

To: the Richmond Conservation Commission and the Richmond Trails Committee. CC: Town Manager.
From: Ian Stokes.

I am writing as an individual to the Conservation Commission and the Trails Committee to support the application by Brad Elliott to join the Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC). I wish especially to bring factual information to your attention, rather than addressing whether personally I or others agree with him, nor submitting 'hearsay' evidence. I am aware that questions have been raised about his disagreements with others (I refrain from calling such disagreements divisive) and about his ability to work with others in a Committee context. I have come to know Brad over several years personally through his work for the Richmond Land Trust (RLT), e.g. I've helped at the 4th July RLT lemonade stand and more recently through observing his dedicated engagement with the planning for the Andrews Community Forest. Therefore I fully expect him to be a very hard worker – I expect him to be committed to working and contributing well beyond the expectation of simply attending ACFC meetings and expressing opinions.

His Oct 16th 2023 application documents a broad range of experience and contributions and commitment to public service. I urge you to read his assurances about his experience and expertise as meeting expectations within the ACFC Bylaws that state "Each ACF Committee member shall avail their expertise and background to the forest's management, but are elected to represent the interests of the forest and the town." [1]

Specific to the Conservation Commission: Brad has accumulated detailed understanding of the natural world in this part of Vermont with his concern for forest connectivity, threats from invasive species, and negative and cumulative human impacts on wildlife. He has worked to bring experts on the effects of humans on forest ecology to public meetings. I am one of many who has gained a better understanding through initiatives he has supported: the RCC panel on impacts of trail based recreation (March 15th, 2023); the recent recent talk at the library by Sue Morse ("Enjoying Our Trails with Wildlife in Mind": June 7th 2023).

Specific to the Trails Committee: Brad has knowledge and experience that relates to trails, and therefore merits your support. He often speaks and writes [2-5] about the emerging understanding of how human presence adversely affects wildlife and natural resources. Specifically, he cites the scientific evidence, and examples of where this knowledge has been applied to trail design. He is persistent in emphasizing that wildlife studies show surprisingly wide 'influence zones' around humans, and the need to consider buffer zones to protect various species, especially when their food supplies and breeding are at risk. He is concerned that humans now have the ability to access forests in increasing numbers and to travel increasing distances on trails.

Brad does not hesitate to put his knowledge and opinions in writing - there is an impressive written record. In addition to his detailed letter of application to the Select Board, Brad has contributed eight helpful postings to Front Porch Forum [3], and one to the Times Ink! [4] When the ACFC solicited written comments about the trails and about revisions to the Management Plan, he made detailed, fact-based contributions [5].

In Summary: This applicant has numerous strengths directly applicable to his ability to serve the Town as a member of the ACFC. I have attempted to document these, based on written records. Some may consider his persistence in bringing his concerns and ideas to public meetings as weaknesses. However, I anticipate that as a member of the ACF Committee he will work in a collegial manner, and within the constraints applicable to all members of Town Committees where disagreements are debated in public. Such disagreements should not be seen as divisive, but rather as bringing valuable perspectives.

Thank you for your consideration, sincerely, Ian Stokes

References:

1. Bylaws <https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Archive/2018/11/1c-Appendix-D.-Andrews-CFMC-Bylaws-10-30-2018-VERS.pdf>

2. Comments by email to the RCC January 2023 meeting:

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Conservation_Commission/Meetings/2023_Comments_on_AFC_panel.pdf

3. Brad Elliott's eight postings at Front Porch Forum about the Forest:

- “Conservationists in the Minority? Not at All”. Richmond – No. 5424 • Brad Elliott, Aug 7, 2023
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/5424#post_3136078
- “Trails in the ACF Are a Given: The Issue is Where” March 29th 2023
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/5258#post_3026776
- “Trail Mileage in Richmond and Surrounding Towns” Richmond, VT, Richmond – No. 5417 • Brad Elliott. Aug 2, 2023 https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/5417#post_3131735
- “Trails in the ACF Are a Given: The Issue is Where” Brad Elliott • Snipe Ireland Rd, Richmond
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/5258#post_3026776
- “Questions of Balance” Richmond – No. 5236 • Mar 7, 2023.
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/5236#post_3012639
- “Future of the Andrews Community Forest” Richmond – No. 4848 • Brad Elliott, Mar 21, 2022.
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/4848#post_2739789
- “The Future of the Andrews Community Forest”
Richmond – No. 4683 • Brad Elliott, Oct 9, 2021.
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/4683#post_2632235
- “Andrews Community Forest”
Richmond – No. 4680 • Brad Elliott, Oct 6, 2021.
https://frontporchforum.com/areas/107/issues/4680#post_2630505

4. Brad Letter to Times Ink.pdf April 2022

<https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2022/05/brad-letter-to-times-ink.pdf>

5. Comments submitted to the ‘Post-Engagement Meeting’ spreadsheet March 2023.

<https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2023/11/brad-post-engagement.pdf>

Dec 4th, 2023

To: The Select board,

I am writing to support Brad Elliot's application to join the ACFC.

