

## Catamount Community Forest Planning Committee

Minutes of July 31, 2017

Approved

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

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**Members Absent:** Jay Diaz

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**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)

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Goal: Establish group norms and collaboratively build a group charter

1. **Review meeting goals and objectives:** Kim Coleman introduced herself as the group facilitator and gave an overview of the meeting's objectives. The focus of this meeting is on process, i.e., how the group will work together to achieve the objectives.
2. **Housekeeping items:**
  - a. **Meeting schedule** – Mondays generally work for everyone, as does the time slot. The Committee's tentative schedule will be the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month with the potential exception of August, as it might be desirable to meet earlier than the end of the month to jump start the process. Kim and Melinda will be in touch with everyone soon regarding the August date.
  - b. **Shared documents** – Kim suggested using Google Drive to share documents. Not everyone knows what it is, so Kim explained that it's an online platform similar to Dropbox that allows users to share and edit documents.
  - c. **Contact** – Melinda Scott is serving as staff support person. If members need technical assistance or have concerns with the logistics of the project, they should speak to Melinda. Kim Coleman is facilitating the process, so any concerns related to meeting process should be directed to her.  
Our contact info is on the agenda.
  - d. **Other items** - Melinda asked about whether food and drinks should be offered at successive meetings. The group decided to have a potluck for each meeting, with members contributing simple snacks, nothing fancy. An alternate meeting space was suggested as the Planning Office Conference Room seemed a bit tight. Kort suggested using the Police Station Meeting Room, Melinda will look into this.
3. **Overview of the group's function** – Kim reviewed the Committee Charge. The Town has an opportunity to acquire a sizable amount of land commonly known as Catamount and owned by Jim and Lucy McCullough, to be conserved as a community forest. Kim emphasized that this Committee has been asked to make recommendations about the acquisition and management of a community forest, however, the Committee does not

have the final say. The Selectboard will consider the recommendations of the Committee and make the final decisions about the community forest. The Committee should keep in mind that management decisions will be constrained to some degree by the conservation easement and grant requirements. Those constraints will be outlined during the next meeting.

Kim reviewed some of the issues to be discussed, including deciding what recreational uses will be allowed and how to manage them, managing free pedestrian access, trail maintenance and management, timber management and forestry activities, etc. Some decisions the Committee will consider relate to current activities and programs on the property and the organizations that operate those activities.

4. **Introductions:** The members each introduced themselves, provided some background on themselves, what they do, where they are from, what brings them to serve on the Catamount Committee and what they bring to the group that will be of help.

5 min Break

5. **Establishing group dynamics**

- a. Envisioning effective working group dynamics – Members each filled out the worksheet “Envisioning a Productive Working Group.” The idea is to use the collective comments to develop ground rules and guidelines for group process.
- b. Establishing guidelines – Based on the worksheets, the group came up with ground rules for meetings and group process (see attached document).

6. **Selecting decision-making protocols** - Kim outlined three potential mechanisms for making decisions: majority vote, consensus decision making, or 85% Rule (detailed in slide below). In the latter, any decision on a recommendation requires 85% support (4 or 5 scores). An individual who scores a 1 or 2 on a decision can write a dissenting opinion that would become an official part of the decision-making record. Consensus decision making works best for small groups. It requires much listening and a willingness to give up your own position, but can result in stronger outcome in the end. It does take longer than either voting or the 85% Rule. Given the tight timeframe of developing a Plan, there were concerns raised about the consensus method. The question was raised about what constitutes a majority vote, and Kim stated that the group can decide. With voting, the Committee could still allow a minority opinion. Kate Wanner mentioned that the Plan will use adaptive management, which allows the flexibility to modify any policy that isn't working. Steve Page stated it would be helpful to the Selectboard in making the final decisions to have some texture and background to the Committee recommendations put forth. The group decided to adopt the 85% Rule, with the condition that no one has veto power and that anyone who chooses to can write an opinion that becomes attached to a specific recommendation.

7. **Open comment from the public** – No members of the public attended, thus no comments were made.

## On the agenda for next month:

- What is a community forest?
- What is a management plan?
- What is our mission for this forest and plan?

## Group Function



Photo credit: Bill Keeton

- Community forest planning
  - Collaborative
  - Focused on community benefit
- Recommendations, not decisions
- Working within constraints and restrictions

## Decision Making

- Voting
- Consensus
- 85% Rule: 85% support 4's and 5's with no 1's
  - 5: I wholeheartedly agree
  - 4: I agree; it's ok
  - 3: I'm neutral
  - 2: I disagree but will go along
  - 1: I hate this and will work to stop it!