

Community Forest Management Plan Committee

May 22nd Meeting Minutes

The Town of Barre Community Forest Management Plan Committee held its nineteenth meeting on Monday, May 22, 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: Larry Rogacki (Chair), Jim West (Vice-Chair), David Rouleau, Lori Bernier (remotely), Patty Meriam, Josh Howard (remotely) and Dean Preston. Also present at the meeting: Recreation Director/Committee Administrator Johnny Crossley, Recreation Board Chair Doug Farnham, MTA President Kevin Spaulding, RockFire organizer Pierre Couture, Selectboard member Justin Bolduc (remotely) and Selectboard member Norma Malone (remotely).

1. **Call to Order:** Larry Rogacki called the meeting to order at **6:00pm**
2. **Consider Approving Meeting Agenda:** On a motion by Patty Meriam, seconded by Jim West, the Committee voted to approve the meeting agenda, as written. Chair Larry Rogacki made a motion to add Lori Bernier's findings on: Action Plan, Trails and Greenways, and Central Vermont Regional Plan as Agenda item #6, after Updates from the Recreation Director. Committee voted to add this Agenda item, 7-0.
3. **Consider Approving May 15th Meeting Minutes:** On a motion by Jim West, seconded by Patty Meriam, the Committee voted to approve the Meeting Minutes, as presented, 7-0.
4. **Receive Public Input (for non-agenda items):** There was no public input received at this time.
5. **Updates from the Recreation Director:** Johnny thanked the Committee members for their time and efforts. Johnny provided an update on Aidan's digital recreation map. Committee members were emailed the QR code/link to the map. The map links will be posted at kiosks. Johnny shared that Carl provided him with 3 additional "Leaving Town Forest" signs and the name of the company that designed them. Johnny asked members who had volunteered to examine areas where the trails leave the Town Forest to notify him of locations they may have encountered that need a "Leaving Town Forest" sign.
6. **Action Plan, Trails and Greenways, and Central Vermont Regional Plan (added by motion on Agenda item #2):** Lori Bernier presented updates for the Action Plan, Trails and Greenways, and Central Vermont Regional Plan. Updates had been emailed to Committee members prior to this meeting. The Vermont Trails and Greenways document should be corrected to say 2005 instead of the current documentation of 2007. The Central Vermont Regional Plan was amended in 2020, and the 2023 CFMP should reflect this change. In addition, language will be added to this subsection that includes: "forest blocks and rare, threatened endangered species." Lastly, Lori made a motion to adopt the "Projects List" (emailed to the Committee 5/15/23) to replace the Action Schedule Section of the CFMP. Patty Meriam seconded the motion, with

additional language added by County Forester Robert Nelson. Committee voted to adopt "Projects List" 7-0.

7. ***Review and Discuss the Administration of the Barre Town Forest (formerly item #6):***

Patty Meriam emailed the Committee a CFMPC Forest Board Recommendation Document, prior to the meeting. After receiving some feedback from members a few changes were made and an updated document was emailed to Committee members before this meeting. Josh Howard made a motion to keep the management and administration of the Town Forest the same as it is now with the management by the Recreation Board, oversight by the Selectboard, and assistance of the Recreation Director. Chair Larry Rogacki asked if there was a second for Josh Howard's motion. No second. The motion dies. Patty Meriam read through the Forest Board Recommendation document to the Committee. Patty Meriam made a motion to submit this recommendation to the Selectboard separate from, and not included within the 2023 CFMP. Jim West seconded the motion. Discussion ensued about the possibility of a Forest Management Board. Josh Howard called the question to vote. Robert Nelson wished to add to the conversation. Josh Howard recalled the question to vote to hear Robert's thoughts. On page 3 there is a paragraph that states, "The FMB would take lead in any tree removal and harvesting activities in the Town Forest. The FMB would focus on public outreach, education, and resolving forest issues. Any tree cutting should be done in consultation with the Forest Management Board who would provide recommendation to the Selectboard." Robert wished to know how this might affect the Forest Ecosystem Management Plan he is writing and if his recommendation would be subject to constant approval by the FMB. Patty Meriam stated that the proposal would have the Forest Management Board be familiar with the plan, know Robert's recommendations, and know if they needed to consult Robert further on his plan. Robert stated that he is quite involved in the plans that he writes and would care to see language that includes the consultation of the County Forester. Extensive conversation ensued on the possibility of a Forest Management Board. Conversation consisted of member's individual opinions on the matter. Kevin Spaulding, MTA President, asked that Corridor Managers have a seat at the table with a FMB, if established, because of the nature of their work and historical involvement with the Town Forest, most notably the recreational trail system. Further discussion ensued. Patty Meriam called the question to vote. Patty restated the motion, the Committee accept this document and make a recommendation to the Selectboard to adopt a Forest Management Board (Jim West seconded the motion). The Committee voted to recommend the creation of an FMB to the Selectboard, 4-3. (In favor of: Patty Meriam, Jim West, Lori Bernier, and Larry Rogacki / Against: David Rouleau, Josh Howard, and Dean Preston). Johnny stated that he would email the recommendation document to the Town Manager to pass along to the Selectboard.

