

Ashley Community Forest Board - Regular Meeting DRAFT Minutes

8 August 2024 6:00 p.m.

Morrill Memorial & Harris Library, Strafford, Vermont

Attendance, board members: Kevin Gish, David Paganelli, Annie Penfield, Michael Sacca, Erik Skarsten

Attendance, other: Judith Falk

1. Call to order, 6:05pm
2. Public Comments - none.
3. Approve Minutes from June 13, 2024 meeting - approved.

4. Review of Posting Requirements for Warned Meetings.

The agenda for all meetings is required to be posted as a hard copy in two locations in Sharon and Strafford two days before the meeting. In addition, it is required to be posted on the Sharon and Strafford websites by the town administrators which need the agenda three days in advance of the meeting. The meetings will also be listed to the Sharon and Strafford listservs 2-3 days ahead of the meeting. Though not required, the board has agreed to also post to the Royalton and Tunbridge listservs.

Draft minutes need to be posted to the town websites within five days of the meeting, posted by the the two towns administrators.

Kevin brought up the question of whether the ACF Board functions as an advisory or non-advisory role to the two towns. It was decided that David would draft a message to the town administrators stating that we consider the board to be an advisory Board and plans to act in accordance with requirements for that category unless we hear otherwise from wither the Sharon or Strafford selectboards.

Kevin also stated that we do not need to schedule an electronic meeting (via Zoom) unless requested by a member of the public or the media on a meeting by meeting basis. We are required to audio record the meetings and post them on the towns websites.

5. Development of a Protocol for Publicizing Educational Programs, Tours and Walks.

It was decided that posting times for Educational Programs, Tours and Walks would be made as follows: 1 month ahead of event, then 2 weeks ahead, then 1 week, then one or two days before the scheduled event. Annie agreed to writing the text for the events and Judith has agreed to coordinate the posting of events. The listings would be posted on the listservs, town websites calendars. Michael agreed to work with the town administers to update maps, calendars and management plan information on the two towns websites.

6. Discussion of Protocols for Public Communication.

It was decided that the board should avoid confusing or contradictory posts, with agreement

among the board before posting and that ACF Board public communications should stay on message.

7. Update on the plan for parking area improvements.

A contract for work to be done at the ACF parking area was signed by David and contractor Calvin Benjamin with delivery of materials to take place soon and work to be completed by late August. The kiosk will also be located and put up during this time period.

8. Update on forest management activity.

David sent request for bids for carrying out forestry activity to 12 contractors with little to no responses. Apparently the job has low quality timber with some distance to a suitable log landing and the preferred equipment (forwarder) is not available. Heavier equipment may be available but with a greater impact to the forest and to new logging road creation. David has located a potential overgrown trail that could be widened though the grade is steeper than is standard or preferred. The point was raised that creating new logging roads that are close to existing trails is not desirable which was agreed upon by several members. David stated that there is no hurry to do the logging in this area and that he will explore options.

On 2 July 2024 David and Windsor County Forester AJ Follensbee met with a State of Vermont Acceptable Management Practices (AMP) water quality rep regarding the regents of a previous logging operation that has left logs across the brook that runs on the western and southern portion of the ACF. It was hoped that the removal could be accomplished with the sale of timber/pulp offsetting costs during logging operations with equipment that would be on site. That does not appear to be the case. They need to be removed at our expense though the cost has not been budgeted into this year's expenditures.

David updated the board regarding the locust harvest which is scheduled to be done in late November or early December by Jim Welch. Notes from the 7/13/23 minutes regarding the locust harvest are as follows: "It was decided that anything straight over 10" dbh would be cut and anything smaller would stay, up to 60% of the locust stand. The exceptions, tbd are the trees nearer the foundation. Some large ones would go, others would stay."

9. Update on Mowing

The Strafford meadow was mowed completely and the single Scots pine in the field removed. The main loop trail was also mowed. Thanks go to Annie Penfield for facilitating.

10. Update on Invasive Plant Work Days.

The response by volunteers this year is not as robust as last year. In 2023, five work days had a total of 53 volunteers with an average of 10.6 volunteers/work day. So far in 2024, three work days, 16 volunteers, average 5.3 volunteers/work day. There are two more days scheduled, on 8/17 and 9/14.

It was discussed to see if groups could be recruited to do service work, possibly with a donation being made to a community or non-profit organization. Michael will check with a contact at

Vermont Law and Graduate School and others were going to look into other potential groups to help.

Treasurers report

Annie reported that our account balance of cash on hand is \$14,946.64 and that \$20,000 remains in a CD for a total of \$34, 946.64.

11. Discussion of our approach to our Sharon right-of-way and maintenance of good relations with our Clifford Farm Road neighbors.

Not discussed

12. Review Educational/Fun Programming for 2024 and 2025.

Not discussed

13. Work plan for 2024.

Not discussed

7:50 Adjourn

Next meeting. 9-12-24 at 6:00 p.m.

Sharon Town Office, Sharon, Vermont

Submitted by Michael Sacca