

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Minutes of Regular Meeting

January 27 2025 6:00 to 8:00

Present: ACFC: Ian Stokes; co-chair, Melissa Wolaver; Cecilia Danks, Brad Elliott, Sam Pratt, Wright Preston, Chase Rosenberg (co-chair), Julian Portilla

Town of Richmond: Tyler Machia, Richmond Zoning Administrator

Public: Kit Emery, Jeanette Malone, Dan Wolfson, Nancy Zimny

Wright Preston: appointed timekeeper. Julian Portilla: appointed minute taker.

Meeting called to order at 6.05 by Ian Stokes

December minutes

Approved without amendments

January 27, 2025 agenda discussed

Discussion and clarification of how the agenda was built

Discussion about whether a motion has to be submitted in writing prior to a meeting. It appears not.

No amendments to the agenda.

RCC update

No RCC meetings since the last AFC meeting. No updates.

Trails committee report

Discussion with Richmond Mountain Trails about Trailforks app (TF).

Questions about how much control the town or the committee would have over what is published in TF.

Proposal to bring the discussion about how to update ACF trails on TF.

Vacancies on the committee

Several seats are coming open.

RTC recommended Chase remain on the committee. He has not decided whether he will remain on the committee.

Sam is the RCC committee rep.

Brad is the RCC recommended nomination.

Discussion on updated memos by Tyler Machia

On enforcement: Absent a zoning complaint, there is not an active search by the town for shutting down unpermitted trails on private property.

On how to define a trail:

Looking through definitions in current town relevant text. 2.4 of the zoning regulations allows for trails anywhere BUT there is nothing in that section that mentions what zoning regs apply.

There is a definition of "open space" in section 7 that appears to apply to the ACF. But there are exceptions to open spaces if there are Conditional Uses.

ACF has Conditional Use (because it changed from ag to recreational) and therefore other regs apply, such as restriction on development or construction on land with grades over 20% is required to have engineering plans (with erosion and sedimentation controls).

Is a trail considered construction? If there is modification to the landscape with manmade structures, (stairs, berms, bridges, gravel) it's likely a construction. There is no universal list of what constitutes "construction", each item would be considered on its own merits.

Trails on slopes below 20% are much easier to approve.

On what steps are needed to create and develop trails

ACF makes a proposal to select board (SB).

SB then decides whether they want ACF to submit the application for a site plan or if they wish to do it themselves.

Submits to Tyler Machia who then reviews:

Do you have a site plan?

Is it made by a professional?

If not, did you apply for a waiver?

Does it have proper buffers?

Does it interact with any of the erosion and sedimentation restrictions?

Tyler puts it on the agenda with at least 20 days notice.

Goes to Development Review Board (DRB).

DRB makes a decision, usually approves.

Or issues a continuation (maybe because slopes, erosion control, public scrutiny) and asks for further information. Tyler Machia would communicate what is needed to AFC.

If DRB approves they have 45 days to make a decision. Decisions can be made in public or executive session.

30-day appeal period.

Brown's Court took 4 months, give or take.

Powerline trails are in the 35% range. But because it is pre-existing, they can be used.

Trails over 20% need an erosion and sedimentation control plan prepared by a licensed engineer.

Tyler Billingsley is a licensed engineer who has worked for the town in the past.

How do the regs here affect the abutting trails?

If it's on private property and recreation is incidental to the property, there are not regulations that apply.

VYCC is conditional use because they're not private property.

Preparation for communication with planning commission

Need two volunteers to interface with Virginia and Keith to share information

Brad and Sam will interface.

Will review the town list to see what is relevant for AFC. There is a preliminary list generated through correspondence between Ian and Virginia from Dec 26 2024.

Discussion of big picture direction of the AFC

Shall we wait to complete the MP before discussing a Trails Plan (TP) or shall we do them in tandem?

Some believe we can work on both in parallel. Others note that MP objectives and content won't change with the new version and so can design a trail plan that aligns with goals. All new information to be included in the new MP should be weighed when creating the new TP.

Others believe we have to wait for a new version of the management plan to more closely guide the decision-making process about how to make a trail plan. There is new scientific information to include in the management plan.

Others note that it would be wise to consult with the SB prior to developing an MP or a TP. They may have other considerations than AFC such as liability. They may give guidance about how they want the committee to go about it.

Perhaps can make a two-phase plan, one that integrates new information into the plan and proposes non-mechanized trails first, perhaps up to the ridge.

Some think we need more information from engineers on erosion and sediment control to understand what's involved including costs and such.

Comments from public

There are specific wildlife concerns that need to be taken into consideration such as habitat and migration patterns. A great deal has changed between the first MP and the revised proposal. New MP helps to define what minimal impact is. There should be no TP until MP is completed.

Building a house without a plan creates lots of problems. And by the same logic, need a plan before we put a trail plan in place.

Structuring a consultation with the SB

AFC will write to the SB with an update on what we've done and where we are in the process.

Seek guidance from SB on whether to complete MP before including a TP or including the TP in the MP to submit to them.

AFC members will seek to find a licensed engineer who can speak to integrating erosion and sediment control plans into a TP and who could perhaps offer estimates or ranges or what kind of budgetary implications such a trail would have.

Chase and Ian will write an email to request clarification from the SB to this effect.

Chase and Ian will attempt to find a licensed engineer to inform the committee about TP options

Next meetings:

Feb 24 meeting is cancelled

Special sessions called for Feb 10, March 10

March 24th is next regularly scheduled meeting

Each AFC member will make comments to the draft MP circulated for Jan 27 meeting. Members (and public) will send to Ian for integration.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25