

**Richmond Conservation Commission
Minutes, August 9, 2022
R.Low**

Present: Kit Emery, Bob Low, Dan Schmidt, Ibit Wright

Public: Brad Elliot, Janet Malone, Dan Wolfson, Nancy Zimney

Start: 7:40

Public Comments

- Brad Elliott asked to reserve his comments for deliberation on Andrews Community Forest Committee Conservation (ACFC) Reserve Fund proposal

Introductions

- None

Minutes

- No action taken on My and June 2022 Minutes
- Kit will circulate latest edited version of July minutes for further RCC editing / review

Additions to Agenda

- None.

ACFC proposal for detailed ecological study of proposed Forest trails: fine scale study.

- Dan S. summarizes proposal: purpose is to gather more information regarding ecological suitability of current proposed trails. Outcome goal is approval
- Kit: Concern that the budget of \$3,500 is not sufficient for required degree of study; not enough detail is provided regarding the kind of assessment to be undertaken.
- Dan: Looking for what is the substance of the survey? Proposal based on discussions between Jim and Caitlin (ACFC) and Arrowwood (AW); goal not to look at every species rather to look for needs to pause for a closer look. Not a bid per se – more to continue ecological assessment; ACFC did not get budget specifics; could ask ACFC for more detail
- Brad Elliot: more information needed, reflecting on 17-year history of careful reviews of CRF applications and their success; current ACFC Proposal is not up to snuff; scope of study not included – standards of detail not met; Discusses Town requirement for 3 bids for projects of this size fiscally
- Ibit: concern about degree to which supporting documents have been available on the / a web site; Agrees in terms of slimness of the current proposal
- Bob: In response to a question from Judy Rosovsky, Josh responded by email:
 - From:** Josh Arneson <jarneson@richmondvt.gov>
 - Sent:** Wednesday, July 13, 2022 9:42 AM
 - To:** Rosovsky, Judy <Judy.Rosovsky@vermont.gov>
 - Subject:** Re: FW: RCC Application - AFC Summer Season Trail review by Arrowwood Environmental

Judy,

If this is the same type of work that was originally contracted for then this will essentially be a change order to add more work and it does not need to go back out to bid.

- 4 ▪ Brad: concern about the level of detail regarding proposed buffer study, citing wording
5 from the Management Plan and the ACFC response to questions raised by the public
6 from its survey (excerpts added as addendum to minutes); the math (cost) does not add
7 up if one computes what is required and the amount budgeted.
- 8 ▪ Bob's read of discussion up to this point:
 - 9 • There is no direct input from Arrowwood in terms of proposed work and cost
 - 10 • The level of detail in current Proposal: what to be done and how
 - 11 • There is no budgetary detail
 - 12 • Overall: RCC needs more
- 13 ▪ Bob: there is some urgency here in terms of getting the ball rolling, moving forward;
14 consider special meeting later this August
- 15 ▪ Dan S.: reminded all the credentialed professionals are involved (Arrowwood), they will
16 do the job well, we would get a critical survey of ecological issues toward establishment
17 of clearance for the trails.
- 18 ▪ lbit: Concern there has been no bidding – need bids; no detail as to what will be done;
19 what is the product in terms of how much will we get; need more information regarding
20 the \$3,500 budget.
- 21 ▪ Kit: Agrees bids are necessary
- 22 ▪ Bob: Reflecting Brad's comments about RF history, there is a precedence issue here if
23 the ACFC proposal is approved as written. As a hypothetical, how could RCC turn down
24 an equally spare proposal from some person / group not known to RCC in terms of
25 established credentials?
- 26 ▪ Bob: reminds everyone of Josh's position that competitive bids are not required.
- 27 ▪ Dan Wolfson: issue of how fine scale assessment can be done without established trails
28 route.
- 29 ▪ Dan S.: reviews trails options, some to be dropped, others to be adopted; RCC focus
30 should be on assessing the Proposal itself
- 31 ▪ Bob: Wonders if an approach such as for the current management Plan and Concept
32 Map is a way forward. Identify proposed trails routes (as is now the case), acknowledge
33 that there is some wobble as a result of fine scale ecological assessment for fine tuning
34 of exact trail location
- 35 ▪ Brad: challenges view that new outside bids not required (Josh's email); agrees some of
36 original proposed trails would be deleted; reminds that a number of specific trails have
37 controversy around them; there is no rush – must take time to do things right; example
38 Arrowwood proposal that spring and fall studies are needed, not summer; believes ACFC
39 is too dug in – has been no real chance for debate
- 40 ▪ Dan S.: challenges that view of ACFC
- 41 ▪ Bob: reminds of goal to move forward with a trails proposal.; why not have ACFC and a
42 Arrowwood come to present and explain Proposal
- 43 ▪ Jeanette: Level of controversy indicates premature to decide on trails; spring inventory
44 needed
- 45 ▪ Dan S.: worth considering a fine scale spring study (e.g. ephemerals, amphibians)
- 46 Dan: next step choices, vote on proposal vs table, asking for a more complete proposal
- 47 lbit: again, what is to be done with the money; no direct correspondence from Arrowwood
48 in terms of what to be done and costs – what is output / deliverables / scope of work

