

# Barre Town Community Forest Management Plan Committee

## Meeting Minutes

### December 12, 2022

The Town of Barre Community Forest Management Plan Committee held its <sup>thirteenth</sup> ~~second~~ meeting on Monday, December 12, 2022, starting at 6:30pm. The meeting was held in Conference Room #3 in the Municipal Building at 149 Websterville Road. Committee members present included: Patty Meriam, Lori Bernier (remotely), Josh Howard, Dean Preston, Larry Rogacki, and Jim West. Also present at the meeting: Town Manager Carl Rogers, Recreation Director Johnny Crossley, Washington County Forester Robert Nelson, Caitlin Cusack of the Vermont Land Trust, and Caroline Earle, Esq., Counsel for the Committee.

- 1) **Call to Order: 6:30pm:** Chair Larry Rogacki called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.
- 2) **Consider Approving Agenda:** Josh Howard made a motion to approve the agenda as is. Patty Meriam seconded the motion. Committee approved 6-0.
- 3) **Consider Approving November 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes and Retroactively sign off on November 21<sup>st</sup> Minutes:** Josh Howard made a motion to approve the November 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes and retroactively sign off on the November 21<sup>st</sup> Minutes. Patty Meriam seconded the motion. Committee approved 6-0. Final copy of Meeting Minutes from November 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> passed around and signed by physically present members.
- 4) **Community Forest Management Planning Presentation from Caitlin Cusack:** Caitlin Cusack from the Vermont Land Trust brought a presentation to share with the Committee. The presentation outlined creating a framework for the planning and review process, an overview of the management process, setting a timeline and budget, means for garnering the public's input, and resources available to the Committee to aid in their efforts. Patty Meriam asked if VLT has approval oversight of the CFMP, to which Caitlin Cusack responded, yes, VLT will be involved in the approval of the CFMP. Patty Meriam asked if other Community Forest Plans have reached the 10 year renewal of the CFMP, and what sort of oversight board(s) manage them. Caitlin Cusack explained that the VLT works with several other Towns who have started and/or completed a renewal of their original CFMP; Town Forests typically have a Forest or Conservation Committee, Selectboard, or Steering Committee. It can vary depending on the Town. Caitlin Cusack encouraged collaboration, listening to members of the community, and taking into consideration the natural resources of the Town Forest that make it unique. She asked the Committee, who isn't here? Who is not in the room? How do you engage the public to ensure they have a say in their Forest? Caitlin Cusack stressed the importance of ensuring the Community feels heard, and they feel directly involved with their

participation efforts. It will come from a combination of impact and action. The Committee began an open discussion on how they might better receive input from the public. The idea was floated of creating a feedback loop through mail and email. It was agreed this could be done by offering the Committee's point of contact, Recreation Director Crossley, as the recipient of mail and email. A call for comments, write ins, and suggestions will be added to Front Porch Forum and Facebook postings in an attempt to generate a feedback loop and solicit public opinion. Caitlin Cusack suggested addressing areas of conflict head on and getting feedback from the public early in the process. In addition, she suggested using resources available to the Committee instead of trying to reinvent the wheel. Other Town Forests have documentation of their efforts in the form of surveys, forms, and methods of public engagement. These are resources the Committee can use to develop their own methodology for soliciting the public's input. Caitlin Cusack provided examples of CFMP efforts in Huntington, Fayston, and Newbury. Huntington did much of their work during the Covid-19 Pandemic and provides a great example of how a Committee was still able to engage their Community virtually. Patty Meriam commented on the timeline and level of commitment necessary for this Committee. Patty Meriam suggested there should be a Committee routinely overseeing the Forest that would already have all of this information at their disposal without the need for new members of a Committee to organize and do a whole background every 10 years. Lori Bernier stated a Forest Committee from the onset would help. Chair Larry Rogacki acknowledged these are conversations we will need to decide, however, they are premature in relation to the Committee's progress. Vice Chair Jim West added, there will be necessary changes as we review, but we are not here to reinvent the wheel. Patty Meriam commented that the time commitment was more than she imagined. Chair Larry Rogacki asked the Committee to focus on the Committee's charge and address the plan. Rogers suggested a robust public input process in which the Committee develop and put out specific requests and invitations for input. Rogers suggested by doing so the Committee could accomplish several things with the public during one Forest walk through. Rogers added, the last plan did research to address importance of wildlife habitat corridors and song bird nesting, the Committee does not need to resell the public on these things because we all know the value and importance of maintaining them. Patty Meriam asked what the Committee's budget is for consulting a service, if needed. Rogers stated, a written proposal for services can be submitted to the Selectboard for consideration.

