

Boyce Hill Town Forest Steering Committee

Minutes

9/21/20 - 7:00 p.m.

Present via Zoom:

Lisa Koitzsch, Corrie Miller, Chuck Martel, Liza Walker, Caitlin Cusack, Woody Dugan, Karrie Thomas, and Sally Dwyer

1. Sally moved to approve the Steering Committee (SC) minutes of 9/15/20 and Karrie seconded. No further discussion, all in favor, motion was approved.
2. Agenda order will be switched around and Section III will come before Section II.
3. Quick review of public meeting law: meeting warning, posting minutes.
4. Call for public input. None offered.
5. Karrie will share a document with the SC from Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) regarding recreation this coming winter and the potential impact of COVID-19.
6. Woody brought up the need to designate someone to take minutes at the SC meetings. All agreed to take turns. Karrie will take minutes for the October 7, 2020 meeting.
7. Interim Management - Stewardship Needs
 - a. Pond embankment
 - i. Shawn Patenaude, a dam engineering expert who now works for Sugarbush snowmaking, visited the site with Mike Jordan, a Select Board (SB) member, and determined that vegetation on the downward side of the embankment would need to be cut to maintain the integrity of the pond. In addition, several small birches along the inside edge of the pond need to be removed.
 - ii. Caitlin said that care should be taken to protect the vernal pool at the base of the embankment.
 - iii. Chuck said volunteers should complete a liability/waiver form.
 - iv. All agreed that any vegetation that needs to be removed should be done without machinery.

ACTION ITEMS:

Woody and Lisa to meet with Mike Jordan to discuss Patenaude's recommendations and report back to the SC.

Vernal pool should be flagged.

SC and FCC Stewardship Committee to organize community volunteer effort to remove the vegetation. Karrie noted this engagement would be a first step to including the community in the BHTF and Corrie agreed that we should coordinate how/when/why we reach out to the community.

- b. No Fishing
 - i. People have been fishing at the pond even though there is no fishing under Interim Plan due to a potential conflict of uses. The issue will be discussed further re: long-term management.
 - ii. SC discussed putting up better signage in several locations, however, since the fishing season is almost over, all decided to wait until Spring.

- iii. There was additional discussion regarding the lack of amphibians in/around the pond due to small mouth bass that were introduced by a former owner. Woody added that our very dry summer this year also contributed.

c. Motorized vehicles

- i. Vehicles have been driving up onto the property and someone has moved two of the rocks that were put in place to dissuade this. Motorized vehicles are NOT allowed under both the Interim Plan and the VLT Conservation Easement.
- ii. Chuck reported the Fayston road crew is supposed to be adding a few more substantial rocks to try to prevent this. Sally offered some boulders from the Big Basin Trust.

ACTION ITEMS:

Chuck will remind the road crew to add some large rocks to prevent vehicles from driving up from the parking area at the top of Boyce Hill.

All will keep an eye on where people access the property with motorized vehicles and SC will consider more options to dissuade this in the future (i.e. ask VAST to put up signs, remote cameras).

d. Campfires

- i. People are building fires in several locations across the property. This is not allowed under the Interim Plan and was especially concerning this year when it has been so dry. Woody and Sally reported that there has been a notable increase in this activity over the last few years.
- ii. Woody and Karrie suggested creating one location where fires are allowed (such as down by the pond, as water is nearby in case the fire gets out of control).
- iii. Sally suggested a small sign at the top of the property that states 'no fires' and allow a fire down by the pond.

ACTION ITEMS:

Continue to remove ash and fire structures during the Interim period.

Consider a sign for the top of the property.

e. Unleashed dogs

- i. Some SC members have observed unleashed dogs running on the property. Leashed dogs are specified in the Interim Plan due to potential conflicts with other property users. All agreed that this is a hard policy to enforce on this property.
- ii. Chuck said any dog control should follow the Fayston Dog Ordinance. Woody suggested SC continue to observe and take note of any issues that come up and then discuss further.
- iii. Karrie suggested using the dog warden for education rather than enforcement – a friendlier way of letting people know what the rules are.
- iv. Concern about dog waste increasing with more people using the property. Liza suggested speaking to AVCC and the Director of Hubbard Park to see how other Towns have dealt with the issue.

ACTION ITEMS:

Lisa will upload the Fayston Town Dog Ordinance to the SC shared folder.

