

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
Minutes of October 25, 2023**

**I. ROLL CALL** Nigel called the meeting to order at 6:01, Jeremy, Russ, David Mo, and Nigel attending, with Debbie and Ruth unavailable.

**II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** September 27, 2023, David moved, 2nd by Russ, approved (four yeas, Nigel abstained)

**IV. DISCUSSION**

**a. Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC)**

1. Reported that Norwich University may provide some limited support for TF trail maintenance.

2. Discussion of whether to request a line item on the Town budget for trail maintenance in the Town Forest. Discussion focused on the use of any approved funds going to purchase basic tools, personal protective equipment, and materials when needed. The majority of trail maintenance would still require state grant funds. Motion was made to propose in the annual budget request that the TFSC, through the NCC, be granted \$1,000.00 for basic trail maintenance. Motion made by Jeremy, Seconded by Nigel.

3. Discussion of the use of E-bikes within the Town Forest. Norwich University is currently allowing them; our goal would be to have a uniform policy with Norwich if possible. Discussion focused on whether they are already in use within the forest, improved accessibility to the forest, e-bikes are not loud like an internal combustion engine. Other towns may have addressed this issue and have a working policy that could assist us. Further research needed.

2. Ski Trail Proposal: Russ reported that he did a site visit to the proposed ski trail with a State botanist. The site visit showed that the proposed area is habitat for Male Fern. The Committee gave approval for the trail with the condition that the trail be no closer than 20 feet from the Male Fern clusters, and made this recommendation to the Town Manager.

3. Other topics of limited discussion:

A. TFSC has a new member: Norwich U. Shaw Center Director, Andrew Padilla;

B. Norwich University is researching options for funding repair to forest access on Slate Avenue trail;

C. Limited discussion of mowing operations within the Town Forest.

**b. Town Forest Stewardship Plan Working Group, discussion:**

- 1. Group may incorporate relevant portions of State Wildlife Action Plan;**
- 2. A Timber Management Plan is in progress, and may be looked at for incorporation of relevant portions;**
- 3. Jeremy has replaced Nelson on the working group due to time limitations.**

**V. UPDATES**

- a. Nigel and Mo are looking into contacts with Highschool staff regarding maintenance discussions for school running trails.**
- b. VOREC Grant: wayfinding is in progress; second treatment for invasive honeysuckle has been applied at Hawkwatch.**
- c. New Tree Planting Grant: Debbie and Russ met and did site visits for the planned locations of the tree planting. Russ met with Tom Trombley to discuss tree varieties and planting details. Plan is for two trees to be planted at the ball field, 4 or 5 at the fire station, and 4 trees near the laundromat on Water Street.**
- d. Dog River Park Management Plan: Nigel plans to email town staff to report that the NCC supports the adoption of the proposed management plan.**

**VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED) None**

**VII. OTHER BUSINESS:**

- a. November and December meetings will be rescheduled and combined due to holiday schedules. Final meeting for 2023 will be held December 6, in person only.**

**VIII. TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING (September 27, 2023):**

- a. Town Forest conservation easement;**
- b. Potential Forest Trails Grant Application, deadline in late January, 2024.**

**IX. ADJOURNMENT: 7:26 pm, David moved, Russ second, meeting adjourned.**

**Nigel Hicks-Tibbles**

**Chair, NCC**