

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting started at 1805 with a quorum of David Mears, Jeremy Whalen and Deb Zuaro in person and Russ Barrett and Suz Stillinger on Zoom.

2. UPDATES TO TONIGHT'S AGENDA

Suz asked if there was an update from the Dog River Park Committee and wanted to add a Butterfly Atlas event to the agenda.

David asked to discuss a proposed Friends of the Winooski project at the well field.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 25, 2026

Jeremy moved to approve the minutes as written; Deb seconded. Approved with one abstention.

5. DISCUSSION

1. Cheney Field Access Working Group

Jeremy reported that Bill Del'Isola will be meeting with interim manager Steve MacKenzie and Utility Manager Jim Russo on March 31st.

2. Cheney Field Restoration

Jeremy reported that Jim Russo will be handling all the town communications with the water tank replacement contractor. Jeremy will be meeting with him to discuss removing/restoring the extra road as well as removing all the extra material in a proper manner. Especially critical is managing the knotweed. Jeremy will get a VNRC recommendation for a correct seed mix to use.

3. Town Forest Conservation Easement

One member of the public and one select board person attended the first forum on March 4. (Turn-out was low possibly due to the Cabin Fever Block Party which extended its parade into the same time-slot.)

Three members of the public plus the newly elected select board person attended the second forum on March 17. Two members of the public attended on Zoom. There was good discussion amongst all the people in the room.

One more public forum is planned for Sunday afternoon March 29. A similar forum for high school students will be scheduled.

We will get this on the Select Board agenda later this Spring.

4. Reconnecting with Rivers

David stated that the "Committee of Committees" is picking its first meeting date. The idea to continue to meet a few times a year came out of the the first Reconnecting with Rivers meeting last Fall. That meeting brought multiple groups together who are all working on some aspect of the Dog River.

David stated that the first meeting will likely set the mission statement and frequency of meetings as well as the person responsible from each group. He would like to see someone besides the chair (at least for the NCC) be the liaison to this committee.

5. Streambank Stabilization

David reported that Friends of the Winooski has identified an an area along the Dog River in the well field off 12A that could possibly use some attention. Russ reported that there was a large planting in the past and much of it has done well; other parts could indeed need some help. Sam from FWR is in touch with Steve MacKenzie and Tom Davis; he will be at our April meeting.

David had two additional ideas related to this topic:

-He spoke at a meeting of the Vermont Association of Wetland Scientists last week. He was struck by a speaker from the NEK who is using the state clean water fund to restore farmland to offset phosphorus that runs into their watershed. He wondered if we could work with regional planners to locate similar opportunities in Northfield.

-Depending on the scope of work and the grants available, perhaps the VYCC Streamside Crew could be hired. They may have extra time in their summer schedule.

6. VYCC Youth Trails Improvement Project & Fundraising Strategy

David, Jeremy, Judy Knapp, Taylor Litwin (FWR), Tom Davis and Lincoln (CVRPC) met. Tom agreed to help write grants. Deb volunteered to get in touch with Tom with the information he needs.

7. Butterfly Count

The Vermont Center for Ecostudies is working on their Second Butterfly Atlas. They approached the NCC; Russ and Suz volunteered to work with them. VCE will supply staff and materials as well as materials to publicize this event which will be held June 27th. We will facilitate getting the public to come learn about and count the

different kinds of butterflies in key areas (that VCE will have identified ahead of time).

6. UPDATES

1. Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC) by Jeremy

-NU Corps of Cadets will be doing their Field Training April 3rd. They asked for access to the TF. Andrew Padilla, Jeremy and Steve MacKenzie met to okay the arrangement with the caveat they avoid the sensitive vernal pool ecosystems as well as the beaver pond complex.

-Cheney Field restoration plans as discussed earlier in these minutes.

-Starting to discuss updating the Stewardship Plan to align with the easement (if it progresses as hoped). Per the easement the plan will need to be updated every 10 years.

-Still waiting for the Forest Management Plan from the county forester.

2. Northfield Range Conservation

David noted that the key people in the Mad River Valley have left who were driving the idea of hosting meetings with landowners to discuss the ecological importance of the intact range. We need to keep this in mind for the future.

David also noted that he heard there is some interest in the Mad River Valley for a local land trust.

3. Berlin Conservation Commission Coordination

Russ reported that he attended the last BCC meeting and they are still interested in coming to one of our meetings. We will invite them for May as David will be out of town in April.

4. Roxbury Outdoor Committee Meeting (no update)

5. Dog River Park Update

Russ states that there is no current update. They do have an invasives plan with the US Fish&Wildlife and have currently been drying it prior to disposal.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (April 22, 2026)

Deb agreed to chair in David's absence.

10. ADJOURNMENT at 1904

Respectfully submitted by Suz Stillinger