

RCC Meeting 10/8/24

Members Present: Judy, Jeanette, Bob G, Bob L, Dan, Sam

Members of the public: Susannah Zeveloff (online), Tyler Merritt, Callie Ewald (in-person)

7:30 p.m. Public introductions and comments

- SZ mentioned RAFT (Recovery After Floods Team) that is being formed in Richmond, Huntington, & Hinesburg. Wondering if the RCC would like to offer assistance.
- RCC indicated interest but needed to determine how best to help. Will be added to the November meeting agenda.
- Susannah will coordinate with Prem Linskey (RAFT contact) and reach out to RCC.

7:35 Appoint minutes taker and approve/amend September minutes.

- Sam doing minutes.
- September minutes unanimously approved with Bob L's edits.

7:45 Additions, amendments to agenda

- Removed discussion about ACF Wildlife Stewardship Plan (WSP) from the agenda. Commissioners should familiarize themselves with the doc so that we can discuss and offer input to ACFC
- More on this later in notes.

7:50 Updates: Conservation Design/BioFinder training

- Jeanette talked with Jens Hilke about running a training for Richmond. He recommended up to fifteen people as any more than that can be hard to manage. Plan would be to “train the trainers” and invitees may include (but not be limited to): Andrews Community Forest Committee, Conservation Commission, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, Recreation Committee, Trails Committee, Transportation Committee, Selectboard.
- Potential dates: Thursday 11/14 or Thursday 01/09 (perhaps both if there is enough interest to fill more than one session).
- BL suggested not getting too granular in the trainings since there is a lot to learn
- JM suggested that anyone interested starts by reading material using BioFinder online prior to the group training. There is a story map on the BF website explaining what it is and how it works. That is a helpful place to start.
- It was discussed if an event should be organized for the public (not just committees)
- Location is important— the training would require a computer lab with a robust internet connection. Jens is concerned that too many machines accessing BioFinder at once might jam up the internet connection and detract from the training.

8:05 Updates: Planting at Volunteers Green

- Jeanette spoke with John Kart and they don't think it's feasible to plant this fall.
- Plan is to revisit in Jan/Feb to coordinate a spring planting.

8:05 Vote on application for Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) representative from RCC

- RCC approved Sam as RCC representative for ACFC. 5 yes, 1 abstention (Sam).
- RCC recognized Daniel for his service.
- Daniel mentioned factors that have caused so little to get done— many approaches to “solving” the problem the committee is set out to do.
- Something about the committee has made things contentious regardless of who is currently serving.
- BL recommended the book “Getting to Yes”.
- TM wrote a letter to the selectboard after the ACFC meeting suggesting they do exit interviews with members of ACFC who have resigned.

8:15 Updates on Donahue Brook and next steps, possibly with Trails Committee or Richmond Land Trust representative. Review 2007 Geomorphic assessment documents attached to agenda

Donahue Brook Summary 10/07/24

RBL

- Feinson 1/5/24 FPF posting summarizing the problem.
- January RCC Minutes: Lou discusses Donahue situation: Outflow redirection – impact on Farr farmland:
- RCC February Minutes: Trails Committee (Calli Ewald) request for CRF \$\$\$ (\$6,000) for bridge repair; issue of public land location; discussion of extensive damage to trail well beyond bridge issues. Trails Committee to look into a more extensive project – engineering study, private land issues, ..., will come back with amended application; Application tabled.
- RCC March Minutes: Jeanette conversations with trails Committee – how to proceed including at State level; reviews extensive trail damage.
- RCC May Minutes: RLT application (Jim Feinson) for Donahue Brook Engineering study; Requests \$10,000; Friends of Winooski to cost share- \$10,000; Motion to approve; Selectboard denies - State responsibility.
- RCC June Minutes: discussion with FOWR; brief discussion- FOWR cannot necessarily help.
- 9/10/24 Donahue Brook summary, Jim Feinson: circulated to RCC; Brook again re-routed,

90% back to original channel; a new western channel through Reap property - well compromise; work in progress with landowner and State to restore; Matt Gardener discussion with LT/ Reap / Ashley Farr – things settling down / drying out, RLT off the hook for now, need to figure out repeated avulsions, need to re-evaluate original larger scope projects – wait and see, LT gives Reaps permission to remediate, no need at this point for CRF funding(that SB rejected in any case)

- RCC October meeting: Bob Low contacts State: Information packet.
 - Discussion with State
 - Past Geomorphic studies
 - Richmond RFP

SCOPE of WORK/ General Requirements

- Examine options for flood mitigation upstream on the Winooski
- Examine option for flood mitigation on tributaries in Richmond such as Jones Mill Brook, Snipe Island Brook, and the Huntington River
- Examine option for flood mitigation of the Winooski related to tributaries upstream but outside of the Town of Richmond such as the Little River.
- Determine what impact flood mitigation will have in the flood zone area in Richmond.
- Describe how the model be a tool to help predict what will be impacted by different levels of flooding.
- Prepare grant application or multiple applications to HMGP by November 18, 2024.

