

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Minutes of July 24, 2024

Attendees:

For NCC: David Mears, Jeremy Whalen, Ruth Ruttenberg, Russ Barrett, Nigel Hicks-Tibbles

Public: None

Called to Order at 6:03 pm

Minutes:

- Roll call
- Public Participation – none
- Minutes of June 26, 2024, approved. Motion by Ruth, 2nd by Russ. Vote 5-0-0
- Discussion
 - ARPA Grant Proposal and Youth Trail Project Next Steps
 - Jeremy reported that as of the 7/23/24 Selectboard meeting, the grant proposal is on hold.
 - Due to funding issues discussed at the Selectboard meeting, the Selectboard is unlikely to approve any of the ARPA proposals that have been submitted but not yet approved.
 - Through the NCC discussion, the group affirmed that funding the trails projects discussed in the grant proposal and building a working relationship with the youth work corps are high priorities for the NCC.
 - Jeremy provided details on the updated grant proposal prepared in response to the Select Board's prior request for additional information when first reviewing the proposal.
 - The additional details included a letter of support from the school and school district administration regarding their support for the project and discussion of funding issues and public access to the trails on school property.
 - VYCC provided an updated budget estimate with more detailed cost breakdowns of individual proposed projects. The updated budget is a higher total cost than the original funding request. Therefore, if the grant is approved the next steps would require a review and prioritization of the top priority projects from the list of identified projects.
 - Limited discussion of seeking alternate funding for these projects if the ARPA funds are not approved.
 - Flood Resilience

- Discussion of a possible FEMA buyout of a property on Water Street. Final sale is pending. NCC may want to weigh in on future use of the site and adjacent vacant property.
 - Reported that a wash out on Cox Brook Rd. was not entirely due to rain, but was exacerbated by a beaver dam breaking.
 - Damage to Slate Ave trail in the Town Forest was worsened by recent rain/flooding. Signage in the Town Forest posts that the trail is closed due to flooding damage.
- Updates
 - Tree Grant
 - Jeremy and Ruth are working on posting in various locations to inform the public of tree planting opportunities.
 - Russ has reviewed the Northfield Tree Inventory for locations for possible planting.
 - Discussion of fruit trees for Town Forest, and whether blue berry bushes might be counted as trees
 - Based on existing tree inventory, we could find locations for over 100 trees. If a large number of trees are approved in grant proposal, this may create difficulty organizing the planting of the trees. Further discussion is needed.
 - TFSC Update
 - Russ did a survey of portions of the Town Forest with members from Audubon looking at where invasive trees are in the Forest, various options for timber management and bird habitat.
 - There is a possibility for a timber sale, but it would require investments to make the harvest possible. The investments would reduce any profit from the sale.
 - VOREC Summer Programs and Guidance Document
 - Jeremy reported that the yoga walks in the Town Forest are going well so far and have good public engagement.
 - Ruth suggests we may provide an update on programming to publish in Northfield News.
 - Nigel presented a first draft of a Town Forest informational handout. The group provided feedback and Nigel will provide an updated draft for further review and distribution.
 - Meeting with North Branch Nature Center staff
 - David and Ruth met with NBNC staff and discussed possibilities for joint programming in Northfield. Nature Center may be able to coordinate for programming with High School, or develop programs for Northfield Town Forest.
- Other Business
 - Ruth raised a point of discussion regarding recent removal or cutting of trees on Halstrom Road. Discussion identified that this topic has been discussed

recently on Front Porch Forum. This may be a topic for the NCC to monitor due to property owners frustrations with damage to trees near roadside.

- David is in the process of follow up with VT Land Trust and discussed possibility of having Land Trust staff join the NCC for a future meeting to provide information on land protection options.
- Motion to Adjourn made by Russ, 2nd by Ruth. Vote: 5-0-0. Adjourned at 7:30 pm.