

Richmond Conservation Commission
DRAFT Minutes
March 11 2025

7:30 p.m. Public introductions and comments

Attendance: Kit, Sam, Bob, Jeanette, Judy, Ibit, Susannah, caller -Chelsea, Alicia Daniel

7:35 Appoint minutes taker and approve/amend February minutes

* Jeanette minute taker, clarification about notes: Send notes to Judy, Bob and Kit will send their February 2025 minutes.

7:45 Additions, amendments to agenda

* Sam added to the agenda to discuss FEMA/NEPA. The deadline for public comment is 3/27/25.

7:50 Vermont Master Naturalist Program request for CRF Funds

* Alicia wants to return to Richmond to share the natural history of our lands using a layers

approach. Program is planned for 2025-2026 and included Huntington and Williston.

* Natural history-focused events and workshops are popular, indicating a need for more

naturalist related work, training and educational opportunities.

* The goal is to promote protection of natural communities and special undeveloped places

supporting well informed decision-making.

* Each participant contributes at least 20 hrs educational and stewardship projects.

* Each town would ideally cover a portion of the overall fee.

* Judy: I d like to recommend to SB that they approve the multi town mVMN program - Middle

Winooski Watershed - present both options \$3500 (VMN Middle Winooski Program) and/or

\$4175 (scholarship)

* Bob: Are you depending on all three towns?

* Alicia: Yes, but may be asking Richmond only since Richmond did it in the past.

* Sam: What are the requirements?

* Alicia: passion for the learning

* Judy: Mission is to not leave those who can t afford the program behind, therefore we should support covering those individuals.

* Kit: It was very poplar and the demand exceeded participant openings the last time it was done in Richmond.

* Alicia: Jon Kart remarked that multiple folks come back yrs expressing their enthusiasm for continued conservation engagement because of the program.

* Jeanette: Do you want RCC input about project ideas?

* Alicia: Absolutely, we would love your input and will work with you on those ideas.

* Bob: SB will likely support if our CC has input.

* Judy will present both motions to the SB in consultation with Josh

* Motion approved for \$3500 - unanimous approval

* Motion for \$4175 - unanimous approval

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8:15 Request to use unused Volunteer s Green tree planting funds to replace flooded out trees.

* Judy: Richmond Conservation Commission recommends that the Selectboard approve up to

\$300 in Conservation Reserve Funds to cover the cost of supplemental trees for Volunteer s

Green, as described in the attached proposal dated 3 March 2025. The request fits a number of

CRF criteria, as enumerated in the proposal. This request is in keeping with Conservation

Reserve Fund s primary purpose of preserving water quality, providing outdoor recreational

opportunities, protecting wildlife, and conserving important natural, agricultural and historic

resources. See CRF Criteria III A1, A2, A4 and A5; B1, B3, B4, B6 and B7. And see CRF Section II

bullet point on education about the environment for children. These funds must be expended

within 3 years of the date of final approval, by 3 March 2028.

* Judy and Jon are trying to get taller trees to beat the weeds. We may need to pay for mulch, but

trees come from grant money.

* Bob: Shouldn t we ask for \$700 bc \$300 may not be enough?

* Sam: Agreed with Bob to ask for \$700 in case we need it for trees and mulch

* Sam: We should prepare SB with motions ahead of time and remind them requesters have three

yrs to spend funding approved.

* Sam makes the motion to approve \$700 and Kit seconds

* Unanimous vote of approval

8:20 Update from ACFC (Sam Pratt)

* Judy: Appreciates efforts to finish the MP, nailing down goals and criteria for how the forest is used including trails.

* Sam: ACFC has been having extra meetings to finish writing the MP. Some of us met with new

forester. Making good progress on MP2, most members are reading through it, commenting and

trying to integrate the comments to present to the SB. Got a little sidetracked because some

members wanted to forge ahead with voting on a trail plan. Tyler advised us to ask the SB what

they want which they did and the SB said to focus on MP by June and then the it will

be ready for a trail plan. Yesterday's motion to put trails up to the ridge went against the SB's directive to let the MP inform the trail plan, so back to working on the MP. Added extra meetings to get the MP done by June. Sam asked the SB if we should get input from other committees before June. The SB said input should be gathered before it's presented to them. If it goes to the SB in June without other input, it will be considered a report about the work in progress, but input from other committees is needed.

* Judy: Is it okay according to open meeting law to work together since you don't make final decisions?

* Sam: There are wildly different ideas about Open Meeting Law.

* Judy: Would money from the CRF be well spent for final revisions? "We paid the Conservation Commission, use Conservation Reserve money to hire group, to do the management plan for us."

* Sam: Ian made improvements without outside help. Conflicts now about recreation sections and wildlife section. It's been challenging, but progress is being made. Brandon (zoning administrator) looked at Ethan's FMP. He will make minor changes and doesn't need to rewrite the whole thing. Brad has been infusing the scientific basis for the natural resource and wildlife stewardship sections of the MP.

* Kit: Is safety really being taken into consideration? Multiple users on steep single trails isn't safe.

