

Dear Richmond Conservation Commission,

I, and I'm sure the rest of the ACFC, understand that our community holds a diversity of views on how to best manage shared resources. My highest priority in my work on the ACF committee is to manage the forest in a way that integrates that diversity of priorities. My comments tonight express my concern that one community member is attempting to force our shared forest to be managed according to his vision without regard for the priorities of stakeholders who disagree with him. I am taking the extraordinary step of discussing Brad's actions in this way, not because he shared an opinion, but because he has continually misrepresented the nature of ACF management plan and the ACFC's work.

Brad has accused the committee of deviating from the management plan with its proposed trail route, yet the route we propose achieves the requirements described in the management plan (connectivity to adjacent parcels, multiple loops, higher density below power lines and lower density above power lines, and "avoid[ing] sensitive natural features whenever possible... as guided by professional ecologists" - see page 27 of the 2018 plan). To eliminate that connectivity, or to use a route advised against by the professional ecologists who reviewed the property, would be to deviate from the community's wishes as codified in the management plan. There is no trail route that better meets the requirements of the management plan than what the ACFC is proposing.

Brad alleges that the ACFC has not listened to his comments nor addressed his questions. Brad has had a far larger voice in committee meetings, and has had far more attention from committee members, than any other community member. When Brad raised concerns about the ecological impact of the trails, the committee discussed with him how the management plan requires implementation of trails meeting certain parameters and how we worked with professional ecologists (Arrowwood Environmental) to plan a route with as little ecological impact as possible (the ACFC even removed one of the trails approved by the Arrowwood due to concern for its ecological impact). When Brad questioned Arrowwood's recommendation to move a proposed trail from the northwest quadrant (as suggested in a draft concept map from 2018) to the northeast quadrant, the ACFC included Brad's question (along with others) in an inquiry to Arrowwood, using public funds to confirm that this adjustment was, as Arrowwood had already indicated, ecologically favorable. The ACFC has invested no small amount of consideration in issues Brad has raised.

I will acknowledge that the ACFC has not directly answered each of the minutiae-oriented questions Brad has posed (e.g., Brad has asked how the committee will manage the trails in light of a specific individual plant at a specific individual location). Researching and uniquely addressing every one of Brad's multitudinous highly-specific questions is neither practical nor the best allocation of the ACFC's finite time. The ACFC exists to serve all residents of Richmond, not any single community member.

I am exceptionally frustrated, not that Brad has a preference for how the forest is managed, but that he continues to misrepresent what the management plan calls for and continues to mislead

the community about the work the ACFC is doing. By promoting this misinformation he has personally commanded an exceptional amount of time within processes that are intended to serve the town as a whole. I am worried that, the next time the town requires a coalition of stakeholder groups to conserve a parcel, people will look back on this process - gridlocked primarily by one person sowing discord via misleading statements - and decide they want nothing to do with it.

I welcome the RCC to ask the ACFC questions about our process or what the management plan calls for. I am confident you will find that we are not disregarding the management plan, nor operating outside of the easement, nor suppressing public opinion.

Sincerely,

Nick Neverisky
Andrews Community Forest Committee Member