Discussion:

- \$138k from FEMA toward fixing Jericho road trail and bridge.
- Callie walked the road with Pete Goselin:
 - Adding culverts - recommended 12 replacements
 - Raise bridge up to trail level
- Using Vermont Better Roads manual to help with embankments, reestablish trail.
- UVM civil engineering students did an analysis and report with suggestions to fix – Included three different options.
- Callie's takeaway from the February meeting was that as a town, we need to determine all the factors and balance use vs responsibility of maintaining a trail where it currently is.
- Balancing maintaining a trail, reducing siltification of the stream.
- \$138k is not enough for a plan and build, also depends on what is done with the trail, armoring embankments, etc.
- BL: Will the FEMA funds expire? Do we have time for a geomorphic assessment? Will ANR need to weigh in? Chris Brunell - site visit and recommendation.
- The northern section has a town right of way (on private land), so that shouldn't be a concern with restoring the trail (this was a concern when discussed prior).
- RFP will need to be done for FEMA funds to be used.

- Trails committee meets Tuesday 10/15, they may invite Josh to the meeting or try to meet with him before. Need to determine scope of RFP.
- FOWR might be interested? They mentioned interest in culvert replacements.
- Any cost over \$138k could be covered by CRF, and up to 75% of the costs over the \$138k may be reimbursed by FEMA.
- Put out RFP with different “levels” of repairs and see what we can afford.
- Trails committee will keep RCC updated as the process continues.
- Based on similar projects, work expected to be sustainable and ecologically responsible.
- Callie will engage ANR, Jeanette offered to help too. However, it might make the most sense to come from Josh.
- Judy mentioned to let RCC know if there’s anything they can do to help

8:30 Update on Tabling at Richmond Farmers Market and planning for Oct table

- Sam recapped the event.
- Amphibians on deck for next session (10/18).
- Should get some materials: banner, trifold, “ask your conservation questions here” sign, etc.
- Next month’s meeting: talk about SOS.
- Acquire updated RCC cards with CRF info?

8:40 Next steps for Conservation Reserve Fund renewal and timing

- We need projects to spend money on.
- Bob G. suggested having an in-person event where we share the CRF’s purpose and help coach people into applying.
- Spreading the word at farmers market
- Consider tabling on election day?
- Write a Times Ink article?

~~8:50 Request to revise wildlife management plan [for ACFC — does anyone know about this?]~~

9:00 Suggestion to have stewardship speaker for public

- Should RCC organize a speaker or panel to talk about wildlife stewardship?
- Jeanette suggested we read the WSP and then talk to professionals
- Jeanette suggested that we support the ACFC by reviewing the MP2 in its draft form when they are ready for review from the RCC. She further suggested we consider inviting professional wildlife biologists such as Andrea Shortsleeve, Jens Hilke, and the like who don’t live in town with a stake in how we manage our community forest to review the MP2 and to field questions from the RCC/ACFC about the Wildlife Stewardship section of the MP.
- • This would provide the RCC a chance to offer helpful feedback about our community forest when the ACFC is ready. It would also be an opportunity for the ACFC to enrich and validate the content of the overall MP.

- • We discussed the merits of respecting the time and space the ACFC needs to complete their next draft of the MP2 while also offering our input during the revision process. This is commonly done by conservation commissions throughout Vermont.

9:10 November 12 meeting in Town Office Conference Room C or fully virtual – which does RCC prefer?

- RCC agreed to meet in person

9:25 Matters arising

- Discussion continued regarding ACFC and RCC's role.
- RCC is waiting to weigh in until asked – that's how committees are supposed to function.
- The RCC would look forward to the opportunity to comment, and it would be in ACFC's best interest to do so.
- Daniel: Not everyone can be involved in the "early stages", ACFC needs to do its work before opening items up for public comment and discussion.
- Judy: RCC has thoughts but would like to know the process and when a good time to weigh in is.
- Daniel: Management plan that contains: conservation plan, wildlife stewardship plan, trails plan. Those get refined and integrated into the management plan, and then the updated management plan gets released to the public for comment.
 - Management Plan needs to stay focused and can't entertain every thought people have about what *could* be in the Management Plan.
- Daniel: Ask ACFC what the status of the WSP is to bring back to RCC and whether the draft is ready for feedback.
- BL: when doc(s) are sent to us, we can reach out to 1-3 experts for comments.

10pm Adjourn.