I believe Brad Elliot possess several qualifications to be appointed to the ACFC.

Brads involvement with the various town boards such as the Richmond Land Trust, ACFC Steering Committee and years of dedication to help preserve other natural resources in Richmoond such as the Huntington River Gorge, Gillett Pond and the Beeken Rivershore Preserve has allowed him the gift to be a team player, communicate effectively, with clarity and accurately, his years of involvement with conservation - minded committees make him an invaluable candidate to sit on the ACFC.

Additionally, Brad has spent countless hours communicating to the board the impacts that we ALL can have on wildlife and ecology. He is a strong advocate of conservation practices regarding forest-based recreation and climate change. Brad continues to be a proven champion for balancing the needs of wildlife and people who want to enjoy the forest.

Sincerely Kit Emery
RCC Member

Brad Elliott's application to the ACFC

Nick Neverisky <nickneverisky@gmail.com>

Thu 11/2/2023 7:19 AM

To:jay.furr@richmondvt.org <jay.furr@richmondvt.org>;bard.hill@richmondvt.org <bard.hill@richmondvt.org>; david.sander@richmondvt.org <david.sander@richmondvt.org>;jeff.forward@richmondvt.org <jeff.forward@richmondvt.org>; lisa.miller@richmondvt.org <lisa.miller@richmondvt.org>
Cc:Josh Arneson <jarneson@richmondvt.gov>

You don't often get email from nickneverisky@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello Selectboard,

I'm writing to express concern about Brad Elliott's application to the ACFC.

My concern does not relate to his preference for tipping the balance of management more towards preservation than human access. That, like all personal preferences, is valid. My concern relates to his actions to discredit views that differ from his own, which he's done by promoting falsehoods about ACFC actions and by seeking to obfuscate and delay public process.

Brad has, in multiple instances, switched his stance to take the position most advantageous to his preferences at each time (e.g., alternately calling for closer adherence to the concept map then deriding the ACFC's adherence to the concept map as inappropriate), derided the work of professionals he participated in selecting (Brad participated in planning the hiring of the ecological research firm that advised on the trail plan, then called their work low-quality when they returned recommendations that didn't match his preferences), accused the ACFC of intentionally withholding information (most notably when he asked Caitlin Littlefield "What are you afraid of?" when she said she didn't have time to make Brad additional custom maps matching his specifications, after having already made multiple custom maps that Brad requested), and accused the committee of ignoring him and his perspective (despite Brad being the individual community member who has received by far the largest amount of ACFC time, attention, and resources). There is nothing wrong with Brad having a preference for how the town manages the forest, but the tools he has used in trying to get the town to manage this public asset in line with his personal preference (obfuscation of public process, accusations against public servants) indicate he is not fit to hold a public service position.

I'll note that my first action as ACFC chair was to recommend appointing Ian Stokes, who similarly holds preservation-focused preferences, to the committee. I believed then and believe now that Ian is an asset to the management of the forest. I even recommended him for an additional position on the Richmond Mountain Trails pedestrian advisory committee. I'll also note that, in 2021, I was one of the ACFC members who voted against a trail route that included a trail running parallel to a wildlife corridor because I believed including that trail would be more ecologically costly than was appropriate given the management plan's vision. My concern about Brad's ACFC application does not relate to his preservationist preferences, it relates to his attempts to derail public process for his own benefit.

The Selectboard did not approve Paul Hoff's application to the ACFC. That was an application I remained neutral on because my understanding of the ACFC bylaws indicated that position was to be settled between the Trails Committee and the Selectboard (see my email to Jay at the time stating this). I wanted the ACFC to respect that process and so was careful to take no position. I will note now that, although Brad's tone is very different than Paul's, if the Selectboard is opposed to appointing committee members who promote a single perspective rather than consider the voices of all

constituents, and is opposed to appointing committee members who denigrate community members who hold perspectives different than their own, you should not appoint Brad Elliott to the ACFC.

Nick

Andrews Forest Committee application feedback

Peter Halvorsen <halvorsenp@yahoo.com>

Mon 10/30/2023 11:50 AM

To: Josh Arneson <jarneson@richmondvt.gov>

You don't often get email from halvorsenp@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Josh

Please forward this email to the members of the Select Board. Thanks.

Select Board Members:

I've recently learned that a local resident Brad Elliott is applying to join the Andrews Forest Committee. I served on the Forest Committee for a period of time and my interactions with Brad were not like others I've had with our town residents. His demeanor is one sided and he does not listen well to other's points of view. He is adversarial at times enlisting his peers to support his view while not accepting those opinions of experts enlisted to bring credibility to a specific topic. When our group initially began discussions on trail locations, Brad would not accept the views of the ecologists we brought in to substantiate that there would be minimal impact of the wildlife in select locations.

I feel strongly that Brad would not bring value to the Forest Committee. He has one goal, to keep recreation out of the forest. Many residents are sick and tired that Richmond continues to drag on trail design and construction. Brad in my opinion would continue to elogate any resolution to our community recreation goals for the forest.

Sincerely

-pete halvorsen.