- 1 ▪ Dan: process issue – box checking or process to identifying best trails solution; at this
- 2 point sounds more like a box check
- 3 ▪ Dan: does not know how to adjudicate need for outside bids – no one comes forward with
- 4 an answer to that
- 5 ▪ Kit: with revised proposal, agrees, bring in AF+CFC and Arrowwood to explain it.
- 6 ▪ Dan: or someone from ACFC
- 7 ▪ Motion by Dan seconded by Ibit:
 - 8 • **Proposal is tabled for want of more detail on deliverables, to include direct**
 - 9 **proposal from Arrowwood, a description of what id to be done and how and**
 - 10 **an explanation if the budget in terms of expenses and sufficiency**
 - 11 **4-0-0**
- 12 ▪ Dan will communicate with ACC
- 13 ▪ Brad: does not see the need to rush; remind of Arrowwood statement that spring and fall
- 14 studies needed.

16 Ecology and recreation review meeting

- 17 ▪ Following up on discussion at July, 2022 meeting, thee is a need to construct a list of
- 18 possible keynote speakers as part of a series of sessions on issues related to ecology
- 19 and trails. The list from the July meeting was not at hand.
- 20 ▪ Dan: should construct a list of those expressing interest
- 21 ▪ Kit: plenty of names; need to focus down on the best ones
- 22 ▪ Brad: asked about nature of RLT role in terms of process, identification of participants
- 23 ▪ Ibit: Broad, non-confrontational, cooperative title is important, including for PR efforts
- 24 ▪ Group consensus headed toward a subcommittee, perhaps Dan, Max, Brad, to develop
- 25 participant list and establish contact.
- 26 ▪ Should continue discussion at next RCC meeting

28 Wild parsnip

- 29 ▪ Mary Houle had asked for RCC to look into the issue in terms of abundance along town
- 30 roads
- 31 ▪ Bob will circulate email received from Jon Kart on how to proceed; recent Vermont Public
- 32 piece indicates spring is the time for action
- 33 ▪ Kit: and after rain to facilitate removal
- 34 ▪ Ibit: how real is the problem?
- 35 ▪ General consensus: serious.
- 36 ▪ Dan: what should RCC role be?

38 Matters Arising

- 39 ▪ Brad: has sent to Judy and Dan the issue of serious Winooski River erosion along
- 40 Riverside Preserve.
- 41 ▪ CRF funds have been approved to begin to tackle the issue.
- 42 ▪ Selectboard may be asking RCC to weigh in.

44 **Adjourn: 8:40**

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ADDENDUM

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Management Plan Language:

5 ...requirement (page 27) stating, "Arrowwood, or another professional ecologist, will walk the
6 flagged route and a 50 foot buffer on either side to determine whether there are any fine-scale
7 features (rare, threatened, or endangered species) that would be adversely impacted by trail
8 development in that particular location. If there are, Arrowwood (or another professional
9 ecologist) will propose a suitable re-route."

Response to Questions raised:

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12 Arrowwood, in its Feb., 2022, "[Expanded Responses](#)" document, describes a broader project
13 scope, given that, as they admit, "a comprehensive natural resources inventory including a rare,
14 threatened, and endangered plant species survey was not conducted due to seasonal
15 limitations. This project provided a direction for trail routes, but avoidable small, localized
16 elements are likely present and could be identified by a qualified ecologist as the specific trail
17 footprint is determined in the field. Examples of some of the micro-features that may be present
18 and identified during the spring/summer seasons include small seepages, micro-habitats, visual
19 and auditory barriers, preferred stream-crossing locations, sensitive or uncommon plant
20 populations, wildlife food resources, denning and nesting sites. It is additionally best practice to
21 see trail design regions in various seasons, most notably spring and fall."