* Sam: Yes, this is why the motion to the ridge failed because of liability/safety issues. The current approach reflects inherent confirmation bias, making the MP conform to the trail preferences vs the other way around which assumes that the ends justifies the means. Zoning rules mandate no trails on slopes of greater than 35% or greater. Some of original proposed trails above are that steep. We need engineering erosion plans for 20-35% Tyler advised to start low, below 20% to show progress to the community.

* Judy: Submit the draft to SB to make suggestions about how to move forward. "It's a town thing. It's not so just because there might be a steeper trail in Bolton doesn't mean that you can do that same thing in Richmond. So that's an entirely different question, which would involve, right now, basically updating the town plan, which then informs the zoning laws."

* Sam: SB said we don't understand why you are turning to us, that's why we have a committee.

* Bob: SB was clear they want the MP before trail map. I read the updated draft and my opinion is that the sections should not have been divided up. How can you write your section without taking the whole thing into consideration. The MP should spell out the rules. Need a facilitator and someone to ultimately write and synthesize the sections. We need the big picture to avoid internal conflicts within the document. "I think you're going to need a facilitator, and then after that, from what I see, you're going to have to have a writer. I was always against writer, but as I see things merging, somebody has to synthesize this into a story."

* Sam: Some of us commented on all of it. Tyler has been clear and steadfast to interpret the zoning rules. The zoning rules are hard and fast. "If you want to have something to show the town that progress has been made, that's an easier thing to get past, because if you can do anything under 20% elevation, you don't even need the engineering site plan."

* Bob: Suggested we take a look at it. If I were on the SB I would want the central question solved about where trails can and can't go.

* Sam: MP should include trail building guidelines.

* Jeanette: Where did this process breakdown to not complete a MP before a trail design? Most towns ask ecologists to assess the land in general, map sensitive areas and features to inform MP guidelines, decisions and incorporate their recommendations about where to put trails. Instead, it seems desired routes were flagged that detoured from the original trail concept map and MP1 guiding goals, thereby we put the cart before the horse and gave the public the perception that the trail design was a done deal despite conflicts between new trail design and MP1 guidance.

* Judy: We should talk about this more in our next meeting.

Jericho Road Update

* Judy: We should, talk about this in our next meeting, but "We asked Josh for an update, and he sent a note. And I don't think I sent that out to you the packet, because I wasn't sure it was appropriate to make that available to the public. I can send that around.

And so we will consider that our update. But basically, they look like they'll get FEMA coverage. I just don't know when the work will be done.

8:35 Update on climate change project with UVM Susannah

* Susannah: Sam will be the ACFC rep and Jeanette will discuss with past participant to determine her participation. Barb Winters will be the Huntington representative. Good to have task force convened soon before the start in the fall. "

8:45 Review plan for upcoming Save Our Salamanders activities

* Jeanette: Additional funds will cover reflective vests, flashing lights and signs to slow motorists. Stay tuned for volunteer info including zoom training followed by our gathering to organize ourselves to review locations, coverage for them, amphibian handling, safety procedures, data collection and to distribute gear.

* Josh advised to contact Hinesburg Police to let them know and see if they might assist.

* Jeanette: Richmond rescue may be able to help. We need 2-4 more volunteers from the East.

8:55 RCC role in Town Plan

* Daniel's Email: Attached is Bob's updated Implementation Plan. Apologies for not getting this to you all sooner but I was out with the flu all week last week and was deep in a brain fog. The task for you all is to let me know if there are any accomplishments (column K) that we should add to the list. You can email those to me directly and I will update the spreadsheet. No need to worry about the entries below row 25. Those are new entries that may involve the RCC in some way but are not tasks that we need to report accomplishments on.

* Bob: Add a section called, ongoing my proposal is that we look at all the items to identify the ones of interest by looking through the table to make sure that all of our bases are covered and then send our reports about what is done, what should be done and what may be missing. Therefore, we should get into the natural resource section carefully to make sure what's in it is reflected in the table.

* Sam: Couldn't comment on our progress bc he is unclear about status/ongoing.

* Bob: Take the current list to add to and subtract to the table that Daniel sent. Send Virginia original list and add or subtract to it. Send any additions or changes to Daniel. We have until April to complete the table.

9:15 Green Up Day

- * Ibit will coordinate green up day this year and needs someone to do the follow up.
- * Ibit: I communicates with Pete G from Richmond Road Crew and those who manage and the state. Wants to get communication on the FPF follow-up.
- * Sam: Will help before and with follow-up communications.
- * Ibit will put out a big map and communicate with town clerk, Suzanne Parent.
- * Judy will look into the statewide cub scouts app to record our collection.
- * Bob: Is there a Vermont report?
- * Ibit: Yes, Green Up data. She read an email with a report on what towns throughout Vermont collected.

Nepa review

Sam: Direct effect on the federal gov option to sell off lands and drill. I can send this out to the RCC.

Review policies other agencies want to implement - comment ends on 3/27.

Ibit is following the link and noted that public comments are up to 15K

Sam: I will send this out a prompt and put it on the FPF.

Bob: What should be posted. to the public? ie, 'Do not remove the council .'

9:25 Matters arising

9:30 Adjourn motion by Sam at 9:32