

# **RICHMOND CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

## **Meeting Minutes, Tuesday August 12, 2025**

**Present:** Kit Emery, Jeanette Malone, Sam Pratt, Judy Rosovsky

**Members of public:** Melissa Wolaver, Morgan Wolaver, Mark Schiewetz, Jayne Sheridan, Kathy Gruber, Fran Thomas, Jon Kart

**Minutes** taken by Judy Rosovsky

The July minutes were **approved** unanimously.

The **agenda was amended** to move the goats for introduced species control to the introduced weed control section (“Richmond Pulls Together”).

**Consideration of the 3 Parks Committee request for Conservation Reserve Funds (CRF)** for trees and other additions to the pickleball court:

Judy suggested that Melissa and Fran each represent their case, then the commissioners would discuss the CRF request.

Melissa remarked that Brown’s Court park is a town asset and she has recreated there for 30 or so years. She questioned the cost of the project, including \$2750 for concrete slabs for the benches and picnic table, and mentioned that the library has metal benches that one person can move but that there has been no vandalism. At least one is ADA accessible.

Fran noted that the Historical Society, of which she is a member, helped to pay for those tables. Jayne remarked that it would be more appropriate to bring these concerns directly to the 3 Parks Committee.

Fran had been surprised by the letter which had gone to the Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC). There had been at least 3 opportunities to comment – at the DRB meeting, the SB meeting and two prior RCC meetings. She only saw the letter of concern as part of the RCC meeting packet.

She explained that the 3 Parks Committee had a designed place the table and benches and that they were saving space for a possible bocce court and possibly for parking. Jean Agner had researched the design (see Round Church green for examples of similar benches). Concrete slabs are necessary as previous benches have been chucked into the river. These amenities will serve more than just pickleball court people; all other park users can enjoy them. The Development Review Board (DRB) and Selectboard (SB) had both approved this project.

In her letter of concerns, Melissa had noted a discrepancy in the number of trees. Fran explained that this was a DRB error; the correct number of trees is 60. The trees are for shade and for noise control and the stipulation is that the pickleball court cannot be used until the trees are planted. The trees will not be 15’ wide.

The history of this project is that the 3 Parks Committee received \$550,000 of ARPA money to improve 3 parks; the Round Church Green, Volunteer’s Green and Brown’s Court. Actual construction of the pickleball court was under contract and was built, but due to the immense amount of flooding the town needed to utilize the rest of that ARPA allocation. It is not

clear if the town will be reimbursed by FEMA for those flood repairs. Hence the request for CRF funds to complete the planned and approved project.

Questions – Sam asked if changes to this plan require approval? Yes if the site plan is changed. If FEMA reimburses the town will the town reimburse the CRF? No. Jeanette asked if anyone had brought this issue to the 3 Parks Committee. Fran said no, it's the first she's heard about the concrete slabs. There are no complaints about mowing at the Round Church and it is easier for people in wheelchairs to access the table if it is on a slab.

A discussion about possible options ensued, including the use of sono (aka sauna) tubes as a less expensive alternative. But any changes would require DRB review, then SB approval. IN a compromise solution the RCC decided to exclude funding for the concrete slabs.

The Conservation Commission voted to approve recommending a modified version of the 3 Parks Committee Application for CC Funds for continued work on the Brown's Court pickleball court. The original request for arbor vitae trees for sound barriers, picnic tables and benches and other items that will improve this recreation area was supported with the exception of the \$2750 for concrete slabs, for a total modified request of \$9,953.07. The request fits a number of CRF criteria, as enumerated in the proposal related to recreation, natural resources and historic preservation. These funds must be expended within 3 years of the date of final approval, by Sept 2028.

### **Updates:**

Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) update – the committee continues to make progress on a draft of the revised management plan. Ian came to the SB to discuss hiring a copy editor. A tentative timeline was discussed – once a draft is completed it will go to the RCC and the Richmond Trails Committee (RTC) while meantime the ACFC will be putting out an RFP for an editor. That person will have 8 weeks to complete their work, then the ACFC will review the semi-final copy and send that to the RCC and RTC. The details of any public comment period have not been worked out yet.

Jeanette suggested that there could be a special meeting of all parties (ACFC, SB, RTC and RCC and public).

We agreed to add a discussion of this item to the next RCC agenda.

Future Land Use Map – Judy briefly reviewed the work on the Future Land Use (FLU) map. The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission map is now closed to public comment, but Richmond can make it's own map. The regional map is not always congruent with the Vermont Conservation Design guidelines. Direct comments to the Planning Commission.

**Ethics documents** – commissioners must view video and send confirmation to Duncan. Most commissioners have completed this task.

**Priority projects for RCC** in coming months – Town Plan, weeds, river?

There is some concern about work overloads especially with the commission temporarily down to four functioning commissioners. Dan resigned due to a work conflict, Ibit is doing fire work in MT, Bob is directing his energies to the town plan and needs to step back a bit from the RCC and Susannah out for personal reasons. Hence the need to establish priorities. We agreed

that we do not have the expertise for the river projects we attempted to take on. We are best served fulfilling our obligations to the town in furthering the town plan, and in pursuing the control of noxious weeds, including the bindweed besetting the newly planted Volunteer's Green trees.

Sam is the liaison for the UVM Climate class offered by Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux. She would like a one paragraph statement about Richmond's goals for her class. It was mentioned that the town is looking into climate issues on the east side of the town so perhaps the class can look into the western end. Sam will write something up and send it to us, but if we have comments we need to reply to him directly.

**Richmond Pulls Together** - Jeanette is leading a train the trainer project called "Richmond Pulls Together" for showing neighborhood leaders how to manage small infestations of noxious weeds. She proposed 3 levels of management: small, like easy enough for a few people to remove in 45-60 minutes; medium – requiring a half a day's work with volunteers and a coordinator; and large – projects too big for volunteers alone that would require professional help. Jeanette only wants to take on small projects and hopes to find others to lead the medium and large projects.

Jon Kart joined us in a discussion of how to proceed. He has organized many events but can't do so any longer so we considered how and whom to hire or solicit help from. Judy agreed to contact some of our partners to see if they might be interested in this idea. Any contract would require 3 bids.

In the interest of managing the workload Judy asked if commissioners would bring in their ideas for areas to target for introduced species control. We could then establish priorities for which ones to tackle.

We considered goats as a control method and at least 3 goat owners who use lend or rent their goats were tentatively identified. Jeanette thinks mapping weed locations would be helpful.

**The town plan workshop was briefly reviewed:** There were not many members of the public present. Judy commended the commissioners who outfitted and staffed the table (Jeanette, Kit, Bob and Sam) and appreciated the work that was done to create this event. It seems like more publicity was needed.

**Acquire note-taking device:** All were in favor of getting a note-taking app like OTTER. Judy agreed to ask the town about this. A town-wide app could be used by all boards and committees. Sam saw that a business version is \$20/month. Kit said OTTER is better than the app she was using.

9:25 Matters arising

9:30 pm Meeting adjourned