TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT

NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Community Room

1. ROLL CALL:

Members: Russ Barrett, Suz Stillinger, Jeremy Whalen, Deb Zuaro (the NCC has an open seat with the death of Ruth Ruttenberg so this is a quorum)

In person: Bill Dell'Isola, Ginny Kunkel, Angus McCusker

On Zoom: Michael Miller

2. UPDATES TO TONIGHT'S AGENDA

Jeremy asks that CISMA be added; Suz asks to report on road salt use in Northfield and also discuss the open seat

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING: September 23, 2026

Russ moves to approve the minutes; Deb seconds the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

5. DISCUSSION

1. Discussion with Angus McCusker (Velomont)

Angus is here at the invitation of Ginny Kunkel who serves on the TFSC. Angus works for Velomont which is "a shared project between Vermont Huts & Trails and Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA) for a multi-use, hut-supported trail system, optimized for mountain biking, that will run the length of Vermont."

Angus shared the Vision Plan which was developed in 2024: (https://vermonthuts.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/240628_FINAL_Velomont-Vision-Plan.pdf)

He stated that there are so far 38 miles of the trail in Central Vermont. The conversation is just starting in Roxbury; they are waiting to hear about being able to use the State Forest. Northfield has the potential to be a spur trail. Angus noted that the majority of users are locals.

Deb stated that this project was wonderful to hear about and asked Angus to keep Northfield in mind. Jeremy stated that we could ask Economic Development Director Tom Davis to get involved. Angus said that he would let us know about the Roxbury State Forest. He would also be open to doing a public presentation in the future.

2. Possible Joint Zoom Meeting with Berlin Conservation Commission (Agenda, Date, Time, etc.)

No update. Suz is hoping that they can attend the December 9th meeting which will include DarkSky Vermont.

3. River Path and Cross Brothers Dam Removal

Jeremy stated that he got the okay to put the remainder of the ARPA trailwork funds (about $2,200) towards the River Path project.

4. **Recognition of and Tribute to Long-Time Northfield Conservation Commission Member Ruth Ruttenberg**

   Jeremy started the conversation stating that he worked with Ruth on the Commission since 2020 and knew her as a strong advocate for conservation.

   Deb related how she and Ruth worked on many successful tree grants together. She remembers driving around with Ruth and Russ looking at ash trees for EAB damage.

   Deb would like to honor Ruth's contribution in some way-perhaps a bench with a plaque.

   Russ met Ruth when she first moved to Northfield in 2008, buying land that had some boundary issues. He helped her sort it out and was pleased when she joined the Commission not too many years later. Ruth was an active member of Vermont Coverts for many years.

   Suz pointed out that Ruth recruited both her and David to be on the Commission. Suz is particularly happy that she was able to help Ruth get her vernal pool listed on the state VP map last Spring.

6. UPDATES

1. **Update on Town Forest Conservation Easement Next Steps - Meeting with Town Manager to be Scheduled**

   No update.

2. **Dark Sky Presentation Planning Update**

   Suz states that she has not talked again with Jon McCann about details but that she anticipates that this will be more of conversation than a presentation.

3. **River Clean Up: Next Steps and Planning**

   No update.

4. **Friends of the Winooski Wellfield Project Proposal Update**

   No update.

5. **Town Forest Accessibility Update**

   Bill reported on the positive outcomes from the pilot event with Four Seasons residents earlier this month. The town had mown an area by the apple trees where Tim Schwarz placed lawn chairs for the 9 or 10 residents who came up by volunteer-driven cars. Some walked around to look at the trees; all admired the view and the fresh air. None of them had been up to Cheney Field before, including the activity director, a life-long resident of Northfield.

6. **Town Forest Stewardship Committee**

   -Jeremy reported that Andrew Padilla has the trail signs that need to be installed now that the water tank project is completed but still needs the information on where they need to go. Deb will look in her files.

   -Cheney Field has been totally mowed for the first time in three years. Jeremy and Andrew had marked the area with knotweed so it was not mowed. A new management plan will be devised this winter with the help of the recently completed report by the Audubon Society.

   -The trail counter at the Shaw Center showed 900 rides in September.

   -The Shaw Center and the town are starting discussions about a jointly-funded pavillion.

-The Lybrand Trail engineering studies are done and NU is now awaiting hydrology studies to be able to apply for FEMA money.

-Russ and Ginny and Ray Kunkel almost completed marking the property lines of Dustin's pasture. Jeremy and Bill will try to get out there to finish it before winter.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

8. OTHER BUSINESS

-**CISMA:**

Bill reports on "Cooperative Invasive Species Management Association" after a webinar earlier this month put on by the AVCC and the VNRC. Basically entities in a given geographic location can work together to share information, planning and possibly resources.

Suz also attended the webinar and thinks the Dog River might be a perfect area for this.

Deb is in favor of learning more.

Jeremy points out that there are other invasives besides knotweed. He would welcome more discussion with a larger group.

Russ, who is on the board of the Berlin Pond Watershed Association thinks that group might be interested.

-**Road Salt:**

Suz reported on a conversation with Jim Russo, Director of Public Works, about the use of road salt by Northfield. Jim agreed using less salt is better as long as roads are safe. The majority of the roads in Northfield are dirt (with a chlorine solution being used occasionally in summer to keep dust down). Storm sewers and sanitary sewers are separate in town. The stormwater goes to collection areas at the end of Central, behind the American Legion and at Kenyon's. There will be new catchment basins when the Main Street Bridge is replaced.

Suz doesn't feel a need for the Commission to study this issue further. She did invite Jim to contact the Commission if there is ever anything we could do to help with this or other issue.

-**Open Seat:**

Jeremy pointed out that there is now an open seat and if anyone knows an interested party, they should reach out. Bill stated that he would be very interested. Jeremy asked him to write to the chair and to the town.

-Strategic Planning:

Deb asked that we take time this winter for strategic planning. Jeremy states that the TFSC has been talking about that too so maybe a joint meeting would be appropriate. Suz asked about the Dog River Park Committee joining in as well though Russ states he thinks there is a strategic plan on the town website.

Suz would like to have some kind of calendar so that we know when we should be working on things like Night on the Common or the AVCC grants. Bill suggests a Google Doc.

-EAB

Russ states that he has measured the trees that need to be treated again next Spring. He is unsure if the town is aware that it needs to be done.

9. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (December 9, 2026)

-David to report on possible VOREC grant

-Possible dates for Wood Turtle public presentation?

-EAB treatment planning

10.ADJOURNMENT

Russ moved to adjourn and Suz seconded; unanimously approved at 1925

Respectively submitted,

Suz Stillinger