

**Town of Richmond
Special Selectboard Meeting
Minutes of June 29, 2026**

Members Present: Bard Hill, Greg Rabideau, David Sander

Absent: Caitlin Filkins, Adam Wood

Staff Present: Duncan Wardwell, Deputy Town Manager; Susanne Parent, Town Clerk; Peter Gosselin, Highway Foreman

Others Present: Recorded by MMCTV Erin Wagg, Adam Morse, Andy Solomon, Bob Galvin, Brad Elliott, Chelsye Brooks, Chris Chivers, Dan Wolfson, Gunnar Nurme, Hannah Harrington, Ian Stokes, James Cochran, James Patterson, Jeanette Malone, Jewels Hicks, Jon Kart, Joy Reap, Judy Rosovsky, Kamli Faour, Kit Emery, Marcy Harding, Max Krieger, Melissa Wolaver, Merrick Gillies, Nancy Zimny, Nick Herrmon, Paul Hauf, Pennie Rand, Robert Lajoie, Robert Low, Sam Pratt, Sonya Mastersen, Trevor Brooks, Tyler Merritt, Wright Preston

MMCTV Video: <https://youtu.be/Qv06Q8Kql08?si=0YBFFrC9yHIUpU4H>

Call to Order: 7:23 PM

Welcome by: Wood

Public Comment: Rabideau noted that GreenSea completed the construction of the west wall of the old Richmond Corner Market building. Rabideau stated that there was possibly the first chucker of polo on the field near the bottom of Snipe Ireland Rd.

Additions, Deletions or Modifications to Agenda: Sander noted that the Selectboard needs to move funds from FY26 to FY27 for a paving contract.

Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Public feedback on the Preliminary Draft of the Updated Management Plan for Andrews Community Forest

Timestamp: 0:02

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2026/06/3a1_MP2_Approval_Flowchart_Final.pdf

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2026/06/3a2_Management_Plan_FAQs.pdf

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2026/06/3a3_DRAFT_MP2_5-7-2026_WORD_VERSION.docx

https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2026/06/3a4_DRAFT_MP2_5-7-2026_PDF_VERSION.pdf

Pratt, the co-Chair of the Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC), stated that last month, seven of the eight members of the ACFC voted to approve the Preliminary Draft of the Management Plan (one member was not present to vote). The ACFC is seeking feedback to refine the plan and generate a Final Draft. Pratt stated that no plan of this scope will please everyone, which is a sign that the forest matters deeply to this community. Pratt stated that the Plan is designed to be both well-informed and practical to implement now, with the understanding that it can be adjusted over time through monitoring and adaptive management. The conservation easement requires the ACFC to protect both the forest ecological integrity and provide meaningful public recreation, not one instead of the other. The central idea of the Management Plan is straightforward. Different parts of the ACF have different ecological characteristics, and different activities have different kinds of impacts. Good stewardship means matching the two. Pratt illustrated that the southern zone is where the ACFC proposes to concentrate new trail development and higher levels of use. The northern zone has a greater concentration of sensitive habitats, steep terrain, and species that rely on quieter conditions. The boundary between them, the former VAST trail and power corridor, already exists on the ground as a clear and natural dividing line. Every part of ACF remains open to the public and the Plan directs certain types of developments to areas where they can do the most good and cause the least long-term harm. Pratt stated that written comments are welcome and can be sent to richmondtownforest@gmail.com.

Krieger, a former member of the Conservation Commission and current member of Richmond Mountain Trails, stated that the Management Plan misses the mark in a few ways. Krieger stated that it does not reflect the original intent of the purchase of the land for the Town, and he does not believe it reflects the majority opinion of folks in Town. Krieger summarized how Arrowwood Environment and Sinuosity Vermont Trail Builders were contracted together to plan for trails but were not re-contracted when there were questions about sensitive areas and ways to move the trails. Krieger stated that folks made their own decisions about the process and tossed out a lot of expert opinion. Krieger stated that his main concern is limiting the trail connectivity on the upper part of the parcel that connects to adjoining trails systems like Sip of Sunshine trails.

Hill summarized how people stated that the original trail plan was done before a fine scale ecological analysis. Kart reviewed that Arrowwood was told to make a plan that included trails which is one of the reasons people started over.

Gilles stated that there is a disconnect from the ability for the general public to interface

with the process as it is a very technical document that is hard to digest. There are a lot of restrictions placed on where the public might interact in certain ways in this parcel. Gilles observed that he does not see families or old people utilizing the trail network. There are going to be a lot of hurdles to develop any sort of meaningful recreation on this parcel. Gilles stated that the current Preliminary Draft Plan cannot provide meaningful recreation except for dispersed recreation like wandering throughout the woods.

