

1 **Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC)**
2 **March 14, 2023**

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4 **Members in attendance:** Elizabeth (Ibit) Wright, Judy Rosovsky, Daniel Schmidt, Kit Emery,
5 Kate Kreider, Bob Low

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7 **Community Members in attendance:** Duncan Wardwell (first 15 minutes)

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9 Meeting start: 7:35PM

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11 **Public Comment:** None

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13 **Minutes Taker:** Bob Low

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15 **Minutes Approval:**

- 16 ▪ February 14, 2023 meeting: Unanimous approval with typo corrections
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18 **Amendments to the agenda:**

- 19 ▪ Planning Commission report to Selectboard at its 3/13/23 meeting.
20 ▪ Report on Umiak plan for access ladder to Winooski River.
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22 **Update from RCC Subcommittee and discussion regarding the speaker series:**

- 23 ▪ Location: Richmond Free Library, 6-8PM. Show to be run by Jim Shallow –
24 introductions, question and discussion management, moderate public comment.
25 ▪ The selectboard approved request for spending up to \$1,000 on speaker
26 honoraria. Not certain State representative can accept. Dan will ask at end of
27 Panel Session.
28 ▪ Session explained as Town-wide discussion: Balancing Conservation and Trail
29 Based Recreation not restricted to Andrews Community Forest (ACF).
30 ▪ Judy and others: Extraordinary job done by RCC subcommittee organizing the
31 Panel, amalgamating / assembling a core set of questions from those submitted
32 by the public (See below). Panel has seen the questions in advance
33 ▪ General conclusion after discussion that that speakers should introduce
34 themselves.
35 ▪ Dan: RCC should consider this as the start of a series.
36 ▪ Judy: should be a report for FPF.
37 ▪ Set-up plans: RCC members and Duncan will arrive early for audience, video,
38 sound set-up. Ibit will have copies of the speakers list and core questions to hand
39 out and fill in
40 ▪ Has been good PR. a good turnout expected in person and by Zoom
41 ▪ Judy will see to refreshments. Kitchenette available.
42 ▪ General discussion of role of RCC members: there as listeners; should avoid
43 answering questions unless circumstance demands such as panel asking RCC
44 to comment.
45 ▪ General discussion of managing questions: restrict time allowed; alternate
46 between audience and Zoom questions submitted in Chat (Dan will manage).

- 1 ▪ Ibit will send a last minute FPF announcement with Zoom link.
- 2 ▪ Bob will take photos for post-PR such as TimesINK Report.

4 **Green-up Day:**

- 5 ▪ Ibit agreed to lead again. Has discussed needs with Linda Parent - bags and
- 6 posters. Will discuss with recently appointed Town Planner Keith Osborne,
- 7 including use of VT Green-Up Day interactive map.
- 8 ▪ RCC will need to assure FPF and other announcements / reminders; be ready to
- 9 assign volunteers who ask.
- 10 ▪ Need to reserve time for discussion at April RCC meeting.
- 11 ▪ Kate discussed plans for a Volunteers Green Clean-up: a family opportunity;
- 12 dovetailing with Green-Up day.

14 **Matters arising:**

- 15 ▪ Ibit will be putting a request in to renew her RCC membership. Judy will
- 16 recommend.
- 17 ▪ Selectboard renewal of CRF: 71% approval, down a little bit from previous year –
- 18 may be yearly wobble but need to watch. Can check past voting record.
- 19 ▪ Planning Commission report to Selectboard at its 3/13/23 meeting (Judy).
 - 20 • Judy summarized Planning Commission (PC) report to Selectboard at its
 - 21 3/13/23 meeting. PC has focused on two districts: Route-2 corridor and
 - 22 Bridge Street / Stone Corral area. PC seeks to remove barriers to building
 - 23 concentrated affordable housing stock including multiple-unit housing and
 - 24 regulations regarding family restrictions; seeks to keep big boxes out; need
 - 25 to account for State criteria regarding housing.
 - 26 • Issue remains regarding infrastructure in Richmond to support low-income
 - 27 families.
 - 28 • The Selectboard has received the PC plan and has a certain time limit on
 - 29 responding.
- 30 ▪ Report on Selectboard / Umiak discussion regarding Umiak desire to install a
- 31 ladder at Overrockers to facilitate entry / exit from the river (Judy, Bob).
 - 32 • Selectboard was positive after discussion of purpose and location.
 - 33 • Discussion included use of Bombardier meadow as an entry point: need to
 - 34 clarify the issue here.
 - 35 • Possibility remains that Umiak might approach RCC for funding of
 - 36 additional river access needs. Discussion of supporting Umiak as a public
 - 37 sector company

39 **Adjourn: 8:45PM**

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March 15 Panel Discussion

Balancing Conservation and Trail Based Recreation

When: March 15th from 6:00-8:00

Where: Richmond Free Library

Panelists:

Meredith Naughton - researcher focused on recreation impacts on wildlife

Andrea Shortsleeve - Private Lands Habitat Biologist, VT Fish and Wildlife

Claire Polfus - Recreation Program Manager, VT Forests, Parks and Recreation

Hannah Epstein - Stewardship Coordinator at the Northeast Wilderness Trust

Guided Discussion Questions

1. **Defining Conservation and Recreation:** Our discussion is centered around balancing conservation and trail-based recreation. So how do we define conservation?

How do we define, or can you provide examples of, trail-based recreation?

2. **Wildlife and Human impacts:** How does trail-based recreation impact, in both negative and positive ways, natural communities?

3. **Individual vs population impacts:** The impact of recreation on wildlife is well-documented. However, the magnitude of those impacts seem to be poorly understood. How do we weigh the benefits of public access and recreation against the impact on wildlife when the magnitude of impact is largely unknown?

4. **Types of recreation impact:** Recreation can refer to a wide variety of activities (dog walking, hunting, running, birding, mountain biking, etc.). What types of recreation have the highest impact and how might we regulate recreation in order to minimize impact?

5. **Volume of recreation:** The impact of trail-based recreation depends on the numbers of humans using the trail. How can a 'carrying capacity' of a trail be established? How do we manage for potential growth in the volume of users?

6. **Public access and public involvement:** While recreation can have a negative impact on wildlife, enabling public access to natural spaces promotes a desire to protect and conserve these lands. If we limit public access, do we also limit our ability to conserve land?

7. **Climate change:** There is a lot of concern about the effect climate change will have on Vermont's forests. How should we manage our community and town forests such that these forests are resilient despite a warming climate?

8. **Other impacts:** It is often argued that developing trail-based recreation areas is inherently a conservation action because it creates an economically viable alternative to residential or commercial development. How do you view this argument?

9. **Private land:** Much of Vermont is privately owned. How is trail-development on private land regulated and what resources do landowners have to implement a low-impact, conservation-oriented trail?

10. **Equity:** Access to nature is not the same for everyone. For example, those who do not own property or have a readily available car may be less likely to spend time in nature. How might we take an equitable approach to conservation in our community forest, even if that means potentially limiting public access?

- 1 11. **Examples:** Are there conserved forests in Vermont and/or beyond that exemplify
- 2 low-impact recreation? Can you highlight some of them and describe what makes them
- 3 models for striking a balance between conservation and recreation?
- 4 12. **Trail development:** If you were designing a trail system in a town forest that was
- 5 acquired through a conservation easement and would serve as a model for trail design
- 6 across Vermont, how would you decide where to place trails? Is there a one-size-fits-all
- 7 approach or does this need to be done on a forest-by-forest basis?

DRAFT