

Richmond Conservation Commission

Tuesday June 10, 2025, 7:30 PM

Present:

RCC: Judy Rosovsky, Bob Low, Jeanette Malone, Kit Emery, Sam Pratt

Public: Wright Preston, _____, Lou Borie (remote)

Minutes: Sam Pratt

7:30 p.m. -

Public introductions and comments

Sam appointment minutes taker

May minutes approved - 4 in favor, 1 abstention (Sam)

Moved RLT application to beginning of agenda

7:40 p.m. - Consideration of Richmond Land Trust (RLT) application for Conservation Reserve Funds (CRF) for a 20 vehicle parking lot at the Beeken Preserve

See attached documents at bottom of minutes.

Wright-

- Current lot is muddy and not suitable for cars (only usable by pickup trucks).
- Got three bids, proceeding with the lowest cost bid.
- Need to remove a tree for line of sight.
- Plan is to plant trees in the old parking lot.
- Matching funds are not available for this project (since it's a parking lot).

Jeanette -

- Had concerns about bike use, the natural community surrounding the lot is rare
- Does support river/boat access though.
- Noted there technically shouldn't be a trail there in the first place (parallel to a riparian area), turtle habitat.
- Would like to see educational signs posted regarding:
 - Leave no trace practices
 - Natural community education
 - Ostrich Fern harvesting
- Is a Kiosk feasible?
- Seems like an ideal place for a steward.

Wright -

- Seeing more bike parking at Cochran's than at Beeken.
- RLT is pursuing securing additional land along the river that is a dead end/remote section that is not conducive to mountain biking, which will provide additional conserved habitat.
- Can work on signage, happy to work with the town/RCC.
- Signs are permitted, but a kiosk would need permission from the easement holder
- This is a critical need— the lot can't be used currently.
- RLT wants to be part of the solution for recreation parking, but also not a burden to the habitat.
- Made a decision not to provide parking to not provide parking at the Bombardier meadow.
 - Need to provide parking somewhere in this area of Richmond.

Bob -

- Asked who is responsible for the river trail?
 - Seems that it might be the town.
 - Is it possible for the town to determine that no bikes are allowed on the trail?
- Can the lot remain if there's no gravel?
- This is in the flood zone — has ANR approved this?

Wright -

- Richmond residents, trails community, school groups may be responsible for trail?
- Someone is sickling the grass, not sure who.
- The plans for the lot stay out of the floodway.
- RLT made it clear to the construction group that no equipment will be allowed in the floodway during the construction.
- For biking restrictions: it seems to be up to the land owners whether or not they would like to allow bikers.
- Sees a lot of people using the Beeken lot for walking, fishing.

Sam

- Asked if the tree removal can be done by the highway department to save money.
- Had concerns about integrity of the lot long term due to potential flooding.

Wright -

- Lot is on private property and not in the right of way, so the highway department isn't responsible for the tree removal.
- The old lot was ok (if a little soupy) when inundated. Proposed lot is a little higher.
- Plan is to remove topsoil, and replace with state specced highway gravel that packs in and stays in place.
- Project must be "soil neutral" - they can only add as much fill as soil is removed.
- Relying on engineers to design it responsibly and make it resilient and stay out of the floodway.

Kit -

- Asked what the bikers' primary use of the trail is.

Sam -

- Opined the rivershore trail will likely get used by bikers either way, and non-bikers would be impacted more if the lot was not approved.

Jeanette -

- Asked that the contractor wait until July 1st for construction, after wood turtle egg laying season.

Motion: The Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC) recommends sending the Richmond Land Trust (RLT) application for \$30,170 Conservation Reserve Funds (CRF) for a 20-vehicle parking lot to the Selectboard for review. The RLT agrees to make its best efforts to provide signage at this site for conservation purposes, with the assistance of the RCC. The sunset date for this project will be 3 years from the approval date (if approved). This application meets CRF criteria as stated in the application and has been approved by the Zoning Administrator and the easement holder, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

Jeanette motioned to approve, Kit seconded, all voted in favor.

7:50 p.m. - Update from Andrews Community Forest Committee (Sam Pratt)

Three ACFC meetings have occurred since the last update:

- Have met extra times and extended meetings from 2 hours to 2.5 .
- There is still much to do but there is a lot of momentum.
- Spirit of the committee feels very collaborative now and less adversarial.