Wolaver, a former member of the ACFC and a current Conservation Commissioner, stated that the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation developed the Vermont Town Forest Stewardship guide for committees who steward town forests. The ACFC utilized their recommendation to split the forest into meaningful zones that respect the need for recreation and the biodiversity where places need to be protected. Wolaver disagreed that a majority of people would not benefit from this plan or disagree with this plan.

Merritt stated that he served on the Trails Committee for 25 years and the ACFC for the first 3 years of its inception. In 2017 he was asked by the Vermont Land Trust to walk the ACF and look for potential connections with the Sunshine land and VYCC. Merritt asked the Selectboard to direct the ACFC with initiatives as they have had some dysfunctional times over the last eight years. Merritt suggested that the Selectboard interview past ACFC members. Merritt stated that the Selectboard should guide the ACFC with three suggestions. The first is to eliminate the no-biking above the power-line proposal as it is arbitrary with no science to prove that hikers or bikers do any more damage to those sensitive areas. Merritt stated that the pedestrian trails could be closer to the trail head for easier access for children and people with accessibility issues. The second suggestion is to redesignate the lower and mid-zone trails as pedestrian only. The third suggestion is to steer the ACFC to use scientific research. Merritt stated that the current trail designs are basically Google Earth suggestions. Merritt suggested using the Arrowwood ground research. Merritt stated that the Selectboard should set benchmarks and timelines for the ACFC. Merritt submitted feedback from the 2023 ACFC proposal which he stated shows that a far majority of the people want to have recreation trails on the land:

<https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2026/06/2023ACFCfeedbacksummary.pdf>

Rabideau stated that the Selectboard is being asked to balance the goals of hikers and bikers with the goals of conservationists.

Stokes stated that he recently completed a three-year term on the ACFC but is speaking as a member of the public. The easement makes it clear that there is unrestricted pedestrian dispersed access to the entire ACF. There is a pretty good trail system existing in the lower part of the ACF with forest and agricultural roads that provide numerous ways to reach the ridge. Stokes stated that he encourages the Selectboard to recognize

the present Draft of the Management Plan. There is a process for review by Town Committees and residents in place that will provide some minor improvements. Stokes suggested that everyone read the Draft Plan, especially the FAQs from the packet.

Rosovsky summarized that the land was purchased with the goal in mind of connectivity to the river for conservation purposes. Rosovsky recalled discussions about two possible bike trails, one north-south and one east-west. Rosovsky reviewed the steep terrain and fragile vernal pools. There were some safety concerns for bikers halting when encountering hikers. There is a certain amount of erosion happening because of the steepness of the trails. Rosovsky stated that the proposed Plan considers those features when locating trails.

Harding summarized the importance of the wildlife habitat that stretches from Jericho Rd all the way over to Bolton and beyond. Harding stated that this Plan does a remarkable job of recognizing the importance of wildlife habitat and connectors. Harding stated that during the 2023 meeting at CHMS, Arrowwood agreed that they would not extend a trail all the way up the norther part of the property if that had not been instructed to mutually agree with Sinuosity on a plan.

Reap stated that she was on the Planning Commission and helped write the previous Town Plan which stated they wanted connectivity in Town trails to try to keep people off of the roads. Reap summarized how kids could ride their bikes without using Rt 2 or Jericho Rd. Reap stated that there are lots of trails on private land, but they do not know how long those will be around.

Galvin stated he is in support of the balance this Plan strikes. Galvin appreciated the amount of science that was used to inform the Plan. Wildlife populations of so many species are in real danger. Galvin stated that the Plan is conscious of the need for recreation and wildlife habitat. Galvin stated studies that dispute the claim that there is no evidence that bicycles have greater impacts to wildlife than hikers.

Rand stated that the Town purchased the ACF with the idea that it would be an area where wildlife and the natural environment can be protected but also for the public to recreate. Rand stated that it is hard to believe that they cannot protect the birds, wetland, and plant life and still have more trails than what is shown on the current Plan. It is a shame that the Town would not want to encourage a connection to another trail network at the top of that property (a protected public right of way). Rand encouraged some form of public recreation.

Nurme stated that he served on the board of Richmond Mountain Trails and works on land conservation. Nurme stated that this Plan does not strike a good balance for the Town. The conservation easement held by the Vermont Land Trust includes ecological protection zones, surface water buffer zones, and other things that are never going to go

away. This ensures that the property remains forested, isn't developed into housing and provides the ability of wildlife to move through the landscape. Nurme stated that public access is another reason the property is protected and many folks are prohibited from a vast majority of the parcel trail connectivity to the Sunshine trails. Trail connectivity is a huge asset for the Town, and it feels like that form of connectivity is severely undervalued. A carefully sited trail would not have significant impacts to wildlife, especially on a property that's conserved.

