

11/22 TFSC Meeting,

called to order at 6:03

I. ROLL CALL

TFSC: Brad Johnson, Nelson Hoffman, Mat Katz, Russ Barrett, Lydia Petty, Colin Bright

Others: Debbie Zuaro(NCC), Dave Black, Susan Barnard Casey Cutkomp, Kim Caldwell, Jeff Dobbin, Jeremy Whalen, Jonathan Spencer, Jeff Dobbin

There is a policy governing public comment at meetings which has been provided to the TFSC by the selectboard. Brad has a copy, and if anyone would like to see them he will provide it

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mat, second by Nelson, unanimous approval

IV. UPDATES FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

There was a trail work day on Sunday, November 12. There were 8-10 people involved, who cleared water bars from the Beaver Pond all the way downhill to the entrance at Slate Ave.

There was a combined effort from NU, TFSC, landowners to put a new roof on the hawk watch. The ridge cap still needs to be put on. We need to identify who can do it and figure out when. Colin has the screws and the driver bit.

V. WORKING GROUPS AND DISCUSSION

a. Dogs in the Town Forest

A discussion was started at the last meeting about leash requirements in the TF. We'll need to consult with Jeff, as there is an ordinance on the books requiring leashes in town parks.

Lydia: There is discussion ongoing about updating the dog ordinance with public input to bring it inline with the needs of the community and current best practices.

Jeff Dobbin: Jeff is working on the dog park and would like to work with the committee, the SB, and the police to update the ordinance to allow for a dog park. The current ordinance pre-dates the merger of Northfield Town and Village. There are a number of components of the ordinance that need to be updated, both in terms of recognizing dog behavior, and owner behavior. Right now, there isn't a lot of enforcement available on any aspect of the ordinance unless a formal complaint is lodged with the police.

Lydia: If possible, a public forum would be really helpful in making sure that any policy resulting from these discussions is really in line with what the community wants and in line with what's working well in surrounding communities.

Brad will check in with Jeff about where various groups are in developing policy and how best to move forward.

b. VOREC Grant Application Update

Debbie gave an overview of where we are in the VOREC application process. The application for VOREC is nearly complete. One of the biggest components is a way finding master plan with signage around the town center and falls to show people how to get to the forest and where they can park to access it. It will allow for trail head kiosks to be installed with accurate maps. We've been working in conjunction with NU, so any map would include both the town forest and the Shaw Center properties on one map. Another component is two pieces of stewardship: restoring the Westerly view at the Hawk Watch by eliminating the invasive species, the other piece (permission granted by NU) is to undertake trail restorations in the Slate Avenue/Lybrand trail to make the access there better. Irene caused a lot of damage to that trail. NU students working with Adam Sevi have performed a number of studies to determine what would be needed to get the trail serviceable. Could be a contract project with a professional trail builder or VYCC. NU students would like to be involved in the process. It's hoped to add some limited parking, and the VOREC grant application incorporates funding to implement any preferred option identified in the CVRPC Town Forest Access Study currently underway. Three options have been identified: expanding what's available at the GMFP/Shaw,

Prospect St parallel parking when stormwater mitigation projects are undertaken, and Byam Hill. Of these, Debbie believes that the option at GMFP/Shaw is the most likely. NU has given approval for an increase to parking there. There will be a presentation detailing progress on that study tomorrow night (11/23) for the Selectboard and public. The library currently has a stock of lending snowshoes; the grant would allow for expanding that collection to include other birding equipment, sleds, more snowshoes, and possible hybrid skis like Altai Hoks. Increasing access to that equipment will make the forest available to people who might otherwise not be able to afford to. There is funding for programming with NU included in the grant as well to help people get up on the hill (sledding party, etc.). The first part of the process was submitting a letter of intent a couple months ago. Brad, Russ, Debbie, Lydia, Nancy Peck (PC) John Stevens (SB), and Kim Caldwell put that together. It is a town sponsored grant.

Jonathan: How do we get from the information presented at tonight's meeting to decisions at tomorrow night's meeting?

Debbie: D&K will be giving a presentation tomorrow night that includes the three options described tonight. From that, the SB will select one option to be further fleshed out.

Lydia: The feasibility study is separate from the VOREC grant. The VOREC grant will include whichever option is selected by the SB. Anyone interested in the Access Study should attend the Selectboard meeting, as they will be the group that ultimately decides on which direction we go.

Jeremy: So the VOREC grant would pay for whatever came out of the Access Study? Will further development of the Access Study option chosen be included in the VOREC grant, or is that a continuation of the CVRPC grant?

Debbie/Lydia: That's included in the Access Study grant. VOREC would cover any potential implementation.

Jeremy: What is the dollar amount of the VOREC request?

Debbie: It's about \$120k

Brad: That's just about the midpoint on the grants that are being requested by various committees

Debbie: There's about another \$10k in in-kind labor and volunteer labor above and beyond those costs. Someone has volunteered to purchase a bike repair tower. Someone else is building a wooden snowshoe rack. Further grant funding and volunteer hours will also be needed to continue to combat the invasives at the hawk watch after the initial work performed through the VPREC grant.

David Black: Wasn't the grant supposed to be in today?

Lydia: The grant was originally due on the 22nd, but the date was adjusted by the state.

Brad: It's important to note that even if we don't get the VOREC grant that the TFSC and some other committees and groups will be working independently to accomplish some of these goals.

c. Updates from Subcommittees

Brad: No progress made yet on the timber management plan. We're in discussion with the select board to get the county forester involved in re-writing the forest management plan. Brad will let everyone know when the committee can meet with him to look at the property and discuss options, access, etc.

Colin: There was a vehicle parked at the top of the Cheney Meadow It had NU tags, and NU security is appreciative of any specific information we can bring them so that they can identify the individuals involved and speak with them directly.

Lydia: There was evidence of a number of fresh fires by the beaver pond, and ATV traffic has been up the trail towards the beaver pond, which damaged the first VYCC bridge and drove through the stream crossing there damaging the drainage system.

Brad: Signs indicating that motorized traffic isn't allowed up there would probably be a good idea, as would the potential for closing the gate.

Brad will check in with Jeff about shutting or locking the gate, and about the possibility of signing the area.

d. Other Business

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

David Black: There is a leash law in town, and the police are responsive if there is a problem. A post was made by the town in July indicating that there is a leash law. See July 28th, 2021 FPF.

Discussion ensued around the leash laws in town. There is a conflict between the Parks Ordinance (2018) and the Dog Ordinance (2003). The parks ordinance indicates that all dogs must be leashed in town parks. The Dog Ordinance indicates that all dogs not under owner control must be leashed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mat, Second by Nelson, unanimous adjournment 6:58pm.