

ANDREWS COMMUNITY FOREST COMMITTEE

Committee minutes for August 26, 2024, 6pm to 8pm meeting

Roll call and confirm quorum.

Committee Members Present: Ian Stokes (co-chair), Daniel Schmidt (co-chair), Melissa Wolaver, Chase Rosenberg, Cecelia Danks, Brad Elliott, Wright Preston

Members absent: Juian Portilla

Public, via zoom: Robert Low, Kit Emery, Lisa Miller (Selectboard), Dan Wolfson, Nancy Zimny

Minutes by Wright Preston

July 22, 2024 minutes approved: Wright motioned, Melissa seconded. 5 Approved, 2 abstained due to not being present at July meeting.

Daniel presented an update on Richmond Conservation Commission matters, specifically training in using BioFinder, an online database and high-resolution mapping tool from the VT Agency of Natural Resources used to identify Vermont's lands and waters that support important ecosystems, natural communities, habitats, and species. Training will take place in January 2025.

The co-chairs asked if there was public comment. The public made no public comment.

Daniel gave an overview of Management Plan revisions (proposed Tables of Action / Tasks). It was noted that the drafts of a Trail Stewardship Plan and Comprehensive Management Plan are inserted in the current document.

He then gave an update of the draft Wildlife Management Plan prepared by committee members, Brad Elliott, Chase Rosenberg and public member Sam Pratt. It was noted by Brad that Andrea Shortsleeve, a biologist with VT F&W, reviewed the WMP and made minimal suggestions. Brad noted that this draft plan is updated with new data and research from studies (including zones of influence) at ACF since 2018. The committee discussed using the east / west Old Vast Trail along with the east/ west Utility Line ROW as the demarcation between north and south human activity and conservation zones. The committee agreed that we would all read this document and comment on it by September 15th. Chase indicated that he was concerned that the north/south designation may limit any trail development in the north portion of the ACF.

Nancy Zimny spoke and said she liked the draft wildlife management plan as it encompasses State data and plans. She indicated that it coordinated well with other relevant ACF documents.

Wright gave an update on the VELCO utility road ROW easement matter and said that VELCO and the ACF Committee have one sticking point, that being VELCO agrees to pay only \$2,500 for water bar improvements the western Old VAST Trail while the Committee at its 7/22/24 meeting voted to require \$10,000, as \$10,000 will likely be the actual cost to establish new and good water bar systems. We agreed to have Josh Arnesen, Town Manager, take over this final negotiations with VELCO.

Ian and the Town Manager further revised the ACF Committee Bylaws to add clarity in the process for Selectboard appointments to the Committee. Cecelia suggested a couple of refining points. The committee voted all in favor of the revised bylaws including Cecelia's revisions. Cecelia made the supporting motion and Melissa seconded it.

Wright shared with the Committee that Ian and he had met with western ACF neighbor Adam Wood about Adam's mowing of a small meadow piece of the ACF, adjoining Adam's meadow. Adam indicated that he mowed it twice in 2024 to help control the invasive plant, Poison Parsnip. Some committee members feel that increased mowing may actually help spread some invasive plants. Daniel indicated that he would stop by and see how broad the invasive plant growth is and report back to the committee.

Wright shared with the committee that there is a large metal tree stand on a hemlock right off the Urbanik Way Trail. The stand has been at the tree for several years. We don't know who owns it. The tree stand has neither an owner nametag or phone number as required by state law. The ACF policy states that the seasonal installation of tree stands required ACF chair notification and approval. It was agreed that Daniel will place a post in FPF stating the owner needs to contact Daniel otherwise it will be removed by committee members by 9/30/24.

The committee agreed to have our next meeting on Monday 9/16/24 at 6PM and spend the first portion of the meeting discussing the draft Wildlife Stewardship Plan and then discuss possible mountain bike trail use or not in the northern section of the ACF. We also agreed to have our 4th Monday meeting on 9/30/24 to be held at the forest and start the meeting at 5PM.

Motion to Adjourn was made by Wright Preston, Second by Chase. All voted in favor.