

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN FOREST STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MAY 24, 2021**

- I. **ROLL CALL:** Committee members in attendance were Russ Barrett, Lydia Perry, Colin Bright, Nelson Hoffman, and Brad Johnson.
- II. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None scheduled, none sitting in on this meeting.
- III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Notes from April 28, 2021 were offered for approval. Lydia so moved and Colin B. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- IV. **UPDATES AND NEWS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Colin reported that there has been a dirt bike rider entering the TF through Slate Avenue, but no one knows who it is.

V. **WORKING GROUP REPORTS AND DISCUSSION**

a. **Mapping/Master Plan**

- 1. **Landowner Letter/Permissions:** Russ spoke to the committee's conversation with one landowner who is now expressing hesitation to allow trails on his property. This is after he first agreed to the idea and then was persuaded by an interested and outspoken member of the public to reconsider. Lydia expressed her on going frustration with that same person who has been undermining the TFSC efforts to communicate openly and effectively with adjacent landowners. In particular, many committee members expressed disappointment and frustration with comments made on FPF and other social media outlets. There was a lengthy and contentious debate about the role of the various groups involved in the planning efforts for the TF as well as other natural resources in Northfield, including the Dog River. Parking and tourism/development are clearly matters on which the committee does not have agreement, and the situation is similar amongst community members at large. Nelson and Lydia disagreed on whether or not the regional planning efforts/VOREC grant process will lead to further development and parking access, and also on whether or not these potential outcomes would benefit the town or not. Colin asked for a clear public statement from the SB that states the work being done by the TFSC on behalf of the NCC is being done in accordance with the TFSP and on the town's behalf. Several committee members agreed with Colin and expressed frustration with the lack of support from the SB as well as from some towns people. Colin moved that the TFSC/NCC request a public affirmation from the Town Manager and the SB, stating that the TFSC and other groups working on issues related to management of the TF are doing do in accordance with the mandates put forth in the TFSP on the behalf of the town of Northfield. Lydia seconded this motion. It passed unanimously.

- 2. Low Disturbance Areas Discussion:** Nelson noted here that the LDA's laid out on the TFSP (by Arrowood, consultants) are vague in definition and have created controversy amongst the committee members and in town as well. He then moved that the committee recognize the LDA's as displayed on Map #6 of the TFSP and in the GIS mapping that was the outcome of the town's work with CVRPC, which was done at the request of the town. This began a long and contentious discussion over the nature of these areas - whether in fact they were recommendations for areas that might be used as LDA's or more specific zones with rigid boundaries. Lydia and others wondered whether or not this matter should be decided by the committee moved on to any discussion of trails. After a great deal of discussion, the committee was unable to come to any clear consensus, and Colin expressed strong reservations about voting on this motion without first getting some more information from Arrowood about the LDA designations in the TFSP. Russ finally noted that the motion put forth by Nelson did not have a second yet, and he seconded it then. The motion failed, on a vote of 3-2. With the discussion continuing after the vote, it was clear that the committee needs to return to this matter. Nelson wanted the notes to reflect the need to get the engineers from Arrowood back and have them attend a future meeting to provide some much-needed clarification here. Lydia also wanted to have some clarification from the Town Manager about what the committee was able to decide on the issue, and whether or not we would be making a simple recommendation or passing on a decision from the NCC to the SB.
- 3. Trail Reviews:** Lydia and Colin have put a great deal of time and energy into the trail review process, as have other members of the committee, and the discussion turned to this matter. Lydia reviewed the maps of the various trails under consideration. It became clear that even if adjacent landowners have said that they are ok with trails that come from the TF on to their property, the committee will seek a formal endorsement from each, and there is a process for doing so with a prepared landowner permission form. The committee has received the paperwork from some landowners and not from others. Colin moved that Trail #4 be approved by the committee and recommended for approval to the SB, pending the landowner permission form. The motion was seconded by Lydia. It passed unanimously. Trail #7 was next up for consideration. Town Right of Way from Tukey Hill Road was discussed, and Lydia noted that this ROW is important for access as well as trail maintenance. Brad noted that dogs and parking are important issues that need to be addressed with this trail. Lydia moved that this trail be recommended for approval, with the note that the ROW issue needs to be resolved. Brad seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously. Russ then asked for discussion of Trail #2A and 2B. There was

conversation about one of the adjacent landowners who has expressed reservations about having this trail on his property. After some debate on whether or not to reroute #2A, Colin moved that Trail #2A be recommended for approval, but with a plan for addressing a reroute if landowner permission is not granted. Brad seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. The committee then moved to #2B. This trail has a section that passed through the LDA as designated in the TFSP. Nelson urged the committee to consider the impacts of recreation in the LDA, including in the trail buffer zones. He argued that this trail does not conform to the purposes of the TFSP. It was noted that the committee is working with NU to try to get their use of this area to be discontinued, as it impacts the LDA. It was also stated that this trail was purposefully built by one individual who knew full well that it was going through the LDA and would prove controversial when this trail review process was performed. Lydia and others stated that this trail is the toughest to decide on, and urged the committee to get more information from Arrowood. Nelson moved that the committee recommend the closure and removal of Trail #2B and not recognize it in any future mapping. The motion passed on a vote of 3-1, with one member abstaining. Russ then brought up the issues with the Postal Trail, which is closed for now, due to opposition from adjacent landowners on whose land the trail passes. He noted that the committee needs to walk up there to consider reroute options. Collin O'Neil from NU also needs to be included in this walk and discussions, and the public should be invited to join as well. June 5th at 9 AM was designated as the date for the walk, with a rain date of June 6th

VI. Adjournment: Brad moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Nelson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.