

BOYCE HILL TOWN FOREST STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

MARCH 17, 2021

SC Members: Chuck Martel, Woody Dugan, Corrie Miller, Karrie Thomas, Lisa Koitzsch, Sally Dwyer, Pete Colgan

Guest: Steve Sharp, Mad River Valley Backcountry Coalition (MRVBC)

1. Approve Minutes from March 03, 2021 meeting: Karrie made a motion to approve the minutes from March 3, 2021, Woody seconded, no further discussion. All in favor, motion was approved.
2. Public Input - Steve Sharp, MRVBC
 - a. Steve joined the SC to formally introduce MRVBC and engage in the management planning process.
 - b. MRVBC formed a couple of years ago and is a chapter of the Catamount Trail Association.
 - c. Primary interest in working with partners in the community to provide opportunities for enhanced winter recreation with a focus on skiing and backcountry skiing.
 - d. Interested in identifying areas where there may be opportunities for managed terrain such as glades or fields (Boyce Hill).
 - e. MRVBC also works on outreach and education re: backcountry safety and etiquette and is interested in conserving mountain lands and wildlife.
 - f. Comes to the conversation about Boyce Hill open minded about the reality of finding the right balance.
 - g. Hopefully, there are opportunities on Boyce land and in the public process to engage as a partner.
 - h. Pete said there are many voices and visions for what the perfect use of Boyce Hill will be. Public input is a major piece of the process.
 - i. Corrie said that in addition to the public visioning workshops, there will be opportunities to work with different groups that potentially steward trails and resources. No plan yet on how these conversations will happen.
3. Goals for today's meeting:
 - a. Develop public education/visioning workshop process.
 - b. Review public survey.
4. Sub-Team Updates
 - a. Public Education/Visioning Workshops (Corrie, Karrie, Woody, Pete)
 - i. Series of 4 public outreach/visioning workshops to get information from the public. These will be held via Zoom.
 - ii. Workshop #1 - Land Management: What is it and what are the opportunities and challenges with managing this property? Speakers: Ethan Tapper, Chittenden County Forester, Liza Walker, VLT. Possible date: Wed, April 28. Facilitator: Peter Forbes?
 - iii. Workshop #2 - Natural Resources: Natural Resources that are our responsibility to preserve, protect, and care for on this property. Speaker: Grace Glynn, Botanist, Dubois & King. Facilitator: Jenna or Jon? Possible date: Wed, May 19th.
 - iv. Workshop #3 - Recreation: Focus on public interaction with this land, recreation in general and the different ways recreation can work well on public land - conflicts/resolutions/opportunities. Potential speaker: Becca Washburn, VT Forest Parks and Recreation. Possible date: Wed, June 9th. Facilitator: Jenna or Jon?
 - v. Workshop #4 - Synopsis: Overview of everything we learned and final thoughts on how to move forward. Possible date: End of June? Beginning of July? End of summer? Facilitator: Becca Washburn? Hannah Philips?