- 5) ***Conservation Easement Q&A with Caitlin Cusack:*** Vice Chair Jim West opened up the Q&A by asking for an understanding of the Grantee/Grantors in the Easement and how the language concerning them was developed. Caitlin explained that the Easement illustrates the order of operations in which the land owners conveyed their land that became the Town Forest. Given the order in which the land was conveyed, The Easement can be read as the Grantee being the Vermont Land Trust

- 6) **Consider Approving Ground Rules:** The Committee considered approving the ground rules. Josh Howard made a motion to get rid of rules #4 and #5. A change was suggested for #4 to change "5 minutes" to "a few minutes." Patty Meriam made a motion to move forward with the Ground Rules, with the "a few minutes" change to rule #4. Lori Bernier seconded the motion. Josh Howard opposed the motion. Motion approved 5-1.
- 7) **Schedule Tentative Agenda for December 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting:** The Committee discussed means of soliciting the public's input and involvement. Josh Howard made a motion to review the first 19 pages of the CFMP and come with a list of topic that need further discussion. Jim West seconded the motion. Approved 6-0.
- 8) **'Round the Table:** The Committee was pressed on time and began to discuss adjournment.
- 9) **Adjourn: 9:35pm.**

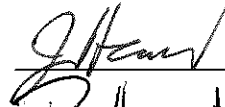
Community Forest Management Plan Committee



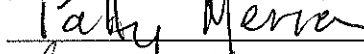
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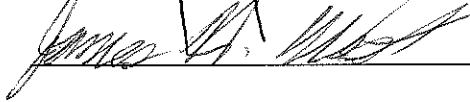
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and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the Grantor being the Town of Barre. Jim West asked if the Conservation Easement applied to all of the land in the Town Forest. Rogers replied, yes, except for land located along Little John Road that was already owned by the Town prior to the formation of the Forest. This piece of land along Little John Road is subjected to the CFMP, but not the Easement. Therefore, it is unrestricted and allows the Town to do anything with it. Jim West asked why there was not language addressing Rock of Ages as one of the land owners. Caitlin Cusack responded that Rock of Ages land was purchased by the Trust for Public Land who then conveyed the land to the Town of Barre, in the Easement. The Town is the sole owner of the Town Forest and they granted the Easement held by the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Patty Meriam questioned who's approval and oversight allowed the Disc Golf course to create pads and hang signage in the Forest. Caitlin Cusack stated she was involved in the Corridor Management Agreement, however, she would need to review her documentation history to answer Patty's individual questions. Caitlin Cusack offered to Patty Meriam to visit the Disc Golf Course together and review Patty's points of concern. Rogers added that the Committee will have the opportunity to discuss the Corridor Management Agreements when they get to that section of the review. Patty Meriam stated she did not want to wait. Chair Larry Rogack assured Patty Meriam that her concern was a good example of something the Committee will review, however, it should be addressed when the Committee gets to that portion of their review. Robert Nelson added that once an activity is approved, it does not require reapproval. Chair Larry Rogack addressed the Committee Charge's note about the Committee having February deadline; he asked Caitlin Cusack if there is a need to follow this deadline, and/or if there is a required deadline to the Committee's completion of their review. Caitlin Cusack stated the process of the Committee's work has begun, the February deadline in the Committee Charge is self-imposed. Caitlin stressed the importance of the Committee's due diligence and framed it as such: What does the Committee feel is a reasonable amount of time, effort, and pace to complete their review? Lori Bernier added that the 10 year update requirement contained in the Forestry Plan is different from the Community Forest Management Plan. The Committee then discussed the requirements of the grant agreement and the Vermont Land Trusts means of oversight through aerial and ground inspections. Caitlin Cusack provided Rec Director Crossley with information pertaining to the Federal grants to be forwarded to the Committee. Council to the Committee, Caroline Earle, questioned Caitlin Cusack to receive further clarification on the Committee's Charge and review process. The following points were addressed: *The CFMP should reflect the needs and desires of the Community. The Committee must be balanced in its review process. The public should feel their input is heard.*