Presenting to Selectboard:

- Did not meet the June 2nd "deadline", reported to SB and they seemed encouraged by the progress even though ACFC didn't have a finished management plan draft to deliver.

Personnel:

- Chase, Cecelia, & Melissa termed out. None reapplied.
- Sonya Mastersen, who owns the farmhouse adjacent to the entrance to ACF, joined.
- Dan Wolfson has applied and his application will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Management Plan Progress:

- Finally addressed the demarcation conflict head-on.
- The simple "no trail development north of the powerlines" method was unpopular but we found common ground and were able to discuss and compromise.

- Resulted in Jim and Sam each writing separate approaches to Rec section, which were effectively combined to replace the old version(s).
- A Subcommittee of Jim, Brad, and Sam was formed and has spent a considerable amount of time working on the rec section, which feels very close to being completed, and is no longer at odds with the ecology section.
- New approach doesn't prohibit development in the northern section outright, but defines specific parameters for trail building that focuses on environmental protection and extensively lists out all of the sensitive areas and their necessary buffers, while allowing for trail development if it is compatible with those parameters.
- This approach is more scientific and less arbitrary, it helps clearly show where and why trails are and are not allowed, and provides a "checklist" that trail developers could use to ensure compliance.

Committee discussed above, and determined Sam should inquire about the following:

What is the appropriate amount of time for RCC and RTC to look at the management plan?

Can we clarify what the process is for shipping the doc out to other committees, the SB, and to the editor? What's the order?

Post on FPF? Documents that are being worked on are available for the public to review?
- Maybe after it's ready for SB consumption

RCC should not give "final approval" of the management plan until the editor has polished it. It's possible for RCC to provide feedback before then, but not final approval.

8:45 p.m. - Update from three parks committee

- Judy met with the committee.
- They were wondering about CRF funding and if they can use it.
- They want to plant some trees there, wondering if they can submit an application.
- Jeanette asked if we make sure we plant natives there.
- Sam noted we could remove existing invasive species(Asiatic Bittersweet) there.

8:50 p.m. - Update on future land use map

- The maps we have for town plan is incorrect— some of the areas need to be re-zoned.
- See attached documents at bottom of minutes.

9:05 p.m. - RCC comments to Town Plan Steering Committee – review of Natural Resource section and comments

- Bob did rewrites for natural resources and future land use sections already.
- Will get feedback from Kit & Jeanette since they filled out the survey.
- Other members can (and should) fill out survey(s): town site > steering committee > natural resources > bottom of page, click “click here”.

9:10 p.m. - Wild Weed Whacking Wednesdays Walk – a plan for harmful introduced weed removal efforts

- Jon Kart is looking to pass off his responsibilities (of 15 years) to someone else
 - Removing weeds/invasives
 - Rewilding areas
- Community efforts
 - Early detection
 - Small patches
 - Short timeframes
- Hire professional help for bigger sections.
- Jeanette is looking to start a small group of leaders to start this and communicate with neighborhoods.
- Need a good name for the program.
- “Pulling Together” was the top pick.
- Send name suggestions for the group to Jeanette.
- Be thinking of folks that would like to join as a neighborhood leader?

9:25 p.m. - Discuss possible RCC action concerning large loss of ash visible from highway – ID owner and perhaps work towards tree replacement to avoid establishment of harmful introduced weeds?

- Sam knows the land owners.
- There is a large presence of invasives already.
- Not sure if they would want to spend their own time and money on removing the invasives there, but can ask.
- There is a high presence of invasives there already, mostly Barberry, but also Bittersweet and Honeysuckle.
- Good topic of discussion for a future meeting— “how can RCC help or coordinate efforts on private land (especially when the private land has an effect on neighboring public land)”.

9:25 p.m. - Matters arising

- Yearly ethics training and attestation must be completed
- https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/General/boards-meetings/all-committee-board-members/CodeofEthics_Training_Acknowledgement.pdf
- COMPLETE THE ETHICS TRAINING via the "Municipal Code of Ethics" links

- Read the RICHMOND CODE OF ETHICS (03-17-2025)
- Sign Acknowledgement form within 30 days of beginning service and annually between 6/1-8/31
- Committees use an Open Meeting in Jun – Aug to review the Code of Ethics and Open Meeting Law.

9:30 p.m. Adjourn