

Northfield Town Forest Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes

3/16/21

TFSC members in attendance: Coin Bright, Nelson Hoffman, Russ Barrett, Lydia Petty (Collin O'Neil, Susan Barnard and Ryan McCall)

Meeting began at 6:02. A motion to accept last month's minutes was made by Lydia and a second by Colin. Colin asked to correct that he is not on the mapping/master plan sub-committee. Passed 4-0

Updates:

- Lydia provided updates on the NRRR work.
 - The SB formally endorsed the NRRR plan
 - The implementation team has started meeting regularly. Two focus areas are the Town Forest Trail Access and Connectivity and the Falls Area (including the exploration of a Connector Trail from Falls to Village)
 - The town of Northfield received a CVRPC Transportation study grant to examine two NRRR suggestions, safer crossings on Rt 12 and parking access for the Town forest in the Slate, Prospect, Byam area
 - Further discussion should happen by the TFSC about the goals in NRRR and how to communicate with the Implementation Team

Public Participation:

- Susan Barnard is on NRRR team and loves the Town Forest. She takes a group of snowshoers/hikers up regularly and is present to listen and learn more about TFSC.
- Collin O'Neil is the director of NU Shaw Outdoor Ctr. He is present to represent NU and discuss areas of shared interest. He is excited about getting people out recreating.
- Ryan McCall present to hear about trail review and response to his letter

Working Groups:

- **Master Planning/Mapping**
 - As discussed previously, this was our first attempt to try out a process for reviewing an unsanctioned trail. The trail discussed was the small trail off the summit of Paine Mtn that is used for primarily downhill traffic and was installed prior to the Town's purchase of the parcel from TDS.
 - Russ mentioned that the trail parallels the PMT and therefore keeps the impact condensed. The rare fern is present but should not be significantly impacted by this trail.
 - Lydia said that she would like to see this trail added to the official network.
 - Collin O'Neil thinks it's a good trail.
 - Colin Bright would also like to keep trail.
 - Nelson feels we don't yet know the potential impacts and need more info to make a decision. He'd like to wait to evaluate the trail until the maps being

prepared by CVRPC are ready. He doesn't think the traffic pattern it encourages is a good one, and that its presence encourages more use of the TF.

- Colin expressed that the GIS data being compiled doesn't provide the level of detail necessary to evaluate specific impacts, and that since several TFSC members are very familiar with the area that there is enough information.
- Lydia expressed frustration about delaying making decisions. She feels that there is adequate information to make this decision.

A motion was made by Colin and seconded by Lydia, to recommend including the trail in the Town Forest, and passed 3-1.

- **NU relations/Special Events**

- Russ and Colin B reported about their conversation with Collin O'Neil regarding NU training exercises in the Town Forest. They made a plan for regular meetings to talk about plans for each semester in advance. NU will route all use requests through the manager who will confer with TFSC.
- Collin O'Neil said that NU is very agreeable and will utilize the Town Forest as little as possible for training exercises and is happy to comply with wishes of the Town and TFSC. Anticipates a continued good relationship.
- Nelson asked whether NU would limit access for the community to Shaw and what impacts this would have on Town Forest usage.
- Collin O expressed NU's interest in including the community and sees very few future situations where there will be closures
- Colin Bright said that the decrease in impact from moving those training activities off the Town Forest should be greater than any increase in usage

- **Forest Mgt**

- Russ and Brad will meet with Rose Beatty when the snow goes

- **Education**

- No updates

- **Further Discussion**

- Lydia spoke with Jeff about the TFSCs letter outlining our plans to review the trail network. Jeff is supportive. He asks that we communicate well with him and NCC. He will talk to SB on 3/23 and get back to us about sending out the landowner letters.
- Russ mentioned that he also said that enforcement can be difficult.
- Ryan McCall said that there are ways to make it happen. He suggested Steve Libby or Richarda Erikson at the River Conservancy could be useful resources for us to reach out to
- Collin O'Neil said that he had heard that the NCC had frustration about people using unsanctioned trails in the past but that there is no signage or communication about expected behavior

- **Hawk Watch**

- Russ shared that there is a couple willing to help fund repair of the Hawk Watch. Russ would like to see it repaired.

- Lydia said we should either repair or take down, because the disrepair invites drinking and porcupines. She leans toward repair but a conversation about how it would be used is important to have.
- Susan B mentioned the history of the Hawk Watch and her husband's involvement. It's been used for many years. Would like to see it restored.
- Collin O would also like to see it restored and thinks NU would be willing to help with labor. The new floor in 2008 was supported by lots of help from NU.
- Nelson says that disrepair may encourage human destruction. Thinks it should be restored but that camping is a bigger question.
- FPF could be used to rally the community and get volunteers.
- Russ wondered if anyone knew more info about the plaque that used to be on the ledge and what it was for. Susan and others will try to find out more about its location and history.
- Rotary might make a contribution to the repair.
- **Ryan McCall Letter**
 - Ryan is from Montpelier but appreciates and uses the Northfield trail network regularly. Would like to offer his support and knowledge to the group as a resource.
 - Said that some trails were well built and some not so well built.
 - Nelson inquired about whether he knew the various boundaries between NU/Town and Private lands. Ryan said he is familiar with the boundaries.
 - Collin O mentioned that he dislikes "spaghetti trail networks" and would like to avoid that here. He'd like to develop trails beyond NU and Town Forest and work with private landowners to add to the trail system. He shared trail density from other town forests. Many are at a 1 mi of trail/30 acres density. Northfield is currently more like 1 mi/60 acres.
- Lydia made a motion to adjourn and Colin gave the second. The motion passed 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 7:02.