

## ANDREWS COMMUNITY FOREST COMMITTEE

Committee minutes for October 28, 2024, 6pm to 8pm meeting

Roll call and confirm quorum.

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

Members absent: Juian Portilla

Public, in person: Jimmy Cochran, Sam Pratt; via zoom: Robert Low, Kit Emery, Lisa Miller (Selectboard), Dan Wolfson

Minutes by Wright Preston

Timekeeper: Chase Rosenberg

Ian read a prepared statement about the committee's work and his role on the committee. (See statement in meeting packet.) He updated the committee on the committee bylaws and stated that the Selectboard (at its last meeting) recommended changing a 2/3 majority for votes and replacing committee votes to a simple majority of the 9 committee members. That simple majority will now be 5, vs 6. Wright shared with the committee that Ian's written and spoken statement was well said.

We then had a discussion about the committee chair and co-chair positions. Ian said he was willing to stay on as co-chair and work on the administrative side of co-chairing, provided the committee elected a co-chair to run the committee meeting. Cecelia agreed to be meeting co-chair this evening and the November meeting. She also suggested we rotate the co-chairs on three-month intervals. The committee agreed with that and Chase will be co-chair with Ian for the December '24, January and February '25 meetings. Melissa agreed to be co-chair for the March, April and May '25 meetings. Wright agreed to be co-chair for the June, July and August '25 meetings.

The 9/16 minutes were approved with an amendment that included both Tyler Merritt and Kit Emery being present for the meeting. Chase motioned; Wright seconded the approval of the minutes. They were unanimously approved. The 9/30 minutes were approved with Melissa making the motion and Brad seconding approval of the minutes.

A brief Richmond Conservation Commission update was provided by commissioner Sam Pratt. He indicated that the RCC would not weigh in much on the committee's work unless the committee asked the RCC for input. The committee's recent draft Wildlife Stewardship Plan was discussed and supported by the commission. Brad asked about the two upcoming dates for the Bio Finder training. Not sure of the dates

at this point but each training session will be for about 15 folks. Melissa asked if we have plans to have RCC weigh in on upcoming ACF documents. We will invite the commission to meetings when certain documents are being discussed.

Chase gave an update on the Richmond Trails Committee activity. The Town received a FEMA Grant for \$140K for upgrades and rebuilding of the Old Jericho Road trail. Work will take place in '25. The town will need additional funds for this work. RTC is looking to utilize Trail Forks software to post trail conditions for all of Richmond's trails. Chase indicated that Richmond Mountain Trails (a private 501c3) is willing to be the volunteer trail steward and maintainer for all trails and bridges at the ACF. It was agreed that the ACF Committee would need to request and accept the services of RMT's services.

Wright mentioned that the old stone culvert bridge on the Old VAST Trail east by the Maple Wind Farm large meadow is still in place and functioning after the July storm, however downstream flow is backing up so that the area around the stone bridge is very wet.

6:45 PM. Consideration of Sam Pratt's and Jimmy Cochran's applications to be appointed to the ACF committee.

Jimmy stated that he has respect for the committee and its work and would like to help carry some of the ACF committee workload. It was stated that the Richmond Trails Committee recommended Jimmy as its representative. Melissa shared that Richmond Zoning regulations state that building trails on 20% to 30% grades requires Town Zoning approval. Jimmy stated he was not aware of this regulation and would look into it. He stated that when developing the final trail "product" getting zoning approval is a great box to check. Ian asked Jimmy if he had spent much time in the ACF. He said he has and said he wouldn't be pigeon-holed by being on the RTC as well. He said the ACF support is broader than that. Brad asked Jimmy if he works with State experts and Jimmy stated that the ski area and forestland is subject to both Current Use and Act 250 requirements, so yes. Ian asked if Cochran's was subject to a conservation easement and Jimmy stated that the upper section of their land is subject to no commercial or residential development deed restrictions when UVM transferred the former DeStefino property to the Cochran family. The lower section of the is not conserved but might be in the future. The RTC voted to support Jimmy's appointment to the ACF committee. Brad made the motion, seconded by Chase, to recommend Jimmy's appointment to the ACF committee, to the Selectboard. Voted unanimously.

Sam Pratt stated that he is a Valley View Road resident and neighbor and is on the Richmond Conservation Commission, and if appointed he'd be the Commission's representative to the ACF committee. He stated he cares about recreation, controlling

invasive plants, is a dog-owner, who walks, skis and snowshoes the forestland. He said he has ADA compliance knowledge and tries to help where needed at the forest.

Chase said it is great to have two good applicants. Ian stated that RCC supported Sam's application to be the RCC representative on the ACF committee. Chase made the motion, seconded by Melissa, to support Sam's application for the committee. Voted unanimously.

7:12PM. We then discussed prioritizing our workload. Ian mentioned our challenge is breaking the "logjam" of the revisions to the ACF Management Plan and related documents. Melissa shared that we should pick one document to complete: "low hanging fruit", and successfully complete that. Cecelia asked if prior co-chair, Daniel, had prioritized these documents. Ian stated that in '24 Daniel made many edits to the MP2, 3/23 plan. Other key documents are the Wildlife Management Plan and the Trails Stewardship Plan.

Chase talked about the trail plan. He said prior committee members Jessie and Caitlin walked with Jay Furr in the forest. He then stated we need to revise the trail plan, include Abenaki support language in the documents and make revisions to the Management Plan (MP2).

Brad spoke about objectives and tasks, and creating a reorganization outline for the Management Plan (MP2).

We then spoke about looking to hire a consultant to assist us in revising and updating the Management Plan (MP2). Ian offered to work through Daniel's MP2 revisions and edits and provide a clean draft to the committee in 45 days. We agreed that we'd like Ian to work on this MP2 draft over the next 45 days.

Our November meeting will be on 11/25, and the December meeting will be on 12/16.

Public comment: Bob Low said we should have trust in Ian to effectively update the MP2.

Vote to adjourn made by Brad, seconded by Chase. Passed.