

Draft

Community Forest Management Plan Committee February 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

The Town of Barre Community Forest Management Plan Committee held its eighth meeting on Monday, February 13, 2023, starting at 6:00pm. The meeting was held in Conference Room #3 in the Municipal Building at 149 Websterville Road.

Committee members present included: David Rouleau, Lori Bernier (remotely), Josh Howard (remotely), Patty Meriam, Larry Rogacki, and Jim West (Absent: Dean Preston). Also present at the meeting: Town Manager Carl Rogers, Recreation Director/Committee Administrator Johnny Crossley, Washington County Forester Robert Nelson, Facilitator Caroline Earle, Millstone Trails President Kevin Spaulding and MTA Representative Mark Martin, Assistant Town Manager Chris Violette (remotely), and Selectboard Members Justin Bolduc (remotely) and Norma Malone (remotely).

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Larry Rogacki called the meeting to order, **6:04pm**.
2. **Consider Approving Agenda:** David rouleau made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Patty Meriam seconded the motion. Committee approved 6-0.
3. **Consider Approving January 30th Meeting Minutes:** Jim West made a motion to add (remotely) next to the Selectboard names Justin Bolduc and Norma Malone to identify their attendance as remote. Josh Howard made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes with Jim's amendment. David Rouleau seconded the motion. Committee approved the Minutes 5-0-1, Patty Meriam abstained as she was not in attendance at the meeting.
4. **Receive Public Input (for non-agenda items):** No public input was received at this time.
5. **Updates from Recreation Director**
 - a. **UVM Intern:** Aidan Rowley, a fourth year student at UVM studying Environmental Sciences, will be joining the Committee as of next Monday's Meeting. Aidan will assist Recreation Director/Committee Administrator Johnny Crossley with the administrative side of the Committee, including Meeting Minutes, Public Surveying, fact checking references and appendices from the 2013 CFMP, and relevant data collection.
 - b. **Town Forest:** Given recent conversations around sugaring operations, Johnny Crossley shared details of conversations he has had with the Central Vermont Career Center about potential sugaring operations in the Town Forest that would serve as educational and provide students with hands on experience. In addition, Johnny Crossley shared his day to day perspective of the Administration of the Forest as he is generally the first contact in regards to questions, requests, and governance.
6. **Discuss Organizational Input**
 - a. **Committee will discuss which organizations to invite and/or survey:** The Committee determined that the following groups would be invited before the

Committee: Vermont Tradition Coalition, Barre Fish and Game, Millstone Trails Association, Thunder Chickens, Disc Golf, Runners (Spaulding XC Coach Don Singer and Central Vermont Runners), Rock Fire, and Weed Warriors. The Committee proposed the following questions be considered in a survey: 1) *What do you like about the forest?* 2) *What are your priorities/concerns in relation to the forest?* 3) *What are you using the forest for?* 4) *How do you feel about the management of the forest?* 5) *What do you believe works, and what do you believe could be better about the forest?*

- b. **Committee will forecast invitation process:** The Committee determined which groups they would invite and discussed which groups they might survey. There was discussion about reaching local educators who might be at a disadvantage not being a part of a user group, but still use the Town Forest nonetheless. The Committee discussed ways to survey the general public, including a direct survey of users in the forest at a given time. The Committee discussed how many groups to invite to each meeting. Millstone Trails Association President Kevin Spaulding offered to share any Committee surveys across their Facebook page to reach a larger audience.

7. Continue Review of Community Forest Management Plan

- a. This meeting's review of the CFMP began at the top of page 15, **Section III. Town Objectives**. The Committee reviewed the first two paragraphs at the top of page 15. Edits made are contained below. The Committee will pick up next meeting at "General Purposes" on page 15 of the CFMP.
- b. https://www.barretown.org/Final_BarreTownForest_ManagementPlan_Full.pdf

8. Tentative Agenda for February 20th Meeting: Before the next Meeting on Monday, February 20th, Johnny Crossley will share with the Committee the list of 9 agreed upon user groups, the Huntington Forest survey (for reference), and a list of the survey questions discussed at this meeting. Washington County Forester Robert Nelson will review pages 20 – 37 of the CFMP.

9. 'Round the Table: Chair Larry Rogacki asked Committee members to share their thoughts as a thumbs up or down. Each Committee member gave a thumbs up.

10. Adjourn: 7:58pm

III. TOWN OBJECTIVES

The creation of the Barre Town Forest was an effort by the Town to protect this land from development, put it into open public ownership, and manage it for timber, wildlife habitat, and public recreation and education. The Town of Barre values the complex suite of both monetary and non-monetary benefits that forests provide including timber revenues, non-timber forest product revenues, tourism and recreation, water supply and water quality protection, carbon sequestration, open space protection, education, wildlife habitat protection, and a sense of community and increased civic pride.

Administration of the Barre Town Forest

The Barre Town Recreation Board will take the lead role in managing the Property and the implementation of the goals established by this Community Forest Plan. The Barre Town Selectboard will have ultimate decision-making authority over the Property after receiving recommendations from the Recreation Board. The Selectboard may appoint a separate Town Forest Management Committee if deemed necessary in the future. The Recreation Board will handle all day-to-day management decisions and will submit annual action plans and budgets to the Selectboard for approval. Washington County Forester Robert Nelsonuss-Barrett (or successor Washington County Forester), who prepared the Forest Ecosystem Management Plan Timber-Management section of this document, will provide assistance and advice pertaining to forest treatments. As the need arises, the Town has the discretion to plans to hire a private forester to plan, mark and manage timber harvests. Overall management will be done in accordance with the Easement and this Community Forest Management Plan approved by the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

General Purposes

- Preserve and conserve 381 acres of forested land and scenic and historic vistas, in perpetuity under Town ownership, for the enjoyment and education of the general public.
- Provide for the continuation of traditional forest uses including sustainable forest management and outdoor recreation.
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitats, rare and exemplary plants and natural communities, and the ecological processes that sustain the natural heritage of the Property.
- Preserve cultural resources, including historic granite quarry sites.
- Provide public pedestrian access on the Property which will allow the general public to hike, hunt, snowshoe, observe wildlife and participate in other low impact outdoor recreational activities.
- Provide for mountain biking and snowmobiling on designated trails of the property.

