

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
Conservation Commission
Minutes of June 26, 2024

- I. Roll Call: David Mears, Jeremy Whalen, Nigel Hick-Tibbles, Ruth Ruttenberg, Russ Barrett, Deb Zuaro
- II. Updates to Agenda: Ruth, Tree Grant and Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) exhibit
- III. Public Participation: none
- IV. Approval of minutes: May 22, 2024 (Joint TFSC meeting) Approved 5-0-1, on a motion by Jeremy, 2nd by Russ, Ruth abstaining.
- V. Discussion
 - a. Tree grants: Ruth informed the group of a new tree grant opportunity with no required match and asked what the needs in Northfield are for trees. Russ mentioned the potential for roadway trees. Ruth added food trees such as apple trees for food-insecure residents. Jeremy suggested new apple trees next to the existing ones in Cheney Field to replace these trees as they are getting older and will die out. Russ also suggested shade trees in Cheney along the Paine Mountain trail portion of the field. The committee discussed providing trees to private landowners as allowed in the grant. Nigel suggested we ensure we get information out to all residents beyond social media. The group agreed and decided to post on Front Porch Forum, Facebook, new Northfield news and seeing if it could be posted on the town TV page.
 - b. EAB exhibit: Ruth and David are getting informational material to promote EAB awareness. They hope to post information in the Brown Library.
 - c. TFSC MAMBA discussion and next steps: Dayton Crites joined the TFSC meeting on 6/18 to discuss his vision of connecting Irish Hill (Berlin) to Paine Mountain with a connector multi-use trail. He had spoken with the Berlin Conservation Commission in May and they were Luke warm on the trail's creation. They were worried about potential E-bike usage on their property as they are allowed on Norwich property, The TFSC is currently assessing the use of E-Bikes on Paine Mountain. Further notes on this discussion are available in the TFSC notes from 6/18/24

- d. Cross-Brothers Dam removal: Nothing new to report. There is likely to be some conflict with the Main Street bridge replacement due to steel shortage. Nigel raised concerns about town liability if Dog River access was created during this project.
 - e. ARPA Grant Application for VYCC Partnership to Improve NHMS Trails and Town Forest Trails: Jeremy and Mariela presented an ARPA funds request to the Select Board on 6/25. It was generally well received and the NCC was commended on how well the grant was written. The Select Board did have some questions that the NCC needs to answer and bring back to the board before they vote to approve the funds. The boards would like to know if the school district applied for FEMA funds to fix the trails at the school. They would like a more detailed budget breakdown from VYCC, detailed maps of the areas where work will be completed, and survey results from a student-led survey on trail uses at NMHS.
 - f. Possible Collaboration with North Branch Nature Center (NBNC): David, Deb, and Ruth will meet with NBNC to discuss the potential to develop a partnership to provide Kid's programming within the town forest.
- VI. Updates:
- a. Zoning Bylaws: Zoning Bylaws went back in front of the Select Board at their last meeting. Currently, there are only two members on the Planning Commission. Getting the Town Forest designation changed is still on their radar.
 - b. TFSC update/Update on VOREC summer programs: These updates blended. Library story walks and yoga hikes in the town forest are part of the programming supported by the VOREC Grant funds. Nigel is developing a town Forest guidance document we could hand out at these events to help community members understand the town forest history and uses better.
- VII. Public Participation: None
- VIII. Other business: David mentioned that the Golf course on 12A was for sale again.
- IX. Adjournment: 19:25

Submitted by Jeremy