

RICHMOND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, January 9, 2023

RCC Attendees: Judy Rosovsky, Bob Low, Bob Galvin, Jeanette Malone, Daniel Schmidt, Kit Emery, Elizabeth/Ibit Wright

Members of the public in attendance: Ian Stokes, Sam Pratt, Rob Mullen, Lou Borie

Public introductions and comments

November minutes were approved unanimously.

December minutes with Bob Low's added details were approved unanimously.

Additions, amendments to agenda:

We changed the agenda to first talk about:

Preliminary discussion and exploration of possibilities of how to help Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) with Master Plan re-write

Ian Stokes: The March 2023 Update of the original 2018 Management Plan has still not been submitted to the Select Board. The ACFC is still in the revising process. One suggestion offered is to hire an expert writer. Disclaimer: Ian has not discussed the plan with Daniel Schmidt. Writing by committee is a challenge. He (Ian) appreciates collaboration between the ACFC and the RCC, as well as our efforts to organize the two events last year—the panel presentation and Sue Morse's talk and slide show.

Ian has a personal request for someone to go through the videos of those talks to extract the helpful information and take-home messages to assist the ACFC with incorporating them into the management plan.

Also, someone could mine the management plans of other town forests for helpful information and the expert literature and scientific articles that could be helpful.

Daniel Schmidt: There's so much information on the ACFC website. There's still work to do to organize the materials so it can all be useful, and to organize the management plan so it is highly accessible for all. It's very common for individuals to help town committees with tasks like this.

Ibit Wright: Suggested using an intern, perhaps an undergraduate environmental studies intern from UVM.

Daniel: Suggested it might be better to have just one person to take on these projects—someone who is already involved with the ACF. Perhaps Brad Elliott or Wright Preston. (An intern would need supervision and direction.)

Jeanette Malone: Notices the strongest mgmt. plans she's seen have many people involved. It's typical for conservation commissions to write the mgmt plans for town forests. It behooves us to get involved.

Bob Low: The UVM Field Naturalist study should be integrated.

Judy Rosovsky: Sounds like the RCC is happy to contribute to the revision of the ACFC plan. It's much about the organization of the materials.

Ian: The RFPs define the content and what organization is needed. It's be good to have an exchange between the RCC and ACFC.

Jeanette: Wants to make sure the new information with conservation content is strong and represented in the new plan.

Richmond Land Trust: Update on Donahue Brook situation at Willis Hill

Lou Borie: This matter concerns the area on Rte. 2 at the bottom of Willis Hill. The western edge of Donahue Brook now flows across the meadow and is a torrent at times. The July floods and a new culvert resulted in lots of material washing down and settling in the flat area in an alluvial fan. The stream was redirected across the meadow and on to the Farr Farm across Rte. 2 flooding their land.

In December the Richmond Land Trust met with specialists to explore getting the stream back into its channel. The experts warned about this happening again next year. Chuck Farr wants to get the stream back into the channel, and the RLT wants the sledding hill back. State folks said an engineered plan needs approval. Jim Feinson and Bob Low met with an engineer who will submit a plan for winter work. They're seriously interested in a plan for rechanneling the stream.

Judy: Reminds us that CRF funds helped to buy the property and we ought to support this effort.

Bob L: Feinson's update about Donahue Brook on Front Porch Forum on January 5th, FPF post #5589 is excellent.

Lou: The engineer's proposal is due in about two months. They need more info to proceed.

Bob Galvin: So if one option is to get the stream to return to the original channel, and the second option is to keep things as they are now, is there a third option?

Lou: Good question. No other options are being considered at this time. It's a relatively simple project to get the stream back in the channel as it was. The State won't allow a big berm to hold the stream in its banks. Streams do move. The new culvert did impact the area.

Judy: Why was there so much water?

Lou: It's a big drainage area. The stream moves through a steep-sided valley.

Sam Pratt: Valley View got hammered and washed out Jericho Road. It was a large convergence area.

Jeanette: Could there be wetland plantings in that area (of the meadow along Rte. 2)?

Lou: No talk of that yet, but the RLT is working with State wetland folks. There's lots of vegetation there now. The alluvial fan is the new channel now and it's the problem.

Jeanette: Are there beavers on the other side of Rte 2?