BrooksC stated she currently serves on the Planning Commission and summarized the steepness of the ridge along Jericho Rd. BrooksC illustrated the perennial streams, wetlands and vernal pools and is concerned about the destruction of intermittent streams. The forest has the capacity to adsorb and disperse stormwater to protect the Town. There is a conservation easement for the Forest legacy where pedestrian access is guaranteed but it is the landowners' discretion to allow bicycles so access could be pulled at any time. The right-of-way for the Sunshine Forestry legacy is located smack dab in the middle of wetlands not previously delineated. BrooksC stated that she does not think trail connectivity to the top is precluded from this Plan. BrooksC stated that this Plan is fairly well-balanced.

Cochran, a member of the ACFC, stated that he met with a wetland person from the State of Vermont and a minimally improved trail through a wetland is an approved use.

Zimny stated that the wording of the conservation easement permitted human uses of the ACF were contingent on not damaging its natural resources. It also says that if conflicts arise between the permitted human uses and the natural protection, then the natural protection should take precedence, at least in some areas. Zimny summarized that parts of the ACF are considered ecologically critical for maintaining wildlife connectivity and climate resilience. The Management Plan acknowledges the possible effects and mitigates them through things like establishing buffers and zones of influence. The Plan has mechanisms for developing new trails, they just have to meet some guidance. Zimny stated that the ACFC focused on a measured and scientific-based approach to managing the forest. Zimny summarized that the Plan is a great place to start and it can go in a lot of different directions in the future.

Morse stated that there is more work that needs to be done to approve the Management Plan. Morse stated that this should be voted on by Town members on Town Meeting Day. Morse does not agree with the way the Plan restricts certain uses above the power lines. Without connectivity, he would not use this space because there are lots of recreation spaces in Town with connectivity.

Hauf stated that the current Management Plan is a culmination of a bait and switch. Hauf summarized that the ACF is important for human physical and mental health, and this Plan really limits that access. Nobody uses the trails and he never sees cars in the parking

lot. Hauf summarized the history of toxic behavior and anti-trail feelings that influenced ACFC members which resulted in at least five resignations. Hauf stated there is an anti-mountain bike sentiment from current Selectboard members. The ACF should be open to recreational users, and the current configuration does not make it realistic. The rubric and framework in place states 300 feet from any sensitive area so there is never going to be a trail in there if this Plan is approved. Hauf stated that restricted dispersed access is most intrusive to wildlife versus channeling people through a specific trail network. Hauf summarized that no existing trail in the State of Vermont, with maybe the exception of some of the shelters, meets the trail specifications of the Plan. Hauf agreed that the Plan should be put up to a Town-wide vote.

Patterson stated that his grandmother grew up on the Andrews farm and he is a trail builder designer. He would like to take his two little girls to explore the land and history on bikes.

Kart stated that he is a wildlife biologist for the State who really appreciates the ACF spot. Kart summarized that the Management Plan is not just for bikers versus wildlife but for many people who will never set foot on the property. Kart illustrated that some studies show that mountain biking has the same or less impact than hikers, but other studies show other pieces that depend on which wildlife and situations are present. A trail perfectly cited and artistically built will have an impact on wildlife, not all species and not all the time. It is the amount of use that the ACFC is trying to get at. Kart suggested that the Plan include a schedule of things that need to be done with monitoring efforts. It would be helpful to have the criteria that would trigger a response. Kart suggested picking a few important places in the ACF where access is going to be planned with annual or quarterly photo and video assessments.

Malone stated that she has provided several nature and adventure programs for kids in the community and serves on the Conservation Commission. Malone stated that she supports the Management Plan because it achieves a thoughtful balance between recreation and conservation. The terrain on the southern part of the forest is quite gently after the first steep climb that could be made wide enough for folks of all abilities and ages to share safely. The southern trails connect to Maple Wind and VYCC trail systems. The northern part of the forest would remain open for low-impact recreation along existing logging roads. The Plan honors a quiet, healthy forest that allows ample access for all users to safely enjoy. As recreational demands increase, protecting these spaces for wildlife and low-intensity recreation will become even more valuable.

