

Catamount Community Forest Planning Committee

Minutes of August 15, 2017

Approved

Members Present: Anthony Jordick, Terry Marron, Kort Longenbach, Jay Diaz, Michael Clauss, Jeff Dickinson, Barb Evans, Ben King, Steve Page, Patrice Maloney, Ben Norris

Members Absent: Rita Dessau

Others Present: Melinda Scott (staff), Kim Coleman (facilitator), Ethan Tapper (Chittenden County Forester), Andrea Shortsleeve (Department of Fish and Wildlife), Kate Wanner (Trust for Public Land)

Goal: Learn about community forestry and this forest in particular

1. Kim reviewed the meeting goals and objectives.
2. **Housekeeping items:**
 - a. **Meeting schedule going forward**– future meetings will be held on the fourth Monday of every month, from 6-8 PM. If Holidays fall on any of these dates, the meeting for that month will be rescheduled.
 - b. **Shared documents – any issues?** Patrice stated she was having difficulties with printing documents from the Drive (not printing at full scale). Other than that no issues were reported.
 - c. **Reminder of ground rules and decision-making** – Kim reminded the group of the rules of engagement, which will be put up at all meetings as a reminder.
 - d. **Other items?** Jay Diaz, who was not present at the first meeting, introduced himself to the group.
3. **Overview of Community Forestry**
 - a. **Presentation** – Ethan Tapper presented an overview of Town Forests. The PowerPoint has been uploaded to Google Drive in the 8/15/2017 folder.
 - b. **Questions for Ethan** - Steve Page asked about how open lands will be managed and if they will be kept open? Ethan stated this will need to be decided in the management plan. If the open areas are left to grow into forest, then it is likely invasives will encroach and will need to be addressed. Terry asked, what were the significant struggles that the Hinesburg Town Forest Committee faced? Ethan stated that it's hard to get user groups to come together and discuss how to balance the different uses. Kort asked about whether Ethan anticipated future conflicts with any of the trails on Catamount. Ethan stated that some trails may need to be closed during logging activity. Invasives are present and will need to be addressed. Patrice asked if the forest management plan would be updated? The current one was developed in 2009. Ethan stated the forest management plan will be updated and incorporated into the overall management plan. Kate Wanner stated the goal is to have the entire plan, including the forest management plan adopted by next June. Mike Claus asked about

the process of developing a forest management plan. Ethan explained it involves collecting and mapping data, establishing goals of forest management, and then developing a plan to achieve those goals. Timber harvesting wouldn't be large scale, but incremental over time. Kate Wanner stated that the town may decide that recreational uses outweigh the need for timber harvest, so perhaps it will be done very infrequently if at all, or done just to manage for forest health. Mike asked how long of a trail closure would be necessary during a timber harvest? Ethan stated that extra precautions would be taken not to interfere with recreation on the property. Most harvests are done in winter, thus minimizing the impact to both recreation and to the land. Patrice stated it is important to know what timber management has occurred in the past in order to inform what is done in the future, and whether the Committee could get access to that information. Ethan stated that he can provide that information to the Committee. Ben asked about the timing of the development of a forest management plan in relationship to the development of the overall management plan. Ethan stated the management plan would address the overall goals of forest management and forest management plan would address the timber harvest practices and schedule that would best achieve those goals. Terry asked whether we had a ortho map of the property as it would be helpful in seeing the overall landscape patterns. Melinda Scott said that she can create and print out a large map of the property and bring it to the next meeting. Barbara Evans asked if different uses of trails would be discussed, or if any current uses and/or contemplated future uses were or would have a detrimental ecological impact. Different uses will need to be discussed,

4. Review of restrictions, allowances, and requirements for Catamount property

- a. Presentation** - Kate Wanner reviewed the different restrictions placed on the Community forest around which the plan will be developed. USFS Community forest grant - \$400,000, VHCB - \$325,000, TNC/Keurig - \$80,000, Open Space Community Forest - \$110,000 (with more expected next year)
- Permanent conservation easement held by VHCB/VLT.
 - Both agencies require a MP every 10 years, needs to be approved by both agencies.
 - USFS requires the property remain 75% forested. KW stated it's good to have a buffer, allow some areas to reforest. Andrea SS asked if they have a definition of what is forested? KW – no they don't. Trying to get more clarity on this. Jeff Dickenson – has that percentage ever changed? KW – no not likely to change.
 - USFS requires that the Town follow federal civil rights laws
 - Public access, VHCB dispersed recreation – on trail and off trail
 - Surface water protection zones – to protect wetlands, streams and vernal pools. May require some trails to be rerouted.
 - Sign must list funding agencies.
 - Commercial timber activities are allowed and nonprofit recreational
 - Structures are allowed that support recreational uses as long as it's in the Mp and approved by VHCB
 - Some onsite energy facilities are allowed, as long as no profit is made.
 - Parking area is allowed, some expansion is allowed.

- Snowmobiling, mountain-biking and horseback riding is allowed.
 - Trails can be maintained, any significant expansion will need to be approved by VHCB. This includes reroutes. Some discussion of what degree of reroute will require negotiation with VLT. On initial site visit, the VLT ecologist didn't think that an trails needed to be moved. PM – if a new trail is planned for in the Plan and its approved by the easement holders, do we need to go back later and ask them for permission – KW stated no.
 - No subdivision or residential development, no trash dumps, no mining, no billboards.
 - Drafting a MP was a requirement of the federal grant, but this regulation has been changed since. Draft MP is a framework from which to start.
- b. Questions for Kate:** A Jordick asked whether we are making decisions about who is going to manage the property? KW stated the goal is for a partnership between the Town and COFC for COFC to manage the trails and programs. A draft license is being reviewed by the Town and COFC and will eventually come to the Committee for their approval. KColeman stated the Committee needs to consider how other uses considered will impact the COFC's operations and management of the property. Ethan asked what is required in the MP? Everything that is in the draft table of contents, can add more. ET asked if there are any other potential grants with restrictions? KW stated LWCF Stateside, and they would require that it be permanently be managed for recreation (?) Access to south side? There will be an easement that is on the property plat. Where is this? Just west of parking lot. Melinda will put up plat on Google Docs. Jay asked about VAST trail and whether it is being used. KW – not currently, though the easement allows it.

5. Review of Draft Management Plan:

- a.** Prioritize questions, focuses for consideration at future meetings
- b.** Additional issues to address not in Draft Plan

Both **a** and **b** above are shown below:

- Timber Management
- Wildlife management
- Meadow management
- Connection to other properties with respect to wildlife management, access, trails, education, research, and/or timber management
- Hunting and trapping
- Snowmobiling
- Horse riding
- Dogs
- Are there certain activities that will have the potential to reduce amt of forested land or introduce invasives that would require timber removal?
- COFC presentation of financials, programs, etc.
- Management for fees for special events, summer camps – who handles that?
- Will COFC be the sole management or will there be other entities managing programs that don't currently exist?
- How to increase access for differently abled? Or for economically disadvantaged?

- Expectations for Williston residents – fees cannot be different for Williston residents
- Camping allowed or not?
- Potential future land expansion opportunities
- Special events – what kind will be entertained?
- Information about revenue generating activities
- Social mission (ex. Providing firewood to low income people)
- Where does revenue from activities go? Statute says the Town
- Restrictions from McCulloughs? They get to review the license between the COFC and the Town (discuss next month)

6. Plan out future meeting topics and guest presentations

- 7. Open comment from the public** – No members of the public were in attendance

On the agenda for next month:

- Learn about Catamount's current recreational facilities and programs (COFC, Little Bellas)
- Develop a public outreach strategy