

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Regular Meeting

NOTES & Agenda

October 25, 2021

7:00 to 9:00 PM

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

Meeting may also be joined online or by phone

Join Zoom Meeting Online:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81072417050?pwd=emdQRkRkZjg0WDBuc0d0RzZDQmp5QT09>

Join by Phone: +1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 810 7241 7050

Passcode: 046861

Committee Members Present: Jesse Crary, Ellen Kraft, Amy Powers, Cecilia Danks, Tyler Merritt, Jim Monahan. Caitlin Littlefield (Via Zoom), Nick Neverisky (via zoom).

Public: Martha Nye, Chief Don Stevens, Connie van Eeghen, Marcy Harding, Scott Silverstein, Jana Brown, Ian Stokes, Alexis Lathem, Erik Filkorn, Judy Rosovsky, Annette, Urbschat, Emily, Robert(Bob) Lowe, Patty Brushett, Sue Morse, Brad Elliot, Jeanette Malone, Dan Wolfson, Melissa Wolaver, Judy Rosovsky, Andy Solomn

A: **Roll Call, Confirmation of Quorum and Appointment of minute taker (2 minutes)**

Minute taker: Jim Monahan

B: Additions or Deletions to the Agenda (1 minute)

C: **Review and accept minutes of August 24, 2021 Meeting (1 minute)**

Motion to accept minutes. Motion passed.

D: **Public Comment (5 minutes)**

Sue Morse - teaching about wildlife. Co-founder of chittenden uplands project. Introduce two science concepts:

- 1) cumulative effects assessment - used in Canada primarily. Thinking creatively about how we can minimize impact on creatures. Putting too many trails would damage wildlife.
- 2) Animals are facing an uncertain future - Be mindful when planning trails.
- 3) QTS - Consolidated vs spread out trails. It is much better to consolidate the trail network rather than spreading out trails.

- 4) QTS - Logging - ecological logging plan for future for ACF. Logging can mimic wildlife diversity.

Doug St. Amoure - Is there an amended plan? Where are we with the plan?

- 1) ACF approved the trail design
- 2) management plan needs to be amended due to change in the concept map
- 3) Involve the public, circulated and take feedback
- 4) Habitat is fragile. Concerned about the amount of traffic on the trails.

Bob Lajoile

- 1) Hunted Andrews land for many years. Concerned about the deer yards and wintering for deers. He wants to see people in the woods to enjoy it, but not too many. Be balanced in the approach.

Marcy Harding - People lose track that there is a conservation easement. The foundation for everything that happens is based on this document. Keep it in mind that it needs to be in line with easement. Is the trail design in line with the easement from VLT.

Brad Elliot - Is this process of revision management plan public? When will the public see it? Will we only have one week to view it before making a comment?

- Discovered some rare plants on his walk last week.

E: **Proposal for Indigenous Land Use Rights & Land Acknowledgement ** (20 min)**

Scott Silverstein - Introducing Chief Don Stevens. Interested in recognizing the Abenaki culture through land recognition.

- No Land ownership only land stewardship
- Wants land in management plan to have language around Abenaki protections

Chief Don Stevens has many land access agreements with multiple towns and organizations.

- Manage the forest in terms of animals and trees - Keep their needs in mind. We can coexist with animals in the forest. You can allow people to also be in the forest.

Richmond Racial Equity [in conjunction with the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation] proposes an addition to the Andrews Community Forest (ACF) Management Plan establishing the following rights in perpetuity for persons of Indigenous ancestry:

1. Fishing, hunting, and trapping rights for those holding the appropriate license (available free from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department to registered tribe members). "Trapping could be excluded" - Don Stevens
2. Rights to collect plants and plant roots, mushrooms, leaves, needles, twigs, cones, nuts, flowers, and berries, with no limitations. "Add ...and other edible items" - Don Stevens
3. Rights to collect sap and resin from trees such as maple, birch, white pine, and balsam fir.
4. Rights to collect small quantities of the bark and inner bark of trees for medicinal purposes.
5. Use of the land for ceremonies.

In addition, Richmond Racial Equity proposes utilizing the ACF trail network and entry points to offer public education about the Abenaki people, including the following specific initiatives:

1. Interpretive signage at the East Main Street entry board describing the Abenaki historical presence and way of life.
 - a. Visual - Maybe a barcode with more information. Named after what is there
2. Abenaki names for trails, with English translations, to be shown on trail maps and signs.

F: **Community Feedback on Trail Design to Date – Support and Expressions of Concern (20 min)**

The committee needs to understand how we handle public comments. All statements/emails are public record.

Communicate back to folks who have emailed the committee with their opinions to see if it should be made public. We should have a system of communication. Funnel all emails through the ACF gmail account.

- What does the selectboard do with comments?
- Possible Google Form to collect public comment.

G: **ACF Management Plan Revision Status and Process Forward (45 min)**

Open public comment after the management draft plan.

The committee will look at the revised management plan at Nov. meeting and then give the public time before the Dec. meeting to make comments.

At November meeting, dedicate a majority of the time to review the plan and get it so it is ready for public view and comments.

