

Northfield Town Forest Stewardship Committee

Minutes of February 16, 2021

In attendance: John Sears, Lydia Petty, Colin Bright, Russ Barrett, Nelson Hoffman, Brad Johnson

1. Approval of minutes of January 19th, 2021: **Motion by Lydia, second by Brad, passes 6-0**
2. Committee member updates: Brad noted that traffic in the TF remains fairly high with NU trails still closed. Lydia stated that there was still some confusion on the part of NU students about where boundaries lie, and Colin O'Neil is working on that with them. Nelson reported that last weekend there were a group of NU students partying in the TF down in the TF just above his house on Spring St. There was some resulting damage and trash left behind. He is reaching out to Colin on that as well. Nelson also brought to the committee's attention the situation with RASTA's ski trail in the BMF in Braintree. This should serve as a cautionary tale as we move forward with plans for trail planning and usage in the TF.
3. Trail Planning SC (Nelson, Lydia, Colin, Russ): Lydia made sure all committee members had received and read the email they sent with attachments of maps and letters. There was some discussion over whether to call the trails in question "unsanctioned" or use another term, as Nelson pointed out that each trail is in a slightly different situation with the approval process. It was decided to be flexible with the terminology, using the most appropriate term in each case. Brad asked that the letter to adjacent landowners have the maps and trail descriptions, and Nelson asked us to be sure the descriptions do not contain subjective details, facts only at this point. John suggested some amendments to the first paragraph of that letter to make it more readable. Debbie has approved the letter, with amendments from Lydia, to go out to landowners. The letter to Jeff/SB will be sent out as well. All agreed that the committee needs to get approval and backing from the SB on record before we proceed with reviewing the trails in question. John noted that the application form needs more details, but all agreed that the form needs to remain relatively short and simple to fill out. The expectation is that once an application is filed with us, the applicant will attend a meeting to talk over the details with us. Also, all standards for trails stipulated in

the TFMP must be met, including plans for short and long-term maintenance. Brad asked if the form must spell out what types of usages are acceptable. It was agreed that we need some public outreach to give more details on the whole process. This should include trails for hiking, walking, biking, skiing, and hunting. Lydia asked the group if the proposed schedule is workable. There was discussion over which trail should be considered first, and it was agreed that the summit single-track should come first, as there are not adjacent landowners to consider with the trail all on TF land. But, trail #2 (built last summer by Dave Packie) will be next in line and needs to be dealt with before bike season begins this summer. Given that the summit trail decision is pretty straight forward, it will allow us to see how the process works in practice. In all cases, the committee has the option to allow the trail as is, to not allow the trail/dismantle, or relocate to another approved location. Russ and Nelson noted that there are some ecological considerations that need to be addressed as trails are considered. They have been in contact with Pam DeAndrea, Senior Planning GIS Planner for the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission to get some additional overlays added to our GIS map for the TF, including but not limited to update forest boundaries, trails, natural features, wetlands/vernal pools, forest types, LDA's, wildlife habitats, possible trailhead locations, and a Rose Beatty's FMP. Colin also asked that we get the town highway map overlay in there to eliminate confusion over right of way/access points. Please see attached email from Brad with additional comments on the trail planning process. Nelson provided this link for future planning [Vermont ANR - Natural Resources Atlas HTML5 Viewer](https://wildlife.state.nh.us/trails/documents/trails-for-people-wildlife.pdf) as well as <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/trails/documents/trails-for-people-wildlife.pdf>. Both resources can be used by the committee as we make future decisions concerning usages of the TF.

4. Other SC work: Colin is in touch with Colin O'Neil at NU about plans for future plans for ROTC exercises and other special usages in the TF. The Forest Management SC is waiting for snow to melt before proceeding with planning. The Education SC is on hold until Mike can join the committee for meetings, and the meeting time may be moved to accommodate him. It was agreed that we need clearer communication between the committee and Jeff about what activities he approves in the TF. Russ will talk with Jeff to clarify how we work with him on this matter.

5. Colin moves to adjourn, Russ seconds, passes 6-0