Commented [CE29]: Lori - Do we even need this section? Seems very repetitive. Also the listing is in the wrong order. Keep sense of community pride & put that someone else. Maybe at third paragraph of Introduction section. David - Doesn't mind redundancy because folks skip around in sections.

Commented [CE30]: Larry - Thinking about what Lori said. Way back on p. 7, have this laid out. Want to make sure that terminology is consistent so all linked together. Seems totally opposite priorities to what have discussed today. Thought it was recreation, protect resources, then education. Don't see where managing it as a timber forest. If nothing else, would like to reorganize it to mirror the easement. Committee seems to agree with that. Why timber mentioned so much - revenue source or?

Carl - When logging controversy came up in 2001, never discussed initially but then added in and seemed a foregone conclusion that there would be logging in the town forest. It wasn't viewed as a big money maker but would be managed to try & improve the quality of the trees and all other purposes mentioned, like on p. 16. Jeff Smith took great pain to consider all of this when he laid out all the logging plans.

Larry - From his perspective, that is different from managing it for timber. Public safety & health of forest different.

Robert - All sorts of reason to recommend active management, which will involved climate resiliency, biological diversity & for timber, that will include cutting down trees. Not wrong to include timber as an objective. Not hard to mesh them all together.

Carl - There were folks who were concerned about taking 300 acres off tax payrolls and they were placated by idea of revenue coming in to offset that tax loss. That loss has not been replaced. The Town does not get any money from tourism. Just because timber is the first thing listed here, doesn't see it as emphasizing it. He looks at general section and going back to the balanced uses. Something has to come first. Next group, timber listed after education.

Lori - Should just keep it in same order as easement and keep it consistent. Why making timber such a big thing? Town of Barre values the monetary benefits as well - not an economic boom. Timber wasn't a big boon for sales either. It does seem like emphasizing money piece.

Larry - If go to the following page, see the attributes of each. Robert - Everything costs money. Not wrong to make some money from selling some timber from a carefully managed Town Forest.

Lori - Was the money put back into a fund for the forest? [1]

Commented [CE31]: James - Has this been done by Recreation Board? Is there an annual action Plan and annual budgets?

Carl - No Action Plan that gets submitted unless you consider that the budget is an Action Plan.

Dave - Some of the day to day management goes through staff and then to Rec Board if needed.

Paity - We need an Action Plan so that we can see what is reviewed & recommended. She has been asking from Day One for this. She would have had more clarity on this earlier.

Larry - He tends to agree but things it would be over the [2]

Commented [CE32]: Carl - Depends on what Committee decides to do with the Forest.

Commented [CE33]: We will start here at the next meeting.

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Robert - Everything costs money. Not wrong to make some money from selling some timber from a carefully managed Town Forest.

Lori - Was the money put back into a fund for the forest for logging.

Carl - No, just went to the General Fund. James - Was the controversy whether there should be harvesting or was it the way the trees were cut & the way the forest was left after the harvest?

Carl - Both.

Kevin - He heard more the aesthetics of it - from MTA members.

Patty - Note that p. 6 of the Plan dictates the look of the forest.

Robert - Dense canopy & dense undergrowth is in conflict in fact.

Lori - One woman who used the forest as part of her cancer treatment, she felt impacted. Other fellow who said he didn't want management - he wanted it wild. He felt it was turning into a big park.

Larry - Rearrange those bullets to mirror the easement priorities. Is it possible to get budget requests from Rec Board for last five years to see what requests have been made. Carl - He can dig out budget books & copy that and provide it to the Committee.

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Dave - Some of the day to day management goes through staff and then to Rec Board if needed.

Patty - We need an Action Plan so that we can see what is reviewed & recommended. She has been asking from Day One for this. She would have had more clarity on this earlier.

Larry - He tends to agree but things it would be over the next three years.

Patty - Agree.

Johnny - His position did not exist for the past ten years. Carl had five year service report. Every five years, he has to give a report to the US Forest Service.

Patty - In the beginning, says that Barre Town Rec Board will take lead role in managing the property. Easement says that a Forest Committee can be formed. A lot going in the forest & want to keep forest not a recreation center & sometimes that can create a conflict with the Rec Board. Consider things like additional property, educational pieces that might not be recreation. Forest Committee could submit Action Plan to Select Board annually. Prevent spread of invasives. Have a consistent body of knowledgeable experts & would know this document so every ten years not starting from scratch.

Josh - We don't have the authority to create a formal committee & this is not warned.

Larry will add it to the Issues board.

James - not really part of the update of this Management Plan. Will stay that way until the Selectboard approves

that recommendation.

James - He asked Select Board whether current Management Plan being adhered to? Selectboard responded, we think so.

Lori - Agrees with James & Patty. Says in the Plan that we do have option in the future to add a committee. In most other Town Forests, they either have a forest committee or a conservation department. Brought up about logging too.