- How long do you keep open the public comment?
 - 1-2 weeks for comments
- Motion to utilize language from VT State Wildlife in terms of tree stands. Amy P made a motion and Tyler seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Nick will follow up with the specific language.
- Management alternative to Selectboard
 - 2 alternatives for the public to look at based on the comments that we have received so far.
 - Plan 1: the approved Arrowwood/Sinuosity plan
 - Plan 2: What would that look like?
 - Will reach out to Arrowwood/sinuosity to see about possible review of a plan 2 and see how it would look ecologically.

H: **Communication Strategy (FPE, FB, Times Ink, etc...) (10 min)**

- Jesse will lead the subcommittee to keep the public up to speed on the process and what are next steps are along with some basic timelines.
 - Working on Updating Management Plan - Ellen/Nick
 - Aim for last week in November to have a Problem Solving Session - Caitlin
 - Contact Arrowwood/Sinuosity - Jim/Caitlin
- Listening session - When, How
- Move forward with management Plan revision
- Cecilia work with Abenaki and language
- What are we asking of Arrowwood/Sinuosity
 - Current or Compromise - Is compromise sound ecological.

J: **Other and old business follow-up (15 Minutes)**

- i. Resolution of Issue Related to Inappropriate Posting to ACF Facebook Page
- ii. Transportation Committee – 2022 transportation planning projects and Feasibility for Path from Town to ACF
 - a. Interested in any ideas for ways to get to the Town Forest from Town?
 - i. Trail through land owners? Bring ideas forward
- iii. Conservation Committee Recommendation for New ACF Committee Member –
 - a. CCR has a couple of candidates and will meet and vote in November.
- iv. Beyond the Strut Hunt at ACF

Below is the Chat from the people that were on Zoom: These were copied and pasted into this document.

From Patty Brushett to Everyone: 07:30 PM

How lucky we are to have Sue

From Emily (she/her) to Everyone: 07:30 PM

Agreed, Patty! Thank you Sue!

From Chief Don Stevens to Everyone: 07:34 PM

If you create spaces to promote wildlife habitat and also agro-forestry, you can coexist. Our people have been grooming the forest for thousands of years. You just have to manage with those things in mind

From Nick Neverisky to Everyone: 07:40 PM

Trails proposal from Arrowwood and Sinuosity, voted on by the ACF committee:

<https://arrowwoodvt.com/acf/>

From Me to marcyharding: (Direct Message) 07:45 PM

thank you, Marcy. I really want to respect Chief Don Steven's being on the call today. We're already over 30 minutes past when we were going to give him time. I look forward to hearing your feedback on the trail design.

From Erik Filkorn to Everyone: 07:51 PM

I had the good fortune to participate in the Road Ecology training run by Sue when I worked at VTrans. The committee would be wise to carefully consider her comments. I also think revising the relatively new management plan to accommodate a use that runs counter to the plan feels like the trail wagging the dog.

From Connie van Eeghen, she/her to Everyone: 07:55 PM

I am a Richmond resident and support the Indigenous Land Use Rights & Land Acknowledgement proposal as amended by Chief Stevens.

From Judy Rosovsky - VT to Everyone: 07:57 PM

FYI the easement allows trapping but the general sentiment was that it was not an appropriate activity for a town forest that would be likely to have dogs and kids running all over the place, so it was excluded in the management plan.

From Patty Brushett to Everyone: 08:01 PM

I'd like to see signs that have pictures of the plants the Abenaki use and how.

From Emily (she/her) to Everyone: 08:04 PM

I fully support the Indigenous Land Use Rights & Land Acknowledgement proposal as amended by Chief Don. It would be amazing to have Abenaki signage as well. Thank you for working together to acknowledge this and work together to love and maintain the land.

I am a Richmond resident too!

From janabrown to Everyone: 08:04 PM

Thank you Chief Stevens for your insight and assistance with this proposal.

From Patty Brushett to Everyone: 08:05 PM

I agree

From Chief Don Stevens to Everyone: 08:17 PM

Please take care everyone. If I am needed further, please get my contact information from Scott. Wliwni (thank you) for considering our people. Be Well Chief Stevens

From Me to Everyone: 08:18 PM

Thank you Chief Stevens!

From alexis lathem to Everyone: 08:19 PM

Thank you Don Stevens. We look forward to working on this proposal.

From alexis lathem to Everyone: 08:42 PM

VLT has an agreement with the Abenaki. That they wish to extend to all its easements. Don Stevens did say this.

From jon.kart to Everyone: 08:50 PM

Brad, please approach the microphone

From Me to Everyone: 09:42 PM

jon can you speak up?

From Judy Rosovsky - VT to Everyone: 09:54 PM

Re RCC appointee to ACFC, the RCC needs to meet to vote on this. Our next regular meeting is in early Nov, but if you really need a body we could have a special meeting - just let me know.

From Judy Rosovsky - VT to Everyone: 10:00 PM

If Arrowwood or Sinuosity would like to be paid for their time the CRF would be an appropriate funding source if ACFC wanted to apply.

From Me to Everyone: 10:00 PM

Thanks Judy.

From Judy Rosovsky - VT to Everyone: 10:16 PM

Re the people who want no plan, please remember that the ACFC, the RCC and the Selectboard all signed off on the Management Plan, which includes trails.

Thanks for all of your hard work, patience and thought.

**** PLEASE NOTE – MATERIALS RELATED TO THESE AGENDA ITEMS ARE POSTED AND AVAILABLE ON THE ANDREWS COMMUNITY FOREST WEBPAGE AT <http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/richmond-town-forest/>**