

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
Town Forest Stewardship Committee
Minutes of August 29, 2023

I. ROLL CALL

Russ Barrett, Jeremy Whalen, Nelson Hoffman, and Ray Cowder are in attendance. Colin Bright and Blake Pierson absent. Public: Joe Zuaro, Adam Sevy and Andrew Padilla. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Jeremy Whalen.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 18, 2023

Motioned by Russ, second by Ray. Motion carries 3-0-1. Nelson abstained.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

- a. Andrew Padilla, Shaw Center Director, provided an update on the status of trail repairs at Shaw Center. Red trail repairs were completed, 2/3rds of the trail was regraded, and drainage was opened. Norwich met with FEMA and gave them a tour of the landslide and Lybrand trail. There is a possibility the repairs to Lybrand could be covered under an education grant through FEMA. Norwich has drafted a list of NU property rules.

IV. UPDATES & DISCUSSION

- a. **VOREC Grant:** The last meeting was canceled; no updates.
- b. **Wayfinder signage:** VOREC has provided the TFSC with copies of the draft signage for comment. The VOREC group has also asked the TFSC to draft user rules to be placed on the signage in the town forest. TFSC already has some basic rules and signage, and that language will be the basis for the Wayfinder signage. The TFSC will discuss and review further at next month's meeting.
- c. **Report from the working group for the Town Forest Stewardship Plan:** Nelson has not reviewed the plan. Jeremy asked if he had the time to work on reviewing the plan and providing comments, and Nelson didn't think so. Jeremy proposed that he would step into that role and that if Nelson had the time or had general comments, he could still provide comments to me, Deb, and Colin. We also discussed an email from a former Northfield Town resident about the plan. Russ said he has received emails from him over the years. His comment will be considered as we look at the plan.
- d. **Town Forest Zoning update:** At last week's NCC meeting, it was decided that Jeremy (TFSC Chair), Nigel Tibble Hicks (NCC Chair), and David Mears (NCC Vice Chair) would request to be on the Planning Commission agenda on September 6, 2023, to discuss with them the issues around the Town Forest Zoning designation of Low-Density Residential.

- e. **High School Trail System:** NCC is working to contact the school facilities manager to discuss the maintenance and upkeep of the trails on school property at Garvey Hill. This may bring those tasks and duties to the TFSC.
- f. **Vacant TFSC Position:** Jeremy proposed potentially dedicating the vacant seat to the Shaw Center Outdoor Manager. The Committee agreed that this would be a good idea given the properties are continuous to each other. There would be some details that have to be worked out. Jeremy to talk with Jeff to see if that is possible and then with Andrew to see if he's interested. The Committee feels that bringing that position into our Committee would improve coordination and communication between the two properties.
- g. **Paine Mountain Trail Race:** This is scheduled for September 22, 2023, and funds raised will help with trail work on Shaw and the Town Forest. Michael McGrane, the Norwich Cross country coach, is coordinating the event. He has asked if the TFSC has volunteers to help during the event. The TFSC may have at least three volunteers to help out.

V. Public Participation (Unscheduled):

- a. Joe Zuaro and Adam Sevy requested permission to create a gladdened ski trail from the summit of Paine Mountain down to the beaver pond. The trail would start at the summit and run west along the northern property line. They hiked the potential route with Russ a few weeks ago. They are requesting to thin a 60 ft wide area; thinning would include trimming low-hanging branches and small diameter trees that could be hand cut. They would move any downed logs by hand that posed a potential safety hazard. This trail would be skiing only, and Russ concurred that the grade/terrain of the trail is not conducive to other types of recreation. Nelson commented that a process for trail approval was used for the mountain bikes trails and that process should be followed for this trail requested. Jeremy agreed that there should be consistency in trail approval regardless of use type. Russ proposed we have the topic on our next agenda and review the trail request in the same manner as previous trails.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

- a. Russ requested rescheduling a Hawk Watch workday for either September 16th or 17th. He will contact Norwich to see if we can get some student volunteers. Work would be clearing vegetation around Hawk Watch.
- b. Jeremy asked if we should consider asking the Town Manager for approval to get hats or shirts identifying the members when conducting trail work within the town forest. The Committee thought it was a good idea. Jeremy will talk with Jeff.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Jeremy. Second by Russ. Motion carries 4-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:25.