- vi. Structure of each session will be:
 1. Overview of SC and our mission as well as opportunities, limitations.
 2. Presenter who will help shed light on a workshop topic: strategies, opportunities, challenges.
 3. Question/Answer session to allow the public to ask questions about the speaker's topic.
 4. Input and feedback about different opportunities the public sees for this property for the community.
 - vii. Sessions will last an hour and a half, with an extra half hour at the end to allow for extra input if needed. Start time will be 7:00 pm.
 - viii. Vermont Council on Rural Development will facilitate two of the sessions - Jenna Koloski and Jon Copens. Other potential facilitators are Becca Washburn and Peter Forbes, both of whom have experience in facilitation of community conversations. Karrie will speak with Becca and Lisa will contact Peter.
 - ix. There was a suggestion of one speaker doing both the presentation and the facilitation, but most SC members were a little cautious about this and some felt it would be better to keep these tasks separate. Important to have a neutral third party.
 - x. Discussion on which facilitator would be appropriate for which workshop. Still unsure what format of last workshop will be so it would be helpful to have a skillful facilitator. Could possibly open with Peter and use the VCRD folks for the middle two.
 - xi. Washington County Forester has just been hired but is in training and still lives in Maine. Ethan Tapper will visit the property prior to the workshop and invite him to tag along.
 - xii. Re: date selection. Jenna is a no on Sundays, Ethan suggested best days are Tues, Wed, or Thurs.
 - xiii. All agreed the SC would only meet once a month on the months we have scheduled presentations. Will need to have a final discussion before the last workshop to determine format, etc. Would be helpful to have time to do individual outreach to different user groups.
 - xiv. Goal is to announce the workshops three weeks prior to April 28th - second week of April. Publish in Valley Reporter, FPF, etc. Communication team will develop promotional materials.
 - xv. Would be great to be able to engage people on the site during this process. Perhaps once COVID restrictions are lifted, conduct a series of smaller, more focused interest-based field trips during the summer.
 - xvi. Discussion about 4th Workshop:
 1. Would be great to have this meeting in person.
 2. Opportunity to look at a larger vision for the property.
 3. Perhaps focus on issues not covered in the previous three workshops?
 4. Could also dive into more specifics about how the property will be managed, especially if we allow enough time after the first three workshops to synthesize input.
 5. Example: From what we have heard so far, here is a general outline of our plan. Here are the facts, here are the potential management strategies.
- b. Management Plan writing
- i. We should begin thinking about hiring a third party to help write the management plan. Perhaps we engage someone sooner than later.
 - ii. Begin thinking of people we could approach. Liza and Caitlin could help with names?

- c. Public Survey (Pete, Sally)
- i. Challenge is to adapt the Tool Kit survey to the special situation of Boyce Hill.
 - ii. Corrie and Lisa asked for a little more time to fine tune the Natural Resource section. Trying to give a little information to provide a framework for the question. What do people envision, what are their values? Perhaps we could do something similar with the recreation section. Survey will correspond with educational workshops so perhaps we can put a short amount of information within survey questions. Set the context.
 - iii. Sally asked what the elevation difference was from bottom to top - Steve said 400'.
 - iv. Pete noted the cost of providing more information on the survey is the number of people who will respond. We will lose respondents if we make the survey too long.
 - v. Corrie suggested it would be more helpful in the long run to have meaningful input than off-the-cuff responses.
 - vi. Woody believes propaganda is the right word to describe any additional information provided in the survey instead of just raw questions that get off-the-cuff feelings and responses. Survey is to find out opinions, educated or not. Finding the balance point is tricky and we need to know where people are when they take the survey.
 - vii. Corrie countered that we do not need to know if people have seen deer or rabbits, but we do need to know what peoples' values are. If you ask someone: are these your values? They are likely to respond yes to all questions and this is not helpful. Adding context is not meant to sway anyone's opinion, it is meant to provide facts so that we can get meaningful responses and educated comments.
 - viii. Woody suggested a way of possibly asking the values questions. Example: We have an opportunity to mitigate greenhouse gases on this property. How important is that to you?
 - ix. Karrie agreed and stated there is no way of educating people on all these values regarding this property. She added that other values could be wildlife protection, water quality, etc.
 - x. Corrie agreed with Woody's suggestion but stated that some of the values Karrie mentioned would need a little more context. Need to strike the right balance and relate these values to Boyce Hill. All town forests are not going to have the same challenges as we do with Boyce. This situation is more complex. For example, last summer people thought this property offered great wildlife habitat. So, if we do not add the context that it is not high-quality habitat, they might vote for supporting wildlife habitat at the same time as they vote for options that could reduce the habitat quality.
 - xi. Karrie stated there will only be a small number of people who know the property well enough to provide valuable input on natural resources.
 - xii. Chuck expressed concern about leading people to a certain conclusion based on the way the questions are worded. Does think you need to get people's gut reactions. Would like to review wording for the natural resources section before moving forward.
 - xiii. Woody suggested another way of wording a question: Boyce Hill Town Forest in its current state is terrible wildlife habitat. Would you prefer to have it improved on a scale from 1-5? Would this seem like a leading statement? Chuck noted this would be a value judgement. Karrie said it is not a judgement, it is a fact. So, Woody suggested another format for a question: BHTF is lacking the quality of wildlife habitat that you think it already has but could be vastly improved given certain habitat planning. How can we frame the questions?
 - xiv. Pete stated the devil is in the details and applauded the conversation. Corrie and

Lisa will put more time into these natural resource questions and get back to the group. Karrie will review before the weekend and provide her comments. Sally and Pete will incorporate comments. All agreed not to go through the document line by line during this meeting. Sally has more input on the survey and Pete will help her enter these.

