

**Minutes March 23, 2022 Joint Meeting
Northfield Conservation Commission
Town Forest Stewardship Subcommittee**

1. Present: NCC: Jeremy, Nigel, Russ, Ruth, David, Debbie
TFSC: Colin, Brad, Caroline, Matt, Nelson, Russ
Public: Collin O'Neil, NU Shaw Outdoor Center, Lydia Petty, Justin

2. Brad thanked Lydia Petty for her service on the Town Forest Stewardship Committee.

3. Discussion

A. Trails in the Town Forest

The Town Forest Stewardship Committee working group on trails raised the issue of seasonal trail closures. The Shaw Outdoor Center (SOC) recently closed their trails, and as access to much of the town forest (TF) originates from the SOC, this impacts TF trails.

Brad moved that, **"the TFSC recommend to the NCC to enact seasonal trail closures in coordination with Norwich University.** 2nd by Nelson. Colin Bright amended the motion by addition of, **"with reopening of trails as trail conditions allow."** Final motion, **"The TFSC recommend to the NCC to enact seasonal trail closures in coordination with Norwich University, with reopening of trails as conditions allow"**. Motion passed, unanimously.

Debbie moved that, **"the NCC support the TFSC motion on trail closures"**. Nigel proposed amending the motion to add language requesting, **"the town manager put the trail closure into effect."**

2nd by Nigel. Final Motion, **"The NCC support the TFSC motion on trail closures, and the town manager will put the trail closure into effect"**. Motion passes, unanimous. Debbie will contact Jeff Schulz to authorize trail closure. Colin Bright and Collin O'Neil will serve as contacts for trail closure. Communication of this action will take place on Front Porch Forum & NCC Facebook page and trail signage. Collin O'Neil requested that any blow downs or other trail obstacles be communicated to him during the Summer.

Follow-up items from trail discussion:

- i. Improve 3 wet areas of Paine Mountain Trail
- ii. Ridgeline trail impact on vernal pools
- iii. Closure of Postal trail

- iv. Plans for trail reopening after seasonal closure
- v. Network of single-track expanding E and W in vicinity of Kingston access point. Hard to identify official trail in this area

B. Dog Policy in the Town Forest

NU Shaw Center has posted dogs must be on leash or under control. This approximates the Northfield town policy. Some of the issues regarding dogs; bites, non-compliance, difficulty of enforcement and definition of "under control" language. Education, a "Canine Code of Conduct", establishing a point in town forest where dogs could be unleashed, requiring owners to carry a leash, might help. David shared that Montpelier settled for a similar dog policy but that some areas, North Branch Center, established and posted dog codes of conduct that encouraged compliance through peer pressure. Due to the controversial nature of a future discussion, the idea of a public forum based on the goal to explore and address dog complaints in the town forest was suggested.

Nigel moved that, **"the NCC create a working group of individuals to put together a policy for a dog and dog owner code of conduct within the town forest and related properties"**. Brad amended this to be less specific **"research complaints about dog behavior in the town forest"**. Nigel restated the final motion to read, **"The Northfield Conservation Commission creates a working group to research complaints about dog behavior in the town forest and generate proposals to address dog issues"**. Russ 2nd, all in favor. Motion passed. Jeremy, Nigel, Brad, and Colin volunteered to be on this working group. Other parties mentioned to include in work group are someone from Dog River Park Committee and the Dog Park Group.

C. NCC & TFSC Goals for 2022

EAB work, a Dog River symposium & fish hatchery event for the Fall, tree planting are NCC goals. Northfield did receive a VOREC grant that we will discuss at next joint meeting. Brad asked that TFSC working groups send goals to him or to Debbie.

- 4. Public participation: none
- 5. Motion to adjourn by Nigel, 2nd by Brad. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Zuaro, Chair NCC