Lou: No beavers in the Farris' field, and no culvert.

Bob G: Has the State taken responsibility for this? It'll happen again. What to do to account for what will likely happen all over again?

Lou: We can only recreate what was there. Maybe a more resilient channel is possible.

Judy: Maybe the State's highway culvert can be reexamined. Thanks to all for this update and conversation.

Lou: Will keep us updated.

UPDATES:

1) Richmond Save Our Salamanders – activity update, next steps?

Judy: Thanks Jeannette for her efforts. (Judy, are salamander signs coming soon? I have nothing about the signs—only the posts.)

Bob L: Likes the wooden post by Gillette Pond on Wes White Hill Rd. There are two more posts on Cochran Rd—one by the cemetery and one by the Beeken River Shore parking lot.

Jeanette: Encourages folks to take the Zoom training with the North Branch Nature Center. They also have a training manual. We will see our efforts this year as a pilot project.

Judy: Yes, a trial run makes good sense with people out at dark in the rain.

Jeanette: This will involve 8-10 or 12 nights between March and May at two areas on Cochran Rd. We'll work together to coordinate well and ensure safety for the volunteers and drivers of cars on the road (as well as the salamanders).

Kit: We're thinking 2 people per place—one taking data, one picking up the salamanders.

Jeanette: We must count salamanders going in one direction. We hope to train 8-10 volunteers and have them work together at first.

Bob G: Is excited to continue doing this work. Thank you!!

2) Selectboard Conservation Reserve Fund (CRF) funding mechanism decision

Judy: There will be no line item vote. The CRF will continue to be funded as it has always been. Many thanks to Bob Low and Brad Elliott for convincing the Select Board to maintain the funding mechanism. It helps us catch up with the cost of living changes.

3) Appointment to Andrews Community Forest Committee

Daniel: Wright Preston was appointed to the ACFC by the Select Board. The Trails Committee still needs to nominate someone.

Support for trail and riparian zone restoration work.

Preliminary information from Brad Elliott presented by Judy:

After the flooding there's a great need for work on resiliency. Lots of federal programs are there, but they're entangled with other kinds of funding. Brad spoke with Nina Gage with the Vermont Agency for Agriculture about expanding riparian buffer zones. Nina suggested support for silted lands, helping farmers in other ways. Brad wants to propose ways we could help incentivize farmers to go for the funding. Two farms are already getting help—Conant and Maplewind Farms.

Sam: How many farms are not enrolled?

Judy: Two—Farr and Verber Farms. Brad plans to explore the roadblocks in enrollment in federal programs.

Beaver damage and mitigation – next steps.

See attached note and Best Management Practices from Tyler Brown of F&W.

Rob Mullen serves on the Bolton Conservation Commission as Steward of Preston Pond where people want/ed?? to trap beavers. He spoke to us:

Beavers can be moved with permission of the Fish and Wildlife Commissioner. It's illegal to disturb a dam without permission. Skip Lisle is the best person in the world on beaver management, and he's in Vermont. (Bob knows Skip. He thinks he lives in Grafton.) The beaver management report is outdated. There are 200 complaints a year. Only 15 baffles are built a year. The rest of the beavers complained about are trapped. F&W has a bias on trapping. Skip is not cheap to hire, but he is really good. Food, water, shelter is why beavers come to an area. It costs

\$100 per beaver to be trapped. All members of that beaver family must be trapped. "Quick kill" traps take 5 minutes. There are so many benefits of having beavers and wetlands.

Draft presentation of CRF renewal for town meeting

Bob L: By February we need to review the CRF presentation. We want to catch up with inflation.

Invasive species trailer with tools

Judy: See email from Josh Arneson re: trailer for tools to be used for conservation and gardening projects.

Ibit: Where will this trailer be parked?

Daniel: Burlington has a mobile trailer. It could be a shed. Tool use trainings could happen. Private landowners could maybe use the tools. In Burlington anyone can use the tools. He has faith people would be responsible and this tool collection sharing could work here.

Judy: Will contact Mary Houle about her thoughts on this.

Jeanette: Will contact the Richmond Library about this. They do a lot of loaning of things beyond books. Documents and videos could be posted on the RCC website to support Richmond residents using the tools.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth / Ibit Wright