

## Catamount Community Forest Planning Committee

Minutes of January 22, 2018

**Approved**

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**Members Present:** Terry Marron, Michael Clauss, Jeff Dickinson, Barb Evans, Patrice Maloney, Rita Dessau, Ben Norris, Anthony Jordick, Steve Page, Kort Longenbach, Ben King.

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**Members Absent:** Jay Diaz

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**Others Present:** Melinda Scott (staff), Kim Coleman (facilitator), Ken Belliveau (Williston Planning Director), Kate Wanner (Trust for Public Land), Andrea Shortsleeve (Department of Fish and Wildlife), Members of the Public - Betsy Bluto, Tim Post, Meg Costella, and Cameron Clark.

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Goal: Learn about town regulations, discuss and develop recommendations for integration of multiple recreational uses (pedestrian use, recreational snowmobiling).

1. Members of the public introduced themselves, and Kim gave an overview of the Committee's work for their benefit. Kim reviewed the meeting goals and objectives, which are to make recommendations on pedestrian use and recreational snowmobiling and learn about town regulations that affect uses and activities at Catamount.
2. Housekeeping items:
  - Approve 12-18-2017 minutes: Barb noted some changes needed in the discussion of dogs, which she also emailed to Melinda. Melinda will make those changes. The minutes of 12-18-2017 were approved as amended.
  - Patrice asked about whether anyone had written an article for the local paper, which the outreach committee had mentioned last time. No one has yet done this, but Kim/Melinda/Kate agreed to work on this.
  - Kort mentioned a concern with the outdoor center losing its identity in the midst of this transaction between the town and the McCulloughs, and there needs to be an effort to reaffirm its role and identity.
  - Ben Norris gave a report on his update to the Selectboard. Melinda stated that a Selectboard member raised a question about the priority given to free pedestrian access versus the paid activities of the Outdoor Center.
3. Town regulations related to activities at Catamount 6:15 – 7:00
  - Town regulations (Ken Belliveau) 6:15 – 6:30  
Ken Belliveau introduced himself as the Town Zoning Administrator and Planning Director. An important goal of town is to keep most of Williston rural and to provide trails for public access. This project helps the town achieve these goals. Ken showed a chart detailing the town's permitting process, stating the process can be complicated. The Administration of land use regulations does not lie with the Selectboard, but with

the planning staff and, for larger development projects, the DRB. Actual development on the Catamount property would need to go through the town's development review process. In the ARZD, outdoor recreation is a permitted use. At the time these regulations were drafted, the Town wanted to support the uses at Catamount. If a new building is constructed at Catamount, it would need to go to the DRB for site plan review. State statute provides an exemption from local regulations for municipalities, which could be utilized if the current uses were not allowed. DRB can still regulate certain aspects of development such as setbacks, off street parking, landscaping, noise, etc.

○ Questions for Ken 6:30 – 7:00

- Kim asked if Ken would explain about the Specific Plan process. Ken stated that the Selectboard approves a Specific Plan. The process is somewhat cumbersome and time consuming, but might make sense depending on the desired future uses. The Specific Plan would allow the Selectboard to have tighter control over what goes on at Catamount.
- Terry asked if there are any buildings on any existing town-owned country parks, and Ken stated there are not. Terry asked about the structure at Lake Iroquois, and Ken stated it is owned by the Lake Iroquois Recreation District, not the Town. Ken is unaware of the permitting history on that parcel.
- Because Catamount is a much larger piece of land than other of the town's country parks, it is unique, and therefore a structure might be warranted.
- Michael asked, does it make sense for the Management Plan to include a future structure, Ken stated that would probably make sense and to include information about where it would be built. If a structure was proposed outside of the current parameters (in support of outdoor recreation), such as a museum, the DRB would need to issue findings that it is an allowed use. Including a structure and describing its purpose in the management plan would support the DRB's ability to issue such a finding.
- Anthony asked who would file the application. Ken stated that from the DRB's standpoint, it doesn't matter, but that should be in the management plan – who is responsible for implementing the management.
- Steve asked how you would treat relocating features such as the parking lot, culverts, and bridges. Ken stated that all those are considered development and regulated by the DRB.
- Jeff asked Ken whether, based on what he has heard about the Committee's work, he sees anything of concern. Ken stated he thinks the Committee is on the right track, and he has not identified any concerns from a regulatory standpoint.
- Kim asked Ken to give a quick overview of Special Events policy. Ken stated the Committee should consider carefully the parameters for activities allowed as a special event, as some uses are clearly not appropriate. There should be a direct relationship between the event and the regular activities on the property, for example, if camping wouldn't ordinarily be allowed it should not be allowed as part of a special event. When planning Special Events, planning for adequate

parking and traffic control is essential. In the past, there have been concerns around traffic on Governor Chittenden Rd on days when Special Events have been held.

4. Public comment 7:55 – 8:00 – Betsy Bluto and Margaret Costello each spoke in support of horse trails at Catamount (see attached letters). Tim Post stated he was interested in finding out more about this project, as a neighbor. He has concerns about limiting access after dark, and would like to see after dark access continued because otherwise he and others would not be able to enjoy the use of the property during the work week.

10 min break

5. Discuss and vote on pedestrian policy 7:10 – 7:30
  - Ben stated that during the last meeting when the group voted on policies, he felt that a little more discussion would have resulted in the group reaching consensus. Kim named this as nominal group process and stated that can be the process going forward if the Committee members are in agreement. Others spoke up in agreement.
  - Patrice suggested allotting some time for the Outdoor Center to discuss financial viability in light of direction the Committee is taking. Kort agreed this would be helpful.
  - Kate suggested that for uses the Committee cannot reach consensus, the plan can include language like, “in the future, this could happen, with these caveats.”
  - Michael stated he would like abutting landowners to share their opinions about hunting at the next meeting, as they will be most affected.
  - Ben asked what the benefit was of limiting hours from dawn to dusk. Why not open after dark? Melinda stated the town has an open dawn to dusk policy for all its parks, and she is unsure of the reasons behind this policy, but that she believes it is related to safety, the town’s liability, noise and disturbance. Kim suggested having the dawn to dusk open policy for pedestrian use but revisiting it for other uses.
  - The Committee discussed the trail closure policy and suggested “Trails are subject to closure as warranted by conditions such as spring thaw and other weather events.”
  - The Committee discussed the “walkers stay to the right” policy and whether to keep it. Some felt that it was micromanagement. Barb suggested erecting a sign with trail etiquette guidelines instead, and changing the policy to read “Walkers should follow posted guidelines.”
  - The pedestrian policies were revised and condensed, and the Committee subsequently voted to adopt the recommendations (attached).
6. Discuss and vote on snowmobile policy 7:30 – 7:55
  - Steve asked if there is a prohibition against snowmobiling in the Conservation Easement. Kate stated no, that it is a decision made by the landowner.
  - The Committee discussed the snowmobiling policies, revised and condensed them, and subsequently voted to adopt the recommendations (attached).
7. Meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.