

## **Andrews Community Forest Committee submission for the Richmond Town Report, for the year 2024.**

For some time the work of the Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) has focused on revisions of the 2018 Management Plan, including a plans for trails. As this is a Town-owned forest, our work is based on key governing documents: the Forest's Conservation Easement that emphasizes both conservation and human access, as well as the Town Plan and Zoning regulations. Our Committee functions according to rules that govern all Town committees, with the result that substantial discussions and all decisions must be made during our monthly two-hour-long meetings.

There is frustration within the Committee as well as in the Richmond community about the slow progress by the ACFC - primarily, though not exclusively, in establishing a plan for constructing new trails in the Forest and the desire to establish multi-use trails. A trails plan and a revision of the Management Plan have to go together. A huge amount of material about the Forest and its management has now been collected, written and documented. It's been made accessible at the Town website page, primarily via the 'packet' materials attached to the Agendas of our monthly meetings. Incorporation of this material is being included in a draft of the revised Management Plan. The draft will be subject to revision by a formal review process by the ACFC and public, and by other Town committees and the Selectboard. The updating of the Management Plan is proceeding, and public review and comment phase is expected to occur this year (2025).

Recent work has included:

- Formal solicitation and documentation of public/citizen opinions;
- Approval of new Vision and Mission statements that provide a basis for decision-making;
- Bylaws updates to clarify what constitutes a quorum for meetings and voting, and formalization of the process for recruiting ACFC members and for working with the Trails Committee and Conservation Commission;
- A new, improved and updated page at the Town website;
- Clarification of the Easement provisions with VELCO for accessing the power lines;
- Improved understanding of compliance with procedures consistent with Zoning, the Town Plan, Public Meeting Law, and reporting to the Selectboard and public;
- Establishing working groups to draft important components of a revised Management Plan.
- Work party for maintenance of existing trails.

The Committee is thankful for the always helpful assistance of the Town Manager Josh Arneson and Assistant Duncan Wardwell, as well as other in the Town Offices and Select Board members. We get help from the Conservation Commission and the Trails Committee, as well as many Townspeople who take time to attend our meetings or write to our email address or to the Front Porch Forum to offer their insights.

These volunteer members of the ACFC have served recently: James Cochran, Jesse Crary, Cecilia Danks, Brad Elliott, Caitlin Littlefield, Ellen Kraft McCune, Tyler Merritt, Jim Monahan, Nick Neverisky, Amy Powers, Julian Portilla, Wright Preston, Sam Pratt, Chase Rosenberg, Daniel Schmidt, Ian Stokes, Melissa Wolaver. After some turnover of membership – we are now at full complement of 9 members representing a spectrum of citizens of Richmond.