

Richmond Conservation Commission

Meeting, October 23, 2018

MINUTES

Meeting opened: 7:35

Present: Rick Barrett, Bob Low, Guy Roberts

Guest: Hannah Phillips.

Public Comment: None

There being fewer RCC members than constitute a Quorum, no actions were taken

Town Forest

Hannah Phillips presented an overview of the Draft Management Plan dated October 23, 2018.

NEW TIME LINE: Draft Management Plan now due to go to Selectboard on 11/19/18

Changes since last draft: summarized in Appendix H – see and follow minutes by posted version of draft management Plan: <http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/richmond-town-forest/>

- Governance
 - Committee membership change noted: TC and RC appoint one member from their Committee and additionally each recommends one additional member.
 - Noted how Committee members represent the Town, not specific areas.
 - Need to unify Committee composition between Management Plan and Bylaws.
 - Committee should consider staggered appointment schedule, e.g. 1,2,3, ... year appointments at outset, 3 (or so) year appointments thereafter.
- Hunting
 - Changes in restrictions noted and supported.
 - Important to have signage at Kiosk regarding hunting seasons.
- Trapping
 - Agreed there should be no trapping, noting general public view and lack of solution to public danger.
- Mountain Biking
 - Changes supported
- Motorized vehicles
 - Agreed
 - Add emergency to description in Appendix H, as is noted in draft Plan itself

- Recognize parking area not sufficient for snowmobile unloading (VYCC an alternative?). Related, getting snowmobiles past the gate. Mitigating, other snowmobile access points.
- New Trails
 - Plan to locate and developed agreed.
 - Dog policies are as per easement: has been little past public noise (see below)
 - Following Town Dog Ordinance
- “Other”
 - Seasonal policies note re Wildlife. Back-country skiing, fat-tire bikes in winter under consideration.
 - Consider extending to trails (e.g. mud season)

Comments received via emails.

- Kristin Nelson: Loosening restrictions on hunting and trail availability
 - This came about through public dialogue. Parties have come to compromise and so is OK with Kristin.
 - Change shows responsiveness to public input
 - Name of Committee: NOW HAS TWO DIFFERENT NAMES: “Steering Committee”; “Community Forest Stewardship Committee”
- Brad Elliott:
 - Brad was unable to attend. Hannah will be contacting him.
 - Missing maps (“Natural Communities”; Wildlife Elements”):
 - May have been drawn from desk by SE, though Arrowwood is a source. In any case management plan has on-the-ground assessment as part of eventual trail locations.
 - Arrowwood presumably can provide as needed.
 - Trail assessment only 50 feet either side: concern about shutting out important wildlife areas, e.g. breeding, feeding, refuge. Expand to 200 feet.
 - The is fine-tooth assessment of trail location: see management plan for location evaluation.
 - Buffer size for wildlife sensitive (and other) area is a separate assessment
 - Key issue is impact on connectivity (e.g. Act-171)
 - Going to 200 feet for fine-tooth assessment will increase cost substantially.
 - Trail re-routing (alternative availability, ecologist dis-incentive, why should Richmond pay, should start with available information):
 - Unclear what is the dis-incentive
 - See Management Plan for process which is felt robust
 - SE Group is not final decider, though should it be responsible for initial draft locations.
 - Vernal Pools: impact on secondary zone – is protection sufficient
 - Reexamine?
 - VLT role in allowing trails, determining restrictions
 - Need for route to vernal pool(s) for educational purposes (VAST trail goes close by one).
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- Dogs
 - Dog policies are as per easement
 - Has been little past public noise
 - Following Town Dog Ordinance
 - Add signage to protect sensitive areas
 - Need to review in terms of hunting dogs
- Mary Houle
 - There must be no posting: Not on the table

Other matter arising

- Town Attorney review
 - Best through Selectboard
 - Check with Town manager
- Provide date (M/D/Y) on face page for all drafts going forward.
- Zoning designation
 - Not a management issue
 - New Town Plan and Zoning in the offing.
 - Planning Commission needs to review
 - Follow-up by Town manager
- Town Forest Name
 - Not a management issue
 - Select board in driver's seat
- Future presentations
 - Deadline issue
 - Process Time-line
- Future RCC review
 - Next meeting (11/13) or special meeting 1(1/6/18)
 - Compile list of reasons behind vote to recommend
- It was noted that Hannah Phillips will be moving to Montpelier in November and will no longer be on the Town Forest Committee.

Meeting adjourned: 9:10