

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL: Russ Barrett, David Mears, Suz Stillinger, Mariela Swiech, Jeremy Whalen, Deb Zuaro. Also: Bill Dell'Isola and Janan Hamm

2. UPDATES TO TONIGHT'S AGENDA: Addition of the Butterfly Atlas June event

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 25, 2026 & April 22, 2026

Russ moves to approve the minutes of both March 25, 2026 and April 22, 2026 as drafted. Suz seconds. Passed unanimously.

5. DISCUSSION

1. Friends of the Winooski Buffer Planting Proposal

Russ provides a synopsis of FWR's proposal to add to the riparian buffer along the Dog River at the Well Field on 12A. This would include planting along a tributary that runs across the field as well as touching up areas of a previous planting. Russ points out that this would be a great opportunity to engage volunteers. Mariela makes a motion to recommend the proposal to the Select Board; Jeremy seconds; it passed unanimously.

2. New Mad River Valley Land Trust Formation

David reports that this group is made up of the same people who were interested in conserving the Northfield Range. Their new approach is to start a local land trust. They have invited David, who would like them to consider a central Vermont land trust, to meet with them.

Bill pointed out that smaller parcels, in the 20-100 acre range, may not get the attention of larger land trusts so there is a real need for smaller land trusts.

3. Town Forest Conservation Easement Next Steps -- Planning for Presentation to Select Board on June 9, 2026

Mariela reports that the all-high school assembly on the 22nd went well. She and Mead Binhammer of the Vermont Land Trust made the presentation. Teachers and students had several questions. Mariela talked about her time on the NCC and asked for anyone interested to let her know. She will be starting at Dartmouth in the Fall and will resign her seat.

New Town Manager Mary Smith was next to come to the stage. She discussed her job and also the need for more involvement in town government.

4. Events Calendar

Suz proposes that we devise an events calendar that would feature educational and volunteer events. The Butterfly Survey with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies is an example. Other ideas are a Dark Skys event, a

vernal pool event, plantings, accessibility events. Russ stated that there was a tour of the water system in the early days of the NCC that was well-attended.

Deb stated that the NCC has an annual budget of \$1,000 that could go towards events. Suz pointed out that many organizations such as Friends of the Winooski or the Center for Ecostudies are happy to hold events as part of their mission.

Suz will ask Ken McCann if such an events calendar could have a home on the town website.

David asked that everyone bring ideas for events to the next meeting.

6. UPDATES

1. Cheney Field Restoration and Proposal for Re-seeding

Bill Dell'Isola reports that he and Ginny Kunkel (both on the Town Forest Stewardship Committee) worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to select seed for Cheney Field. All material removal and restoration grading has been completed. A cover crop of rye seed was sown, mulch was laid down and the wildflower and grass seed mix was sown. Bill also reports that the grass seed around the water tanks has already come up. Keeping an eye out for invasives will be important while the new plantings are getting established.

2. Town Forest Accessibility/Acess Working Group

Bill reports the group is tentatively planning two events, one in August and one in October. The Cheney Field contractor finished sooner than expected so they were not able to discuss moving some of the extra fill to an area along Byam for additional parking. The group hopes to fundraise for the materials for an accessible picnic table for Cheney Field. David congratulated the group on their work and encouraged them to make a presentation to the Select Board. The working group continues to meet every week.

3. Reconnecting with Rivers update

The first meeting of the Committee of Committees will be convened soon though no date has been set.

Janan states that she is working with the Nature Passport to help get kids out into nature as part of the idea of all the concerned groups working together.

4. VYCC Youth Trails Improvement Fundraising update

Deb reached out to a potential donor (the Barry Chouinard Foundation) but has not heard back yet. David will try and meet with Tom Davis again about grant ideas.

5. Town Forest Stewardship Committee

Jeremy thanked Bill and Ginny for their work on reseeding Cheney Field.

He discussed the "Biodiversity Trail" proposed by Steve Schenk, a new resident in Northfield who designed such a trail in Florida. Steve is putting

in a trail at the Farm and Forest School in Roxbury. Jeremy thought there would be some cost involved, mostly for server space as the trail includes QR codes and the ability for the public to upload photos. Jeremy will send the other NCC members a power point from Steve.

Jeremy says that the engineering fee for redesigning the Lybrand Trail has gone up to \$18,000. (This is NU land but previously one of the access points to the town forest.)

Jeremy also reports that the Disc Golf course at the Shaw Center is now open and on the national disc golf website. It is open to all.

6. Berlin Conservation Commission Coordination

Russ reports that he attended the Herpatologist event held by the BCC held near Berlin Pond. About 10 others were there.

7. Roxbury Outdoor Committee Meeting

Jeremy met with Ben Pinkus over the winter about working together. Ginny Kunkel has since met with him to find out more about the Velo Mont Trail. It was agreed the NCC would invite the organized of this long-distance trail to a future NCC meeting.

8. Butterfly Survey

Russ and Suz are working with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies who will run this event on June 27th. Russ has reserved the community room as the location to start and end. VCE will be choosing the survey sites and sending out advertising materials that we will be able to post.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (June 24, 2026)

- Events Calendar
- Biodiversity Trail

10. ADJOURNMENT

Russ moved to adjourn and Jeremy seconded; unanimously approved at 7:08pm