

Minutes of 7/19/22 Town Forest Stewardship Committee meeting.

I. ROLL CALL

Mat Katz, Russ Barrett, Jeremy Whalen, Nelson Hoffman, and Colin Bright in attendance, Caroline Zeilenga absent. Meeting called to order at 6:04, by Nigel Hicks-Tibbles (NCC chair) who is standing in as temporary chair until a chair can be nominated and approved. Dave (last name not given) was also present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 21, 2022

Approval of minuted motioned by Russ, second by Mat. Motion carries 4-0-1, abstention from Jeremy who was not in attendance at the 6/21 meeting.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

None.

IV. UPDATES & DISCUSSION

a. Town Forest Issue in Coordination with Norwich University (Colin)

Colin will work with Collin O'Neill from the Shaw Outdoor center to get the path from the bottom of the Cheney to the entrance to the Paine Mountain Trail brush-hogged.

b. Fires in the Town Forest (Colin)

Mat and Nigel reached out to Jeff to talk about signage indicating the rules around fires in the Town Forest. This needs to be approved by the NCC, but could be paid for by the town and ordered through their typical sign vendor. Nigel would like to make sure that signage is eventually consolidated (other policies, access, way finding, etc.). Mat would suggest signs be installed at all of the access gates indicating that fires require burn permits. Nelson suggested that there are often fires at the top of the Cheney, and that in addition to signage that we should be broadcasting the prohibition of fires through social media, etc. Russ would like to coordinate with Norwich so that when new students are coming in they are informed that they shouldn't be having fires in the Town Forest. Colin asked if signs should include other permitted/prohibited uses, advertise the existing dog ordinance requirements, and list contact info.

The TFSC requests signs (3-4) that indicate the below be approved by the NCC and printed

- No fires without permit
- Dogs on leash or under control
- Clean up after your dog
- No motorized vehicles

c. Trail Maintenance Ideas/Schedule (Nelson/Matt)

Russ would like to see the existing online Town Forest trail map be modified to indicate where people should park, and that the trail from the clinic be marked with white markers and listed as the Cheney Route Extension so people know how to access the Town Forest. Russ suggests using the back side of the current boundary markers. Colin will check with Collin O'Neill that we can mark that trail.

Nelson cleared an old water line pipe that was draining into the Clark Route and redirected water back into the existing stream. Most of the trail work to date this season has been clearing

blowdowns. There is work to be done on water bars, but it's something that we should probably address in the late-summer or early-fall so that we have time to schedule and gather volunteers. There was a discussion of the Hawk Watch floor and whether it's something that needs to be attended to this season. Nelson suggested that perhaps we should just patch the holes for now and assess the condition later with someone that knows more about construction. Nelson will add the project to the list to organize for trail maintenance. Russ suggested that as a temporary fix, metal sheeting could be used.

Nelson reminded the committee that the Cheney will need to be (at least partially) mowed this year. Last year 2/3 of the field was mowed to catch up. There is a large patch of knotweed at the West side of the field, which will require some thought to (hopefully) eradicate. Nelson will reach out to Jeff to try to coordinate mowing, and try to make sure that it's past when the blackberries fruit. Colin will help to create a map indicating where we would like mowing to happen (and not happen) this year.

d. New Members, Committee Chair

Welcome to Jeremy who has joined the TFSC. He sits on the NCC. The other vacancy on the TFSC has been advertised by the town.

Colin moved the nomination of Jeremy to chair the committee. Nelson seconded the motion.

Jeremy is not opposed to chairing the committee. Nigel suggested that the chair of the committee does not necessarily need to be a member of the NCC.

Russ left the meeting at 6:46pm.

Colin amended the motion to nominate Jeremy as interim chair to be revisited at the next TFSC meeting. Second by Mat. Motion carries with Jeremy abstaining, 3-0-1.

Russ suggested that it could be preferable to have a legacy member of the committee chair and nominated Nelson or Colin to serve as chair. Colin indicated that he did not have the capacity to serve as chair, and that there are communication advantages to be gained by having a chair that is a joint member of both bodies. Nelson also does not have capacity to serve as chair.

e. Working Group Membership

Trails/Master Planning - Nelson, Russ

Maintenance - Nelson, Mat

NU Relations - Colin, Caroline

Forestry - Russ

Dogs - Caroline, Colin

Mat moved discussion of new or amended working group memberships tabled until next meeting, second by Colin. Motion carries 4-0-0.

Russ rejoined the meeting at 6:58

f. VOREC Grant Update

Lydia Petty joined the meeting at 7:01pm to provide an update on the VOREC grant.

Apex Trailwork will be beginning work on the Slate Ave Trail this week. The Town Manager has alerted neighbors that work will be happening. The committee is working with the manager to draft an RFP to have the invasive remediation and view clearing at the Hawk Watch completed this season. Nelson asked when a signage plan through the grant would be available. The RFP requests that the master plan be complete in December with actual implementation occurring next summer. There was a question from Dave through chat asking whether mapping would

include both the NU parcels and the Town Forest. That is included in the scope of service for the master plan, along with markings for areas where the trail crosses between properties, and indications of access points and parking areas.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

The Town now has a Zoom account, which allows for closed captioning. For remote or hybrid solutions moving forward we should utilize Zoom to make our meetings as accessible as possible.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

Dave suggested that if possible meetings be presented in a hybrid format to allow for more public participation. Nigel has spoken with the town manager and the only way to accommodate a hybrid meeting is to use the community room. Jeremy will try to set up a standing meeting in the community room. Nigel reminded the group that if the meeting is posted as hybrid that at least one committee member needs to be present.

Colin moved the next meeting to be conducted as a hybrid meeting, location to be determined, Second by Nelson. Motion carries 5-0-0.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Russ. Second by Jeremy. Motion carries 5-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:22.