8. ***Develop a List of Final Recommendations (to the Selectboard):*** Reviewed minutes from last meeting to ensure final recommendations have been made. Jim West had provided

a copy of recommendations before previous Monday meeting. Larry asked if there were any further recommendations Committee members wished to add. No further recommendations from the Committee.

9. **Committee Discussion on Final Steps:** Chair Larry Rogacki, Recreation Director Johnny Crossley, and Town Manager Chris Violette met earlier today to discuss final steps of the Committee and moving forward. Two paths to completion were suggested: the Committee meet once more to review the final revisions of the document OR a subcommittee be formed to aid Johnny with the final edits before ultimately being presented to the Selectboard. Larry posed this question to the Committee, "Do we all need to meet one last time or do we feel confident having a subcommittee finalize the edits?" The Committee voted in favor of establishing a three-person subcommittee consisting of Larry Rogacki, Jim West, and Patty Meriam. They will finalize the edits with Johnny by June 12th and submit the final draft to the Selectboard no later than Friday, June 16th. It is expected that one or two members of the Committee will present the draft CFMP and Committee recommendations to the Selectboard at their meeting on Tuesday, June 27th (pending Agenda set by Town Manager).

10. **'Round the Table:**

Patty Meriam: Grateful to have been a part of the process and to have heard everyone's voices. Believe they did good on the charge and removing redundancies in the document.

David Rouleau: Long process, very interesting from his perspective being involved with the Town Forest the last decade. Would encourage anyone, regardless of FMB passing or not, to come before Rec Board and have their voice heard on the Town Forest.

Lori Bernier: Appreciated all the input they received. Believe they came to common interest as a Committee. If FMB is formed she hopes they will also find common interest.

Josh Howard: Going to miss Johnny most of all. Suggested a Forest Committee Remembrance Committee that could meet every Monday night.

Dean Preston: Happy to have been a part of this Committee to work alongside some people he has known and others he did not know but has grown to know through this process. Long process to get from where we started to today. Selectboard will notice there was a lot of heart and soul put into this and we did not just rubber stamp what was previously done. Survey was a great way to know what the rest of the Town was thinking in regards to the Forest.

Jim West: Originally thought updating this plan was going to be a piece of cake. He did not realize the inconsistencies and redundancies that would be found and in need of correction. People on this Committee have been very passionate from their positions. Compromising became very evident right away. What the Selectboard receives isn't going to be a perfect document, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Hopefully we will not need to wait ten years to continue said improvements.

Larry Rogacki: Moved to Barre about a year and a half ago and saw this Committee as a great opportunity to get involved in the Community. Overjoyed with the Survey and Aidan's work. Met a lot of very nice people here, everyone is here because they really care about the Forest.

Jim West added: Having Johnny Crossley involved in this thing, making these changes, and keeping track of everything has been helpful to the Committee. Patty Meriam added, having Robert Nelson's presence as well has gone a long way in understanding the document. Lori Bernier added, having Caroline Earle, Carl Rogers, and others come forward was extremely helpful to the Committee's work. Dean Preston thanked Larry Rogacki for stepping up to be the Chair.

11. **Adjourn:** On a motion by Josh Howard, seconded by Jim West, the Committee voted in favor of adjournment, 7-0.