Pratt summarized that the ACFC would respond to the feedback at their next meeting. Rabideau stated that he would like to understand the off-site connections and whether or not they are restricted by environmental laws or property ownership patterns before voting on this. Rabideau requested an explanation of if there are environmentally sensitive ways for people to get to the ACF other than the single access point. Rabideau

suggested managing times when we do not want people up there for breeding and migrating. Rabideau expressed concern about turning this into an attraction for the entirety of Chittenden County. Rabideau stated that it would be good to have a Management Plan in place so it could be revisited from time to time. Rabideau stated that he does not like the idea of waiting until Town Meeting to vote on it. Pratt summarized that just because the Plan does not show new trails on the map, that does not mean the ACFC is trying to block any future trail developments. The Plan sets parameters that allows for trail development. Pratt summarized that the ACFC plans on adaptive management and the Plan will be updated every 10 years or more frequently if desired. Hill asked if there is a feasible, rational, and responsible way to connect to Sip of Sunshine trails. Hill expressed concern about the volume as there are many trails that are suffering from being loved too much.

Wolfson summarized how Arrowwood did a great job of delineating all the sensitive areas on the map and did not understand how the initial trails went right through all those areas. This Plan takes a different approach by not putting the trails on first.

Sander reviewed that the Selectboard is not taking any action tonight as it is an informational session. There will be a follow-up on what the Selectboard plans to do next.

Consideration of moving \$101,161.55 from Highway, FY26 budget to Highway FY27 budget due to contractor schedule

Timestamp: 1:58

Sander reviewed that the money has already been approved and had planned to be expended by June 30 but the contractor has been delayed 13 days into the next Fiscal Year.

Rabideau moved to transfer \$101,161.55 from the Fiscal Year 2026 Highway budget to the Fiscal Year 2027 Highway budget, owing to a scheduling conflict of the contractor. Hill seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Hill, Rabideau, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Adjourn

Hill moved to adjourn. Rabideau seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Hill, Rabideau, Sander in favor. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at: 9:24 PM

305 **Chat file from Zoom:**

306 00:29:51 Jeanette Malone: on-line people can not see the SB members. Their
307 heads are cut off.

308 00:46:57 Judy.Rosovsky: Max, weren't you on the Conservation Commission
309 at or around that time? I don't recollect you making that suggestion. Please correct me if
310 I'm wrong.

311 00:51:31 Judy.Rosovsky: It is true that we were trying to protect some fragile
312 places on the west side of the property. I did at one point think that we should have gotten
313 all wise heads together to reconsider the trail locations but at that point the discussion
314 was mired in contention. The 'expert' trails, if established, would have been subject to
315 erosion, so they were not ideal and were a heated compromise between Arrowwood and
316 the trail design folks. The new plan has a different approach which may solve some of
317 these dilemmas.

318 01:02:32 melissawolaver: The sunshine easement is open public access to
319 pedestrian travel. Bikes are at the discretion of the owner of the property.

320 01:12:12 Jeanette Malone: Great points, Judy! This land is actually an integral
321 link in the Chittenden County Uplands Conservation Project - a statewide-supported
322 effort to connect the Champlain Valley to the Spine of the Green Mountains, which is
323 vital in the face of increased land development and climate change.

324 01:24:39 melissawolaver: If the trails connect to the Sunshine's conserved
325 property. The easement guarantees pedestrian access. Bikes can be banned at any time
326 by this owner or future owner.

327 01:28:06 Judy.Rosovsky: Has anyone ever asked the Andrews what their
328 intention was when they sold the town their land?

329 01:40:43 kit emery: Don't forget the acquisition of the Andrews Forest was
330 made possible through CRF funding. The CRF has specific goals and criteria and ACF,
331 RCC and the Town should keep those criteria and goals in mind, ex:

332 01:41:15 Judy.Rosovsky: Good resource for trails in wetlands:
333 [https://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/doc_library/VTDEC-VT-Wetlands-Program-](https://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/doc_library/VTDEC-VT-Wetlands-Program-Guidance-for-Recreational-Trails.pdf)
334 [Guidance-for-Recreational-Trails.pdf](https://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/doc_library/VTDEC-VT-Wetlands-Program-Guidance-for-Recreational-Trails.pdf)

335 01:46:20 kit emery: Conserve significant wildlife habitat, habitat corridors,
336 travel corridors and rare species habitat, maintain forest health, support long-term
337 ecological sustainability, protect scenic and natural landscape features . This is just a few
338 points of the criteria that are with- in the CRF program. The MP meets those goals .

339 01:51:35 Judy.Rosovsky: Is the hunting community represented in this
340 meeting?

341 02:23:55 Judy.Rosovsky: Some of the trail ocation constraints may change
342 with neighboring land owner changes. And Sip O Sunshine is private land, I believe. If it
343 were conserved it would make more sense to connect to it. We'd be better off with an
344 East - West connection. I like that the plan lays out good guidelines and allows for
345 flexibility.

346