. Current land owner is Gary Bressor. It was brought to the CC attention that Bressor is a RLT member to which Borie stated Bressor had recused himself from Gorge discussions at RLT meetings. VT River Conservancy is the proposed Gorge purchaser. In the future the Gorge will be transferred to the RLT and as such, the RLT is preparing a plan to manage the property and that includes bringing a request for CC funds. Funding will include cost to survey property. RLT planning for the Gorge would include it remain a public area and undeveloped. It was suggested that a non-land trust type of buyer, a private buyer, might deny access to it and possibly develop the land. Vermont Conservation and Housing Board would be an ally of the RLT and hold the conservation easement and assist with the financing for the purchase of the Huntington Gorge. Borie brings this information to the CC to ask if this is a project the CC would support. It is likely the RLT will be completing paperwork for a funding request for Conservation Funds.

8:25 Alicia Daniel, Field Naturalist from UVM

Daniel presented information as attached regarding Richmond as a site for a master Naturalist Program. Her information was well received by CC and two pages of information are the last two pages of today’s notes. These pages represent the scope and details for the Daniel presentation.

8:50 Discussion on how to utilize our budgeted funds: Membership to Conservation Group, Arbor Day celebration, Meetings/conferences for CC members

Andrews Forest land: SE group is to build a recreation model for the Town Forest plan. The plan will be designed to be a template for a Master Plan for the forest. The question arises about how this plan will fit for Richmond as the SE group is consulting with other Towns for their Town Forest.

How do we manage or not manage the Town Forest? Where will the responsibility be seated? Will a management committee report to the CC and we then report to the SB and make recommendations? What system will be adopted to be the Management style for Richmond: Separate Committee, Management by the Conservation Committee, Select Board? Who will be the managing authority? What roles need to be discussed? Filtering issues: Advisory role, managers, enforcers, stewards, arbitration, review, governance.

There needs to be a set formula for percent of forest to be managed: what percent left natural, for recreation, is open for trails, open for biking, exploration, study, harvested.

Guy and Ibit's committee will create their document for the Town Forest then present to the CC. Guy is on the working group and will speak with Town Manager Geoff Urbanik for time and place for meetings.

Conway School-work on Town Forest, develop scope of work, create public forum for various Forest discussions. Commitment to set the Conway School into action is \$7000 plus \$1200 in travel expenses. Management plan must be present before recreation.

Plan to meet Monday November 20, 2017 or Tuesday Nov 21 at 6:30 in Small Meeting Room in Town Center to discuss Conway School issues.

Next regular CC meeting Tuesday, December 12, 2017 at 7:30 in Town Center meeting room.

Meeting adjourned 10 pm

Description of the Roles: Vermont Master Naturalist Richmond Program
Alicia Daniel, November 2017

Vermont Master Naturalist Program (Alicia Daniel/Hannah Phillips)
Coordinate training sessions, including themes, content and dates
Assist Richmond program organizer
Review applications and send acceptance letters
Attend key meetings
Lead designated training days (based on availability of local experts)
Update website to reflect Richmond Program and projects (2019)

Richmond program organizer (TBA) Compensation* \$500 and free enrollment in the VMN Richmond program (value \$395)

Identify partners and schedule initial partner meeting

Help locate and maintain contact info for VMN Richmond candidates

Help locate and contact trainers

Help locate and contact project sponsors

“Go to” person for candidate questions and issues such as absences

Help review applications

Act as a liaison between project sponsors and project teams, including encouraging teams to meet deadlines

Help coordinate graduation events

Take and request photos for the VMN website

VMN Richmond Candidates (enrollment cost \$395)

Ten to twelve Richmond residents (or people working in Richmond) with a sustained interest and background in at least one natural history discipline.

Field Session Leaders/Trainers (Compensation \$400* per session)

Prep and lead training days

Provide VMN with a detailed description of the day’s activities

Project Sponsors (Early access to enrollment for staff and volunteers)

Present conservation education and stewardship projects for VMN candidates to work on

Coordinate team efforts to complete projects successfully

Local Partners (Total cost for all partners \$3,950) Logo will appear on VMN website and early access to enrollment for staff and volunteers

Provide funding

If non-profit, may help seek grants to cover the costs of the program

May act as project sponsors

May enroll staff and volunteers into the VMN Program through early admission

*Compensation based on \$3950 for enrollment and \$3950 for partner match.

Vermont Master Naturalist Richmond Program

Alicia Daniel, November 2017

Advancing conservation, building community, connecting Vermonters to the wild heart of place.

The Vermont Master Naturalist Richmond Program will create a close-knit team of naturalists with specific training in Richmond's natural history across the earth, life and social sciences, who understand and can "read" the landscapes of Richmond's conservation lands. The Richmond has a rich natural heritage with habitat ranging from dry, oaky knolls to floodplains. Diversity underfoot gives rise to over a dozen natural communities resulting in an abundance of rare plant species. Moose, bobcats, coyotes, bears, beavers, deer and foxes either pass through Richmond or live here year around. The Vermont Master Naturalist Program connects Richmond citizens to the nature of their region through professional training and volunteer projects. These towns will benefit long term from a community of naturalists acting as a brain trust for solving ecological issues facing our wild lands and serving as expert resources for conservation education in our schools and communities.

Who: Ten to twelve Richmond residents with a sustained interest and background in at least one natural history discipline will be chosen through an application process.

How: Through a series of field trips to key natural areas, VMN Richmond candidates will explore the processes that shape a landscape and learn a timescale for the major events that have created the landscapes seen in Richmond today. Candidates will spend time on each site reviewing the geology, soils, hydrology, plants and animals (natural communities), human land use history, and signs of processes like wind, fire, or deer browse. We will also discuss the conservation history and management issues relevant for each site. While the focus of the training will be on the exchange of information, participants are invited to enter each of these places with an open heart, enjoying the beauty and a connection to nature that draws the group together. In addition, each Vermont Master Naturalist candidate will have an outside practice designed to deepen his or her naturalist skills of observation and description, including spending time at a sit spot, sketching, photographing, and more.

When: Field trip dates and potential themes will be in August (Geology) & October (Glacial History) 2018; and January (Native Americans, Wildlife and Winter Trees), March (Settlement History) and May (Warblers and Wildflowers) 2019 with a graduation ceremony. All sites will include a discussion of natural communities. Candidates will also attend public walks during the year.

Cost and deadline to apply: Candidates will pay a one-time enrollment fee of \$395. The deadline for applications is June 2018. The fee will be collected after candidates are accepted. Scholarships are available.

Volunteer Contract: Upon completion of the 30 hours of training, VMN Richmond candidates will design team projects to engage with schools and/or community members totaling at least 200 hours (20 per person.) These self-designed volunteer projects will be created in collaboration with local conservation organizations and the town. Upon completion on the program, these Vermont Master Naturalists will continue to serve in an advisory capacity for as long as they choose and will receive ongoing advice and support from VMN Richmond for their naturalist practices and activities.

VMN Volunteer Projects Underway in Vermont in 2017:

- Research into ostrich fern management to protect from overharvesting
- Creative Explorations of Burlington's Natural Landscapes: workshops, Art Hop exhibit and storytelling
- Rare plant identification and conservation education concerning their protection
- Burlington Mammal Tracking project citizen scientists
- Natural history walk leaders
- Ongoing support for the VMN Program