

# BOYCE HILL STEERING COMMITTEE

## Minutes

July 27, 2023

**Present:** Chuck Martel, Corrie Miller, Sally Dwyer, Lisa Koitzsch, Amy Sheldon, Pete Colgan, and Karrie Thomas  
**Guest via Zoom:** Wendy Bridgewater

1. Pete moved to approve the minutes from June 7, 2023. Chuck seconded, no further discussion, all in favor, motion was approved.
2. Stewardship
  - Woody met with Ross Saxton of Saxton Land Works to discuss removing trees and other woody vegetation from the outside of the pond embankment to preserve the integrity of the structure. Ross will send a written estimate to the Town and the work will likely be undertaken sometime in September.
  - Pete weed whacked around the foundation to keep it clear of vegetation.
3. Wendy Bridgewater reported she removed the campfire remains from the edge of the pond. There was discussion about the incident over the weekend (camping, partying, and campfires). For future incidents, Wendy was encouraged to contact the Town's Second Constable, Chris Griffin, or the State Police. Karrie suggested installing game cameras in the parking area and near the pond.
4. Boyce Hill Committee
  - The Boyce Hill Committee invitation is ready to go out. Do we need to wait for the Select Board to approve the management plan first or can we send it out ahead of time to get the process moving? Chuck will confirm this.
  - Pete said it is important for some stewardship projects to move forward now instead of waiting for a new committee to be formed.
  - Discussion re: inviting people from outside of Fayston to join the new Committee.
  - FCC members on the SC will revisit the invitation by email to have it ready to send out.
5. Plan Considerations after Public Input
  - Steering Committee members summarized their thoughts after receiving public input from the most recent forum and during the draft management plan comment period.
    - Lisa expressed disappointment about accusations that the SC did not listen to the public or take their input into consideration.
    - Chuck reiterated that the SC reviewed every comment it received, sometimes several times.
    - Corrie agreed and stated that the agenda tonight reflects the issues and new comments that came up during the comment period. She also said that listening is different than doing exactly what someone wants you to do.
    - Karrie stated that the SC will put forward the very best recommendation it can re: balanced management of this property and ultimately, the hope is that the Select Board will stand behind the hard work of the SC.
    - Chuck said the recent petition will be discussed at the Select Board meeting.
    - Pete said SC decisions were made based on values that were outlined and the relative trade offs between them. Woody agreed and that compromise should rule the day.
  - Discussion of trail use around the pond and how to address protection of the riparian buffer. All agreed to allow a trail around the pond and to protect the buffer with a bridge over the intake stream and very limited cutting. VLT will have to approve the bridge and the Boyce Hill Committee will conduct the work.

- Amy added a date to the aerial photos used on plan maps and changed the label for the proposed trails.
- After some deliberation, the SC agreed to allow horses on the property.
  - No horse trailers allowed. Horses must stay on the main trail. Riders must remove horse waste from the trail.
  - The SC rejected the proposal for a dedicated bridle path.
  - It would be helpful to foster a relationship with the horse community for self-policing.
  - Permission can be revoked if stipulations are violated.
- Karrie requested that as a future consideration, the Boyce Hill Committee should be open to considering new trails. This brought up the discussion slated for later in the agenda about what management decisions could be revisited during the 10-year duration of the plan.
  - Hard lines vs. soft lines.
  - Corrie stated that the plan outlines solid management considerations that are the SC intentions for the life of the plan, but it also leaves room for evaluation/assessment of these considerations and the flexibility to adapt if necessary.
  - Woody mentioned the VLT Easement's requirements for stream protection and not allowing for multiple crossings of these waterways.
  - Chuck expressed concern about not allowing any new trails to be developed after the plan has been approved.
  - Karrie stated that more trails weren't necessarily needed after the plan's adoption, but that working on existing and proposed trails to make them more aesthetically pleasing would be important.
  - Corrie commented that this is a long-range management plan and that some of the recommendations the SC is making should be adhered to such as areas designated for restoration. It will take time to restore those areas and it wouldn't make sense to change that designation as soon as the plan is approved.
  - Amy said that any changes that are suggested once the plan has been approved will have to follow a public process.
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- SC agreed to recommend no hunting or trapping. Comments received regarding more and more land being closed to hunting were respectfully acknowledged but the SC decided not to allow these uses on Boyce Hill primarily for safety reasons.
- SC agreed to allow fishing but not to allow stocking fish in the pond.
- There should be a note in the plan that states that out of respect for neighbors, the property is only open from dawn until dusk.
- The plan should mention the importance of developing a plan for wildland fire management in the future. SC recommended a meeting with the Waitsfield/Fayston Fire Department and the Fayston Fire Warden to get their input.
- Dogs are allowed but **MUST BE LEASHED AT ALL TIMES**. No exceptions. All waste must be removed from the property. Boyce Hill Committee can work with stewardMRV to install a dog waste bag station.
- Estimate amount of time, effort, and money of previous mowing regime and what will be required for recommended management areas.
  - Discussion of previous mowing costs and effort spent mowing by Bob Newis and Boomer Mumford. Knowledge shared of current mowing costs from local brush-hoggers (ranging between \$80-100/hr). Acknowledgement of Sugarbush mowing trade off with Fayston over the recent years.
  - Chuck was uncertain that we could accurately estimate the cost of mowing in the recommended management areas but that it would certainly be less than what had been spent in the past as there are fewer areas to be mowed. All agreed that we would need to put the plan into action to determine exact costs.

- Lisa mentioned that mowing could have occurred earlier in the Fall in the last few years, but we were bound by Sugarbush's schedule.
  - The Boyce Hill Committee will have to take into consideration the cost of mowing, the timing of mowing, and the best equipment to use.
  - Karrie said the property will now be managed for multiple ecological considerations with mowing frequency varying accordingly.
  - Lisa noted that Grace Glynn, who wrote the Boyce Hill Ecological Assessment, is now Vermont's State Botanist.
- Should there be a 'no punji sticks' mowing program for the regularly mowed open areas?
    - All agreed to selectively adapt mowing where larger woody debris is growing and leave the herbaceous areas for less frequent mowing.
    - Corrie asked if we should define the areas where punji sticks are located and mow those areas specifically to control them. She added that the fertility of the soil dictates where punji sticks are growing – the least fertile soil on slopes.
    - Karrie summarized that there is a difference within management zones.
    - Woody suggested mowing twice a year in places where punji sticks are an issue.
    - Lisa suggested consulting with experts in vegetation management (Ross Saxton, Max Popowicz, US Forest Service, Lars Brun).
    - Will need to rely on cadre of volunteers who have offered to help with stewardship.
    - Karrie suggested creating a list of stewardship tasks and considering the creation of an adopt-a-site/patch program. Communication needs to be early and often.
    - Woody suggested a regularly scheduled workday.
  - SC discussed the wording for neighboring landowner relations and agreed to leave it as is.
  - SC agreed to revisit the wording in the plan re: Robert Newis and remove extraneous details.
  - Should Boyce Hill have an MOU with stewardMRV? MRVBC? No decision was made, and this would be a task for the Boyce Hill Committee.

#### 6. Next Steps?

- The SC will present its final recommended management plan to the Select Board on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 6:00 PM.
- Amy will compile the changes noted during this meeting and send out to SC for approval.
- SC will need to send the Select Board the plan at least two weeks ahead of the meeting.
- Lisa will send substantive changes to the Vermont Land Trust for their approval: path around the pond and allowing horses.
- Lisa and Karrie will draft a cover letter detailing these changes to the Select Board to accompany the plan.