

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, August 5, 2026 Community Room - 6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. ROLL CALL:

Russ Barrett, Michele Braun (Friends of the Winooski River), Bill Dell'Isola, Ragnar Eberle, Nigel Hicks-Tibbles, Dan Mears, David Mears, Suz Stillinger, Jeremy Whalen

2. UPDATES TO TONIGHT'S AGENDA

David introduces Ragnar, an incoming sophomore at Northfield High School, who has expressed interest in joining the commission when Mariela goes to college next month. David points out that having Mariela on the commission added the viewpoint of the town's youth and provided access to a population that we might not have been able to reach as easily. Ragnar stated that he wants to help protect the natural aspect of the state that he values so highly.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING: June 24, 2026

Unanimously approved with the correction of Steve Schenk's name.

5. DISCUSSION

1. Update on Town Forest Conservation Easement Next Steps – Meeting with Town Manager to be Scheduled

David reported that manager Mary Smith has requested a smaller meeting to plan the next steps. He has been invited as NCC chair; Jeremy has been invited as chair of the TFSC. Russ reports that he was invited today as Tree Warden.

2. Friends of Winooski Reconnecting with Rivers Cohort Meeting (Thursday, August 13 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in Montpelier)

Michele Braun describes that during the last Cohort Meeting, participants from Barre were able to give Northfield some valuable ideas about the riverfront. This next meeting will focus on marginalized communities and how to connect with people who often are left out. David, Jeremy and Deb will be attending.

3. Friends of the Winooski Well Field Project Proposal

The proposal to add plantings next Spring along the Dog River and a tributary (with an additional wet-land area to be delineated) was discussed. David moved to submit the proposal to the town manager; Jeremy seconded. It passed unanimously.

4. Events Calendar Next Steps

Suz reports that Ken McCann would be able to create an "Events" section to the Conservation Commission page on the town website. She also has heard that the town will be getting a whole new website that won't be as cumbersome. Discussion ensued as to what kinds of events we would want there; it was decided that events we are organizing or supporting would be appropriate.

Suz stated that she contacted DarkSkysVermont who would like to come speak to the commission about programs/projects we might hold with them. Nigel suggests letting the Energy Committee know; Jeremy will be in touch with Joe. Suz will email the chapter head to arrange a date.

Jeremy suggests adding "Upcoming Events" to the bottom of the Agenda so we can more easily keep track.

5. Northfield Mountain Bike Association Next Steps

Russ obtained an MOU from Montpelier and Berlin and the bike associations in their towns. It is not clear that there will be a new Northfield group; the interested bikers are keeping busy on the Shaw Center trails.

6. Friends of Winooski Training -- How to Host a River Cleanup

Suz and Ragnar expressed interested in attending the webinar later in August. Michele states that September is a good time for a clean-up since the water levels are generally low. The goal of the webinar would be to start planning now for next year.

Russ remembers that about 10 years ago there was a successful clean-up from the Stony Brook bridge to the Wall Street bridge. He suggests we could possibly partner with Trout Unlimited.

6. UPDATES

1. Parking in Cheney Field

Bill spoke to the the Accessibility of Cheney Field (asking that "parking" be taken off future agendas as there will be no permanent parking lot in Cheney Field). There will be a very small "dry run" to test the drivability of Byam, the ability to turn around once in the field and other logistics. They then plan two pilot days, one of which will be October 3rd.

2. VYCC Youth Trails Improvement Fundraising

No update

3. Town Forest Stewardship Committee

Jeremy states that NU was able to use FEMA money for an engineering study for the Lybrand route at the top of Slate Ave that washed out in July 2023 due to heavy rains. David wonders if there is FEMA money to repair the trail or could the town of Northfield apply? At a minimum, it would be nice to know cost estimates.

Cheney Field is now at a point where the whole thing should be mowed. The town may put it out to bid or possibly the contractor mowing the ski glades at Shaw might add in this work.

Mowing the entire field would leave a blank canvas from which to create a mowing plan that could be followed for years. David states that the Vermont Center for Ecostudies has a new more sophisticated approach, taking invasives into account. Audubon Vermont has recently shared their field management plan with the TFSC.

4. Berlin Conservation Commission Coordination

No update other than obtaining the mountain biking MOU. David would like to invite them when we get further along on a solid project.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

Michele asked to speak about the removal of the Cross Brothers Dam which is nearing completion. She said that FWR has made two site visits during the work to help the contractor leave the site set up for public access. She also stated that FWR has submitted a grant proposal to the Vermont Community Fund for one week of VYCC time. This could include removing invasives or planting a buffer for example. She hopes to hear next month. David moves to write a letter of support from the NCC; Nigel seconds. It passed unanimously.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Suz reported on the Black Ash in the town forest. Last meeting she talked about the state's call to find locations of seed-bearing Black Ash (because these trees are more at risk from the Emerald Ash Borer). Two weeks ago, Russ and Suz bushwhacked uphill from the beaver pond and found a small population of healthy trees. However, because they are far off any trail, they opt not to report them for seed collection.

9. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (August 26, 2026)

Russ would like the Emerald Ash Borer added to our next agenda.

10. ADJOURNMENT

David moved to adjourn; Russ seconded. It passed unanimously at 1912.

Respectfully,

Suz Stillinger