

Ashley Community Forest Board – Special Meeting FINAL Minutes

Thursday 7-17-25, 6:00 p.m.

Sharon Town Office; Sharon, VT

In-Person Participants:

ACF Board: Erik Skarsten (ES), David Paganelli (DP), Michael Sacca (MS), Kevin Gish (KG), Annie Penfield (AP, 6:25 join)

Public: None

Remote Participants: None

1. Call to Order: David Paganelli called the meeting to order at 6:00.
2. Public Comments. None
3. Approve Minutes from 6-12-25 meeting. **MS motioned to approve the minutes of 6-12-25 as presented; ES seconded; approved unanimously.**
4. Erik Skarsten:
 - Thoughts on blazing current trails, ES wants to get trails marked this summer and the board concurs. Discussion: One color, versus multiple and also possible use of rigid plastic markers nailed to trees, in lieu of paint blazes. The Board agreed to blaze the main loop in yellow paint this summer.
 - Discuss the new trail that Bob Wilson cut. Discussion about several trails that have been created from logging job. Newly created logging trail on Sharon side could easily be connected to Sharon spur trail. This has created possibly some confusion with people walking, attempting to do the loop trail and getting off on side trails. Need to wait until Bob (logger) is done cleaning up from logging job to do trail work.
 - Dedication for Warren's bench, 1:00pm Sat, 19 Jul 2025 meet at parking area. The Board is not part of this dedication, although we did approve location of the bench.
 - Our current contract with Bob Wilson for logging and follow-on closeout is expired. Due to his equipment breakdown, the board discussed extending his contract to allow the completion of closeout work. **KG moved to extend the contract with Bob Wilson until 1 Sep 2025 to allow for closeout of logging job; ES seconded, approved unanimously.**
 - Stephanie Gergeley-Davis (new 6th grade teacher at Sharon Elem.) is very interested in getting 6th graders outside and to Ashley. The Board discussed possibly getting students to do some trail work for connecting the new trails (Sharon). There is possibly a similar suggestion on the Strafford side.
5. Michael Sacca:
 - Report on possible cash gift to Ashley Community Forest,
 - AVC gave Vital Communities \$15K to hold. Must be used for conservation. \$14250 remaining after their fee. Education/curriculum development: Meg Teachout, Steve Wilbanks. Simone Pile, etc. The Board discussed curriculum dev/trails/history (natural and cultural, starting with geologic).

- There was very lengthy discussion and some disagreement among board members regarding the details of how we might utilize these funds and how exactly to create an educational curriculum.
 - DP asked what the deliverables would be.
 - **Motion by AP to accept the funds (\$14250) from Vital Communities to be used for: trail design, trail building, gather historical research, and potentially curriculum development; seconded by ES, approved unanimously.**
- Development of curriculum and visitor information,
 - Curriculum could be for general public, not just schools. Big picture – Robinson District, possibly.
 - Annie mentioned possible website for Ashley that is in work.
 - Potential trail work,
 - MS talked with Sam Brakely about mapped brown trail on Strafford side and also redirecting loop trail to be less steep. MS proposes to get Sam to mark new “brown” trail in Strafford. Also, it appears someone(s) has done some clearing in various areas, but the Board does not know who is doing this and what their motive is. Also discussed old roads and possibly resurrecting them as trails. MS will get an estimate from Sam for trail layout. DP reminded us that a correction of the steep section would take the trail into Reserve area, which is fine; we just need to remember the Reserve areas.
 - Tree marking. MS asked about marked trees. No conclusion at this point, but see Item 7 below.
6. Discuss and finalize MOU with Deb Fisk with respect to trail access to repair damaged stream crossing.
- a. Some discussion about how the board provides feedback on such documents, but consensus was that opportunity for feedback was given and DP incorporated some comments into the document that the board is reviewing now.
 - b. **KG moved to approve the MOU with Deb Fisk as presented by DP prior to this mtg/ES seconded/approved unanimously.**
7. Report on forest management activity: Timber sale closeout/Forest stand improvement/Possible yurt pole sale
- The timber sale is complete with the exception of closeout work discussed above (Item 4).
 - Pink/orange ribbons for Crop Tree Release (CTR). Also, boundary is marked. Blue flags are yurt poles possibility. (“2 Girls Yurts”). If we want to pursue this, it would yield approximately \$7/pole. Board agreed to hold off on yurt pole sale, and leave flagging in place for educational purposes.
 - MS spoke to our mission and he expressed his concern regarding further forestry cutting. Since the recent timber sale, the Board decided to delay the yurt pole sale for future consideration.

8. Discuss the plan for mowing this Summer. Shawn Ward will mow again, using Annie's mower. Board agreed to mow Strafford again this year due to brush in Sharon meadow from recent logging project. We will also mow path through Sharon meadow.
9. Other Business.
 - a. Aug 3, 1000-1200 – Dan Healey program: "How trees work"
 - b. There have been multiple no shows, or very minimal attendance, for several of our scheduled events.

7:30 Adjourn: **DP motioned to adjourn at 7:30; AP seconded; approved unanimously.**

Next meeting. 8-14-25 at Morrill Library; Strafford, VT