Reach out to AVCC and ask how other Towns deal with the dog and dog waste issue.

- f. Entry sign
 - i. The interim sign affixed to the gate at the top of Boyce Road needs repair as one of the bolts has come out. Woody offered to help fix it.
 - ii. Once long-term management plan is in place, a nicer sign will be installed.
 - iii. Woody commented it would be more effective if a sign had a map. Liza mentioned the kiosks at trailheads across the Valley and said a kiosk kit has been saved for BHTF.
- g. Mowing during Interim period
 - i. Interim Management plan calls for mowing the road to the top and a section to the pond. This has been done and Sugarbush supplied their large flail mower to do this as an exchange with the Town of Fayston's roadside mower. Lisa expressed the concern about the size of that tractor and potential damage to the steeper slopes, wet areas, and shallow soil areas as the reasons the Conservation Commission didn't think the flail mower was appropriate for use beyond the road and flatter pond areas
 - ii. Multiple ideas expressed before the formation of this Steering Committee regarding whether to mow this year and if so, where to mow. Corrie stated that the CC has received a lot of input over the spring and summer and most people have a different opinion about what to mow and why and therefore not everyone will be happy with whatever decision is reached.
 - iii. It was decided by the FCC that any mowing would take place after August 1st when most ground and shrub nesting birds had fledged their young.
 - iv. More pressing to mow areas that are 'unrecoverable' (have grown up too much to mow/brush hog next year) but SC still needs to identify which areas those are. It has been 3 years since the last mowing of the entire property although portions were mowed two years ago (Jon Cohen and Boomer Mumford). Several members agreed that if we don't mow some of the more grown up areas this year, we may lose the ability to mow there in the future as they would be too woody for a mower or brush hog. Karrie stated that maintaining some of the status quo set by the former property owner (re mown areas) would not preclude a decision to not mow there in the future.
 - v. Woody said riparian protection zones would need to be identified and protected by a buffer and that neighbor concerns should be considered.
 - vi. Skiers have appreciated the open field skiing and believe that efforts should be made to identify swaths that would make skiing safe from trees re-growth 'pungy' sticks.
 - vii. Karrie shared that she had heard concern expressed about trees growing up along the road and managing the tree lines.
 - viii. All agreed there is a need to consider viewsheds in the long-term management.
 - ix. Corrie mentioned Lars Brun who organizes Mad River Glen's regeneration zones has visited the property a couple of times and shared his expertise managing for backcountry skiing. Discussion re: potential of future glade skiing and non-mechanized mowing.
 - x. Sally mentioned that the property was known as Wrisley Pasture when she was growing up and was largely kept open by grazing. She commented that if mowing is not done this year, it will be another year before any can be done. There are people

with small tractors who would be willing to mow and there are people willing to fund the mowing through a donation. Corrie noted that she didn't think it was ethical to have private donors direct action on the public property before the public management planning process was complete. Chuck clarified that the donors would not direct the mowing, rather there would be money available in the Fayston Town Forest Reserve Fund to mow if this decision were made. Lisa asked Chuck if there is any money in the Town road budget for mowing. He said he would review that at the next SB meeting.

- xi. Sally reviewed some of the areas that she thought should not be mown, and areas that could be mown without contention.

ACTION ITEMS:

Ask people who have mowed the site in the past to identify the too steep, too wet, and rocky areas where the land is not advisable to mow.

Corrie will share a draft map of possible mowing locations on the shared site before our next meeting but it will require input from someone with expertise on 'unrecoverable' areas and from the SC.

Identify someone willing to mow with a smaller machine.

SC will schedule a Field Site visit in the next week or so. Karrie and Woody offered to participate.

- h. Invasive species

Caitlin will send the draft VLT Invasive Report before the next meeting. Discussion about two different species of Phragmites – native and non-native.

8. Other Business

- a. Corrie expressed the need to invest time in organizing the SC before we get too far along and asked members to bear with discussions about file sharing, communications, etc. at the next meeting. All agreed that the agenda on October 7th will focus on Section II of the Agenda for this meeting.
- b. Meeting Schedule - 1st & 3rd Wednesdays from 7 - 8:45 pm via Zoom
- c. Lisa and Corrie will continue to work with Sally on the 'To Do List'.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7th, 2020 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m. VIA ZOOM