

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN FOREST STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Minutes amended

I. ROLL CALL

Ginny Kunkle, Jeremy Whalen, Ray Crowder, Andrew Padilla, Russ Barrett

Public - Dylan Alsbach, Shanna Foran, Rodney Elmer, Mary Nadon Scott, Suz Stinger, Daniel Anderson

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

a. Mead Binhammer, Vermont Land Trust. Public Discussion about Conservation Easements for the Town Forest

Mead explained what a conservation easement is and what it is not. Berlin Town Forest has a conservation easement.

Jeremy explains that the Town Forest Stewardship Plan was adopted in 2019 by the select board and all activities in that plan would still be allowed in the Town Forest.

Group questions and answers are captured to the best of my ability -

Is the forest included in the UVA (Use Value Appraisal Program)? The forest is owned by the town and there is no tax basis for it.

Amendment by Russ: The portion of Paine Mtn, specifically Dustin's pasture is included in the UVA.

Where do the VLT funds come from? The funds VLT are state taxpayers' dollars. These funds have already been dedicated to land conservation; if Northfield doesn't use them for the community's benefit, another town will.

How much will it cost? Most of the money would come from the state. The town will be asked to contribute \$1000.

A few people shared their personal opinions about land usage.

If the town did a timber cut, where would those funds go? The Select Board would decide where it goes.

There is a significant number of ash trees in the town forest. The conversation at this point revolved around timber harvest potential and strategies. Additionally, the conversation included a discussion about Emerald Ash Borer, and its potential impact on Ash trees in the Town Forest.

Is the town required to update the Town Forest Stewardship Plan? It is recommended to be updated every 10 years. An easement would make this a hard requirement. Updating the Town Forest Stewardship Plan requires public input.

Is it possible for money earned by the town forest through logging or grants to be ear-marked to be used explicitly for maintenance of the town forest? Yes it is possible, but is at the discretion of the select board.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 17, 2026

Passed - 5-0-0

IV. AGENDA UPDATES OR ADDITIONS

none

V. UPDATES & DISCUSSION

a. Shaw Outdoor Center Update

FTX Army - last weekend - not on campus

This weekend is air force.

Navy/Marine - 3/28 - not on campus

April 10-12 - several

Tues/Weds are specialty unit days in the forest.

Small trees are down. Andrew will send students to clear.

There are trees down on hole 18.

The disc golf course is not on Udisc yet.

No update on mudslide repair.

b. Cheney Field Parking update from the Working Group Meetings

Jeremy stated the Select Board has asked the chairs from the working groups to approach the folks from the utilities department to have a well rounded discussion on long term maintainability. The interim Town Manager was going set up this meeting

c. Cheney Field Restoration Recommendations Discussion

Jeremy had conversations with the new interim town manager about restoring the field after the water tank work is complete. He suggested developing a punch list to give to the utilities manager and said he would include Jeremy in the above meeting.

d. Town Forest Stewardship Plan Update

All committee members are asked to read the plan by the next meeting. Jeremy recommended updating the membership requirements and could use some wordsmithing. Jeremy will bring some recommendations to the next meeting.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

Comments on the reconstruction. Quite a bit of material would need to be used to restore the road cut. The original material is still on site and would be used to repair the road. It was mentioned that NRCS can provide recommendations about native seeds to aid restoration efforts. NRCS also has cost share programs to help with invasive removal. The cost share may not be available for public land. Ginny plans to inquire.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

none

VIII. ADJOURN

19:21 - 5-0-0