

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
Town Forest Stewardship Committee
Minutes of February 21, 2023

- I. **ROLL CALL: Jeremy Whalen (Chair), Russ Barrett, Mat Katz, Nelson Hoffman. Public: Dave Packie and Deb Zuaro**
- II. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.**
- III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 17, 2023, Approved 4-0**
- IV. **UPDATES AND DISCUSSION**
 - a. **NCC Communications**
 - i. **Update on last month's NCC meeting via NCC notes.**
 - b. **VOREC Grant**
 - i. **Implementation committee: These topics blended together.**
 - ii. **Wayfinding signage:**
 - 1. **Group met recently with Jason Enders, who provided some map examples. He has donated in-kind services to the town in the development of the town forest logos. He would like to see a cohesive design as the project moves forward.**
 - 2. **The Town has an executed contract with the state for VOREC funds.**
 - 3. **DuBois & King have the contract for wayfinding, and there has not been a meeting with them pending the finalization of the above contract.**
 - 4. **Nelson asked if there was a representative from Norwich University on the wayfinding working group. Deb, Yes, Colin O'Neil and then his replacement.**
 - c. **Letter of support to Planning Commission for rezoning town forest**
 - i. **Suggestions for recommended zoning designation:**
 - 1. **The NCC chair is drafting a letter to the Select Board given the resignation of all Planning Commission members. The TFSC committee does not recommend sending a letter of support to the select board for rezoning the town forest. Instead, the TFSC prefers a letter to the new planning commission members and consultants working on the rezoning. The goal is that the town forest would be designated for conservation/recreation within the plan that goes to the select board for final approval.**

2. Challenges with a zoning designation: The need to balance conservation of areas such as vernal pools, beaver ponds, and rare ferns within the forest vs recreation. Also don't want to eliminate our ability to manage the land (i.e., selective tree cutting) or complete more extensive projects such as the renovation of Hawk Watch.
3. The TFSC would also include Dustin's Pasture in the letter of support.
4. Deb mentioned that at the last NCC meeting, there was a discussion about writing a conservation easement for the town forest. Mat raised concerns about how it would impact our ability to complete projects such as Hawk Watch. Jeremy said it was a topic brought up at the last NCC meeting, and not a lot of thought has gone into what an easement would look like, but he agreed with Mat that we would need to ensure that there was still flexibility in the management of the land.
5. Russ stated two critical reasons for developing an easement: 1) Easements would remain in effect in the event the property was sold by the town. 2) Easement can be required to receive some types of grant funds. Therefore it would allow the town more flexibility in applying for grants in the town forest.
6. Mat had asked why now? Deb responded that this is coming up now as a fresh look at what is in the town's best interest.
7. Nelson: Suggested this be a topic of further discussion at our next meeting. Jeremy agreed.

V. Northfield: Our Future common events

- a. TFSC/Event dates conflicts: The next three TFSC meetings are on the same days as the Futures events. TFSC will still hold its regular meeting. It looks as though recreation is a topic scheduled for later in the evening after the 7 pm end time of the TFSC.
- b. TFSC participation: If working groups form that involve recreation, the group felt that the TFSC should have representation. Nelson felt the chair would be the appropriate person.

VI. TFSC/NCC joint meeting discussion: With Jeremy, Nelson, and Russ left. Felt it's useful to have an annual joint meeting. Jeremy to discuss this at tomorrow's NCC meeting.

VII. Public Participation (Unscheduled): None

VIII. Other Business: None

IX. Adjournment: 6:55 pm