

Boyce Hill Town Forest Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes – 11/18/2020

Committee Members Present: Pete Colgan, Karrie Thomas, Chuck Martel, Woody Dugan, Corrie Miller, Sally Dwyer, Lisa Koitzsch, Caitlin Cusack (Vermont Land Trust)

1. Sally made the motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on November 4, 2020 and Pete seconded. No further discussion, all in favor, motion was approved.
Lisa will take minutes for this meeting, Pete will take minutes for the meeting on December 2, 2020.
2. No public input as no members of the public were present.
3. Goal for tonight's meeting: come up with a rough timeline for the BHTF Long Term Management Plan (LTMP) development.
4. Select Board meeting update (Chuck)
 - a. Letter to Sugarbush thanking them for mowing help was signed.
 - b. Timing of LTMP
 - i. SB agreed on one year for SC to finish the plan (end of 2021). Chuck noted that this is a floating timeline and can be adjusted.
 - ii. SB requested that SC provide a write-up for Town Report/Town Meeting about BHTF – what has been done and what is planned.
 - iii. If there is a Town Meeting in 2021, SC will provide a short verbal summary.
 - c. Parking lot
 - i. Three new parking spaces were created and the “No Parking – Snowplow Turn Around” sign was moved. Still need to think about adding a ‘No Winter Parking (with an arrow pointing left)’ Sign
 - ii. Possibility of moving the rocks near the gate to create a few more parking spaces.
 - iii. Stuart suggested adding a barrier made of telephone poles like the one at the parking area on Tucker Hill.
 - d. Budget
 - i. Town can receive private donations for BHTF but need a dedicated account for that. There is an account for Town Forests: Town Forest Reserve Fund. Would need a way to specify dedicated funds.
 - ii. Donations can be tax deductible, but the Town will not note that in thank you letters. Individual donors will need to determine if their gift is tax deductible.
 - iii. Mike Jordan suggested a GoFundMe campaign to help with private donations.
 - iv. SC will focus on a December 8th SB Budget Meeting. SC will need to prepare a funding request for that meeting.
 - e. Pond
 - i. Concern about low water in the pond. SB asked to be kept up to date.
 - ii. Woody did not discover any leaks and soil on the back side of the dam was not moist. Determined that the water is beginning to rise, albeit slowly.
 - f. Mad River Valley Recreation District
 - i. MRVRD interested in helping BHTF with signage when we are ready. MRV Trails Initiative has a signpost for BHTF.
 - ii. BHTF could possibly apply for a grant from MRVRD for other uses on the property.
5. Strategy and Planning Session
 - a. Review of flow chart from the Town Forest Planning Toolkit. This is a tool kit available from Vermont Urban & Community Forest Program website and will be used by the BHTF SC to help guide the LTMP process.

- i. Phase 1: Visioning = Draft Visioning Framework for Town Forest - SC
 - 1. Public visioning workshop - (Community Input)
 - 2. Community survey – (Community Input)
 - 3. Steering Committee visioning – (Community Input)
 - ii. Phase 2: Strategies Development
 - 1. Environmental considerations and site constraints – SC
 - 2. Develop range of strategies to achieve vision – SC
 - 3. Strategies Workshop – (Community Input)
 - a. Review Draft Vision
 - b. Select & Prioritize Strategies
 - iii. Phase 3: Plan Development
 - 1. Draft Action Plan – SC
 - 2. Plan presentation workshop – (Community Input)
 - iv. Phase 4: Final Plan
 - 1. Implementation
 - a. Funding & support resources
 - b. Management best practices
- b. Goal for this meeting is to develop timeline and assign jobs to SC members
 - c. Public input is essential.
 - d. Discussion about what comes first: public input/survey or SC visioning
 - e. Need to combine public education with public input – importance of NRI and other ecological information.
 - f. To develop a survey, might need to determine preliminary vision and consider the specifications of the VLT Conservation Easement. In addition, a public survey can be guided by ecological requirements, conservation regulations, Town decisions, etc. so that the public can know limitations ahead of time and the reasons for the limitations.
 - g. Confusion surrounding the Town Forest moniker – may need to revisit this.
 - h. Town of Huntington is using online speakers to share education and considerations and then opening up to the public for comments. Need to look at how other towns have handled this (i.e. Middlesex and other towns part of this tool kit development).
 - i. If we can wrap education up into any input we are asking for, we will get more meaningful input from the public.
 - j. The SC job is to take all the information in, share it, and then make decisions to create a draft plan. The SC can guide the process – both by bringing people in and by making our own decisions.
 - k. By involving the community and educating them on the reasons for making or not making certain decisions you create an enlivened and engaged conversation on the stewardship of the property. Education is a good form of manipulation and it is the SC's job to make the hard decisions.
 - l. Share with public what hard limitations are AND get bigger picture input from a variety of people.
 - m. In the Toolkit, the sample community survey asked similar questions to those asked in visioning workshop.
 - n. Would be helpful to see actual surveys with the specific questions from other towns.
 - o. In Year 1 of this process, the intention was to educate people and have them get to know the property but COVID made this hard. Combining education as we ask the community for input would be a way to ensure people have the right knowledge to make decisions.
 - p. Discussion on what to put in the survey – raw input from community OR add education to the framework.
 - q. Look at other recreational opportunities in the Valley and see where Boyce Hill fits in to overall recreational resources available.
 - r. **SUGGESTED TIMELINE:**

- i. Phase IV - Final plan completed December 1, 2021
- ii. Phase III – Draft Action Plan: Completed in September
- iii. Phase II – During the summer: education, presentations (May – August)
- iv. Phase I – Visioning in various forms First quarter of 2021
 - 1. Collect survey info and SC vision by March
 - 2. Take the internal strategies and get community input April
- s. Third party designation? What part of this process would be appropriate for a third party – community input management, writing of the management plan, etc. Can the SC manage the entire process? Do we know consultants who will do this work?
- t. Public input can happen throughout the process. People can take a survey more than once during the process. Can also use the public visioning process as well as the Strategies Workshop to gauge people’s opinions.
- u. Possibly reach out to public about property with an article, or a call to contribute photos/records of experiences this part year, maybe develop a Facebook page (curated) or group (forum) and have more of an online presence. A separate page could be created on the Town website as well.
- v. Will need to work between meetings in smaller groups to present to larger group at meetings.
- w. If we form committees to work on things, such as the public survey, should we ask other people to participate?
- x. Steering Committee vision should be a combination of our goals, the community’s goals, the ecological picture, etc.

Leadership roles

Community Survey: Peter, Sally

Education/Public Input Vision: Karrie, Woody, Corrie

Steering Committee Vision: Lisa, Chuck

Assignments

Read Town Forest Planning Tool Kit: Everyone

Review Town of Huntington website: Everyone

Consider aspects that people want to play a key role in: Everyone

Consider 2021 budget for BHTF: Everyone

Collate information that comes in from public: Sally, Lisa

Ask Forest Parks and Recreation about recommendations for third party help: Karrie

Follow up on timeline of process from other towns: Caitlin, Pete

NEXT MEETING WILL BE DECEMBER 2, 2020 at 7:00 pm