

## Catamount Community Forest Planning Committee

Minutes of July 23, 2018

Draft

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

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**Members Absent:** Anthony Jordick

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**Others Present:** Melinda Scott (staff), Kim Coleman (facilitator), Kate Wanner (Trust for Public Land), Andrea Shortsleeve (Department of Fish and Wildlife).

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Goal: Wrap up revisions and finalize Management Plan; consider and make recommendations regarding ongoing governance of town forest.

1. Review meeting goals and objectives 6:00 – 6:05
2. Public comment - none 6:05 – 6:10
3. Housekeeping items 6:10 – 6:20
  - Approve June 25 minutes – minutes were approved with revisions
  - Summary of July 10 Selectboard meeting – Melinda stated that Barb, Ben and Kim did an excellent job of presenting the Plan. Ben stated that Barb’s explanation of the process of considering public input, especially regarding dogs, was received well and provided the Selectboard with a better understanding of the issues and how decisions were made. In the end, all four Selectboard members present voted in favor of acquiring the property. Three of four voted in favor of accepting the License Agreement. The requested revisions to the Management Plan were relatively minor and involved condensing the background information and clarifying certain sections.
  - Fundraising update – Kate provided an update on the fundraising. \$1.77 million has been raised to date of the \$1.92 million needed. This includes a \$25,000 stewardship endowment for the Town and COFC. Kate explained the various means of fundraising outreach on social media and the press.
4. Review revisions to Draft Plan 6:20 – 6:45
  - Melinda presented the revisions to the Plan, page by page. Revisions have been requested by the Selectboard, McCulloughs, VLT and VHCB. The revisions are summarized as follows:
    - Page 6 - just after the Educational Uses subsection, 3 paragraphs were deleted as they largely repeat information stated on page 1 in the Project Background section.
    - Page 8 - in the subsection Purposes of the Conservation Easement, number formatting was changed so as to be more consistent with the rest of the document.

- Page 9 – Administration of the Catamount Community Forest, a definitive recommendation was made to appoint a standalone Committee to oversee the management of the Catamount Community Forest.
- Page 11-12 Local Regulations - the language regarding allowed uses under Chapter 31 of the Williston Development Bylaws was deleted, and a reference to the Chapter was included instead. Details of Specific Plan process were deleted, and a reference to the Chapter included instead. It was noted that the construction of a building to house indoor recreation may require a Specific Plan.
- Page 15 – “substandard” was changed to “state-mapped”
- Page 16 Trails – bullets were not the same font, changed to make consistent
- Page 17 – at VLT’s request a clarification was made regarding when the boundaries would be posted and the construction of a new access trail to the parcel south of Governor Chittenden Rd was added to the Infrastructure Maintenance and Improvements table.
- Page 24 Management Guidelines: Forests – statement was added that the Forest Management Plan will be approved by VLT.
- Page 27 Vernal Pools – Because VLT is okay with leaving the existing trail that passes through the buffer zone as is, the language was changed. The Committee members suggested “When the pools are active from March –April and September – October, the trail adjacent to the pool will be closed. No new trails will be constructed within 100 feet of the pool.”
- Page 29 Historic and Cultural Resources – 3 paragraphs detailing the history of the property were deleted, as they repeat information presented earlier in the Plan (under Project Background) and go into detail that is not needed.
- Page 30 Management Guidelines – clarification was added about who would be conducting an Archaeological Resource Assessment.
- Page 31 Pedestrian Recreation Allowed at No Cost and Paid Activities Operated under the Catamount Outdoor Family Center – several clarifying points were added, including a recommendation to encourage pedestrian users to sign in.
- Page 32 Hunting – Last few sentences that discuss the disparity between game wardens and hunters and amount of state land open to hunting was deleted, after comments from Andrea Shortsleeve (VT DFW) that the language was misleading and offensive. Also added was a reiteration of the justification for no hunting for safety reasons, and a statement that the town is responsible for posting signs prohibiting hunting.
- Page 33 Alcohol Use – added “except when managed at a special event by a business licensed to serve alcohol under state statutes.”
- Page 33 Dogs and Horseback Riding – clarifying statements were added that these uses are currently not allowed. Also, added the requirement

for consideration of horse waste removal to any proposal for future horseback riding.

- Page 34 Snowmobiling – added that VAST grooming equipment would be allowed if the VAST trail was relocated into Catamount in the future.
- Page 35 License Agreement – clarification that the term of the License is 5 years.
- Page 36 Trail Signage – clarification of which types of signs need approval from the Town Forest Committee.
- Page 37 Managing Public Access – Language was added to provide information about the development of a new access trail.
- Page 38 Education – Statement was added that some educational activities run by COFC may involve fees.
- Page 39 Forest Management Plan – Clarification added that no timber harvesting would occur until the Forest Management Plan was updated and approved by VLT.
- Page 41-42 Vernal Pools – this section was omitted at the request of VLT, with the understanding that the Forest Management Plan would address it.
- Page 42 Action Schedule – The Committee recommended changing the numbering to say “Year 1, Year 2” etc. rather than “2018, 2019” etc. since it is still unknown when the town will acquire the property. An action item was added to “Plan for development of access trail from Governor Chittenden Rd to south parcel.” An action item was added at Andrea Shortleeve’s suggestion, to “begin monitoring the deer wintering area, under the guidance of VT DPW.”

## 5. Discussion

- Kate Wanner suggested putting up signs where trails exit the Catamount Community Forest onto private land, that state “you are leaving the Catamount Community Forest - please respect private property” Jeff asked what signs would the town be responsible for and which would be the responsibility of COFC? Melinda stated the COFC would be responsible for signs on the trail network and the town would be responsible for the boundary signs and the no hunting signs.
- Andrea commented on the hunting section. She stated the language justifying the prohibition of hunting is misleading and offensive. The Committee members agreed to remove the last few sentences that discuss the disparity between game wardens and hunters and amount of state land open to hunting. Kate noted that VLT would need to approve the revised language.
- Steve said it isn’t necessary to make statements about statewide game warden coverage in the justification not to allow hunting. Rather than making judgments, the Plan should stick to relevant facts.
- In the discussion about developing a new access trail, Ben Norris asked about the process for getting permits for new trails. Melinda stated that the first step would be to request a Project Review Sheet from the District 4 Commission to determine whether an Act 250 Permit was needed. If so, then getting an Act 250 Permit

would take 6 months or longer. The members discussed whether it was realistic to have the construction of an access trail in Year 1 of the action schedule, or whether it made more sense to include it under Year 2. The members decided to leave this under the first year and change the language to “plan for development of” rather than “construct” to reflect the likelihood of needing to obtain permits prior to construction.

Melinda thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication, and Kim for her smooth facilitation of the group process. Kate said the Committee members will be invited to a closing celebration after the town acquires the property.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.