



## **Waitsfield Conservation Commission Meeting**

Minutes

June 16, 2025

**Members Present:** Bob Cook, James Donaldson, Phil Huffman, Ted Joslin, Leo Laferriere, Curt Lindberg, Chris Loomis, Gail O'Keefe

**Members Absent:** Bruno Grimaldi

**Others Present:** Caitlin Cusack (VLT), Ky Koitzsch, Brian Voigt (CVRPC)

The meeting was called to order by Curt at 6:00 pm. The meeting was held in person at the Town Offices and remotely via Zoom.

### **1. Welcome, Agenda Review**

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

### **2. Public Input**

No members of the public were present.

### **3. Emerald Ash Borer Treatment**

Caitlin Cusack outlined options for addressing emerald ash borer damage while attempting to ensure that Vermont continues to host a population of ash trees. She provided information regarding three types of strategies.

- Biological control – Three different wasps have been shown to parasitize ash borer larvae, but they only protect smaller diameter trees, it is not yet known how well they withstand winters, and it has not yet been determined whether the wasps themselves are potentially invasive. Programs testing this control are generally managed by state and federal government.
- Organic and chemical insecticides – The goal of this treatment is to protect genetic diversity and the cultural experience of ash trees. Not many programs are using organic products. The treatment protocol is generally for preservation patches – a smaller number of trees in many locations. Several area towns/organizations are implementing this strategy, and there is potential to use this treatment in town forests. Caitlin outlined the associated logistics and costs, explaining that VLT has equipment that may possibly be loaned to the Town, but that a licensed applicator would need to be retained by the Town for application of the insecticide.
- Locating and breeding lingering ash – Some resistant trees are found in some ash populations; these specimens are found to live for a couple of years beyond when the

majority of an area's population has succumbed. These trees are then bred and the health of the offspring monitored; most of this work has been taking place south of Vermont, but has recently been initiated in this region. Once an area is observed to having been infected, tree health is being monitored for individuals that might be part of this effort. The strategy makes for a good citizen science project.

Curt suggested that this information be presented to the Tree Board and Selectboard members. Caitlin noted that VLT has published this type of information in newsletters, and that the primary interaction with Towns is through review of management plans and providing education and dialog.

#### **4. Review/Approve Minutes**

The minutes of April 21, 2025 were approved.

#### **5. Floodplain Reconnection Study**

Brian Voigt provided an update on this project, which is evaluating four municipal and one private property along the Mad River for potential floodplain reconnection. Watershed Consulting will likely have preliminary designs developed for each site within the next several weeks, the designs will include best management practices for phosphorous reduction and related cost estimates. The designs will then be evaluated to determine which are cost-worthy projects that should be further refined over the winter and implemented in the spring of 2026. Brian explained that buffer plantings are not likely to be included in the strategies proposed, but that minimal changes to the riverbank through flood benches may be part of the solutions. The work will be fully funded by the state.

Brian will reach out again in mid-August when the preliminary plans are ready for review.

#### **6. Wu/Fairgrounds Management Plan Development and Stewardship**

Chris reported that two individuals have expressed interest in serving as consultants for the development of the Management Plan; neither have yet provided a cost estimate for the work. Chris explained that he needs to determine what digital files from prior plan development are available and can be provided to a consultant; he will look into what files that were stored on the server for the previous Town web site are still accessible. He noted that it still needs to be determined if an RFP should be published for this effort, or if the amount falls under the procurement policy threshold that requires an RFP. None of the members present recalls issuing an RFP for the Wu Ledges Plan development; this will be determined at the next meeting. Chris also indicated that clarification is needed regarding to what extent management plan details will be included for the actual fairgrounds (currently pasture) portion of the new parcel. Curt agreed to follow up with the Selectboard on this matter.

Leo asked that the Commission take the time to determine as a group what the overall goals/plan for the property should be; others felt that this could be undertaken as a collaborative effort along with the consultant engaged to help write the plan. It was discussed that this plan

will be for forest management as well as outlining other uses for the site. It was agreed that Chris and Gail should proceed with getting a proposal from both consultants who are interested in working on the plan, and having them come in to discuss goals with the CC as part of the process.

Gail indicated that she would send out the current plan for Wu Ledges as well as the statement of intent from the donor of the new parcel, and Curt will look into previous minutes reflecting related discussions. This information will help to inform further discussion regarding intentions for the properties; Phil suggested that even if a formal RFP is not required that something should be put together to provide guidance for consultant to respond to.

#### Forest Stewardship -

Chris and James reported that they and PJ Telep had surveyed the Town trails depicted on the Wu Ledges kiosk, and that some maintenance work is needed. They also noted that some people are driving beyond the point where traffic should stop, and there was confirmation that Steward MRV will be taking care of replenish dog waste bags at kiosks.

James and Chris then noted that there is some erosion that resulted from the May storm event and some other trail matters to be addressed. They noted that most of the damage can be repaired with hand tools, and indicated that they will reach out for community volunteers to help complete this work.

### **7. Financial Matters**

Curt noted that he and Bruno are working with Steve Lewis to make the adjustments necessary for accounting of invasive species expenditures.

### **8. Other business:**

- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on July 21, 2025.
- Scrag Trail RFP – This has been published.
- Northfield Range Conservation Meeting – This group of various organizations met recently, and intends to have follow-up conversations.
- GIS Primer – Curt will schedule a presentation for the hour preceding a regular meeting for those interested.
- Other Items
  - Intervale Conservation Nursery has offered to do some stewardship work on recent plantings – it was agreed to proceed with this effort.
  - Curt and Caitlin recently measured a white pine on the Fairgrounds parcel that may be large enough to be included as a state legacy tree; it is about 130' tall with a circumference of 14.5' – Caitlin is calculating the canopy spread.

### **9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary