

Bombardier Preserve Public Meeting Richmond Land Trust (RLT)

March 21, 2023

Jim Feinson – Stewardship Chair, facilitator

AGENDA:

1. Overview
2. Background
3. Current Status
4. What is Our Ideal?
5. Options Brainstorm
6. Pros/Cons of Options
7. Preferences
8. Summary/Next Steps

Note: The meeting did not end up following this agenda exactly. We went with the flow but still covered the main points.

Background: The Bombardier parcel was conserved in 2014. The original intent was for an open meadow, with provision in the easement for a parking area of up to six parking spaces. In 2021, at the request of the Town of Richmond, and in response to increased parking pressure on Cochran Road in that area, the RLT agreed to open up the meadow for up to 20 cars on a temporary seasonal basis, while the parking Advisory Committee sought alternate long-term solutions. With solutions not yet found, in 2022 the RLT agreed to open up the lot again, now to 24 cars. Private and commercial use pressure overwhelmed the lot last summer. No significant parking alternatives in that area have been developed, and on street parking has been restricted. A new long-term solution for Bombardier is needed.

Stakeholders

- Richmond Land Trust (Board Chair and several members in attendance)
- Vermont Housing Conservation Board (holds conservation easement on the property)
- Neighbors (many were in attendance at the meeting)
- Parking Advisory Committee (most in attendance at the meeting)
- Town of Richmond (Town Manager Josh Arneson in attendance)
- Richmond Police Department
- Highway Department (Highway Foreman Pete Gosselin in attendance)
- Recreational Users
- Commercial Users (Steve Brownlee, owner of Umiak Outfitters in attendance)
- Bombardier Family
- Richmond Business Community
- Nature – Conservation Value, Hay Value

ISSUES

- Safety
- Dust
- Noise
- Alcohol/drug use
- Traffic
- Bad behavior
- Overnight parking
- Loud music
- Trash/human waste
- Lack of communication/effective signage
- Historic/archaeological heritage disrespected
- Ecological resources compromised and ecological communities threatened
- Police short staffed
- Lack of management of parcel
- Parking leakage/overflow (and problem overflow) to other nearby areas
- Attractiveness – new beach draws more users
- Commercialization – Umiak, other tubing outfits, camps
- Events – Floatapalooza seemed to be a tripping point for elevated usage
- Parking reduction in other areas
- Route 2 construction coming
- Used taxpayer money to purchase – so public right to use?
- Unpredictability
- Unsustainability
- Anarchy – some users do whatever they want
- New alternatives now exist! (Overrockers, expanded Beeken)

What does success look like?

- “Low key” – less escalation
- Peace and harmony
- Safety
- Balance
- Listening – community members responsive to one another
- Predictability – we know what to expect
- Proactivity – dealing with issues in advance, not after the fact
- “Finality” – move from uncertain temporary status to a known outcome
- Access – to the river, to the meadow
- ADA access for people with disabilities
- Jim’s phone doesn’t ring at night with problems

IDEAS

- Fish and Game Department management
- Attendant on duty
- Move the river access point to a more suited area – for commercial use, or in general
- No commercial access
- Involve Friends of the Winooski River/Vermont River Conservancy
- Strong enforcement of rules
- Allow contractual use only – defined groups, organizations
- Controlled access – set limits, require permits or reservations
- Make it quasi-public to get Town management
- Give parcel to the Town
- Limitations – on parking or on usage overall
- Allow private companies to tow violators
- Study capacity of the area/develop a sustainability plan
- Outline recreational use and limits in Town Plan
- Fees
- Signage
- Alternative parking and access areas
- Rules
- Context/culture – convey the spirit
- Develop new alternative parking and access spots
- Collect more data to better frame problems
- Time limited parking and usage

IDEAS CONTINUUM – from most restrictive to least

- No parking/no access
- No parking/drop off and walk-in only
- ADA (disability accessible) parking only
- Seasonal parking variation – more limited in summer
- Reduced parking – six spots only
- Mitigate affects – control dust, planting to reduce visual issues, noise rules
- Physical infrastructure – strong fences, gate
- Permit only
- Resident only
- No river access through RLT private land – only through State right of way
- Identify other nearby parking alternatives – build or buy
- Make this an improved permanent parking area of similar size
- Make the entire meadow a parking lot
- No change – just keep going as we are

RECOMMENDATION CONSOLIDATION

I make a motion that...

1. No river access be allowed at the Bombardier Meadow other than through the State right of way, and no parking.

or

2. No parking be allowed in the Bombardier Meadow. Drop off only, but no commercial drop off use. No events.

or

3. Maintain a 24-car lot with strong limits:
 - a. With mitigation of issues
 - b. With active management
 - c. With strong enforcement
 - i. "Lease" to Richmond to allow Town management and enforcement?

or

4. Reduced parking to X number of spots
 - a. With mitigation of issues
 - b. With active management
 - c. With strong enforcement

or

5. Experiment
 - a. Try things in measured steps, see how things work at each step