- xv. Corrie asked Pete and Sally to think about the possibility of sharing a little more information on some of the other sections.
 - xvi. Woody said he was approached by someone who would be willing to give a prize to incentivize people to fill out the survey.
 - xvii. Survey process will continue via email since our next meeting is not for another three weeks.
- d. Interactive Map
- i. Corrie, Lisa, and Caitlin will work on an interactive map of the property.
 - ii. Steve noted that an interactive map would be great.
- e. Special Use Permit Policy (Chuck, Lisa, Woody)
- i. Select Board approved Special Use Permit Policy.
 - ii. Tasked the sub-committee with developing an application procedure and chain of approval process.
 - iii. Pete asked Lisa if Mad Birders needed a permit - this will be the test case and Lisa will fill out an application.
5. Other business
- a. Brad Long - FPF request
- i. SC reviewed a request from Brad Long to reach out to community re: oral history of Boyce Hill.
 - ii. All agreed his letter was fine but want him to add language re: working with the Steering Committee (or to inform the SC, or with the cooperation of) and the Vermont Master Naturalist program.
 - iii. Pete expressed concern that older people who could provide oral histories might not be reached by FPF and wondered how else we could reach out to these people.
 - iv. Lisa will email Brad and pass on SC's approval and request.
 - v. Sally asked if there was any written account of Bob Newis' history with the property. There are old zoning records and real estate ads used when he sold the property. Wondered if her memory of the property having been open for a very long time is true. Corrie found the property has gone through various stages of succession but that when Bob cleared the land, it did generate a lot of interest.
 - vi. Woody mentioned that aerial photography from State websites, Google Earth, and other resources can give a snapshot of changes on the property over time.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Task List Before Meeting on April 7, 2021

All:

- Review survey after Pete and Sally incorporate edits and Lisa/Corrie propose new Natural Resources section

Caitlin:

- Help when needed on interactive map development (Corrie, Lisa)

Chuck:

- Finalize a draft of the SC Vision/Mission Statements (with Lisa)
- Develop procedure for special use permit applicants (with Woody and Lisa)

Corrie:

- Work with Lisa on the natural resource portion of the survey
- Begin work on an interactive map with Lisa and Caitlin
- Contact Arrowwood to discuss options for interactive map (with Lisa)
- Work with Karrie, Woody, and Pete on public visioning workshops

Karrie:

- Communicate with Becca Washburn about being the speaker for the recreation workshop and her possible facilitation role on the last workshop
- Work with Corrie, Woody, and Pete on public visioning workshops

Liza

- Confirm schedule for presentation during first workshop
- Work with Lisa and Sally on ideas for grants and other funding

Lisa:

- Contact Peter Forbes re: facilitation.
- Work with Corrie on the natural resource portion of the survey.
- Begin work on an interactive map with Corrie and Caitlin.
- Contact Arrowwood to discuss options for interactive map (with Corrie).
- Develop procedure for special use permit applicants (Woody/Chuck).
- Begin filling in information on Community Profile spreadsheet (with Sally).
- Finalize draft of the SC Vision/Mission Statements (with Chuck).
- Work with Liza and Sally on ideas for grants and other funding.
- Follow up with Chris Stephenson re: abutting landowner.
- Test special use permit application process with Mad Birder walk.
- Record minutes for Steering Committee meetings and post to Town website.

Pete:

- Help Sally enter her comments into the survey document.
- Develop agenda for April 7, 2021 meeting by 4/3/21. Priority will be Public Workshops and the Public Survey.
- Incorporate edits to the public survey (with Sally).

Sally:

- Incorporate comments (with Pete's help) into the survey document.
- Incorporate comments from 2020 Town Meeting into public summary spreadsheet.
- Begin filling in information on Community Profile spreadsheet (with Lisa).

- Continue working on the public survey (with Pete).
- Work with Liza and Lisa on ideas for grants and other funding.

Woody:

- Develop procedure for special use permit applicants (Lisa and Chuck).
- Work with Karrie, Corrie, and Pete on public visioning workshops.