Waitsfield Conservation Commission Meeting

Minutes

July 15, 2026

Members Present: James Donaldson, Bruno Grimaldi, Phil Huffman, Ted Joslin, Leo Laferriere, Curt Lindberg, Chris Loomis, Gail O'Keefe
Members Absent: None
Others Present: None

The meeting was called to order by Curt at 6:32 pm. The meeting was held in person at the Town Offices and remotely via Zoom.

1. Welcome, Agenda Review
No changes were made to the agenda.

2. Public Input
No members of the public asked for time to speak.

3. Review/Approve minutes
The minutes of June 17, 2026 were approved.

4. Update on Discussions with FMR on Invasives/Restoration Initiative
Curt reported on a recent meeting of local CC members and FMR staff, where it was agreed that FMR would be the new organizational home of local invasives/restoration work, with a gradual transition planned for. There will be some concerted efforts over the next couple of months to bring FMR staff up to speed on the work behind these efforts.

Curt confirmed that the most likely area for plantings to be established this year is at Lareau, headed south to the bridge.

5. Spring Trail Work and Phase 2 Trail Build
James reported that this work has been completed satisfactorily, including some final clean up. The invoice amount is what was provided as an estimate.

MOTION: *James moved to approve a payment form the Scrag Mountain Town Forest Reserve Fund in the amount of $31,075, to cover the invoice for the completed trail work. The motion was seconded by Bruno, and passed unanimously.*

James indicated that he would be writing a related announcement for the Valley Reporter, and that he would work on installing new trail markers when he has time available.

There was some discussion regarding the next phase of trail building; James noted that this section is already flagged, although consultation with Dave Gavett is needed regarding sap lines. He also pointed out that there is a section or two that might benefit from some rerouting, for which further discussion will be needed. James anticipates that this Phase 3 section will be constructed in 2028.

Chris spoke of creating a side by side walking loop; James indicated that there is a minimal amount of work needed to accomplish this at the planned location.

James also noted one wet area of the old logging trail that will need some attention.

6. Objectives for Wu/Fairgrounds

Chris led a discussion of review of the vision statement and goals of the existing Wu Ledges Management Plan. He outlined that the Plan will be updated with Michael Brown's assistance, and with opportunities for public input provided. Some management areas will cross boundaries between the two parcels, and it was agreed that the Plan should be adjusted to include the entire acreage, and to not simply add a section solely pertinent to the Fairgrounds.

The following points were covered during the ensuing discussion:

- Efforts should be made to honor to Fairgrounds parcel donor's intent, particularly for allowing old growth characteristics to develop
- Avoidance of trails/recreation in the particularly sensitive areas of the parcel
- Consideration of establishing easements to ensure that older forest and critical areas outside the pasture remain in prime condition
- Management of the pasture area is likely to be an interim plan, as the future long-term use has not yet been decided upon
- New potential for recreational access to the broader Wu/Fairgrounds through the newly acquired parcel
- Possible to allow for some old growth while continuing some harvesting/forest management
    - Outline areas that are appropriate for each approach
- Donor goal of protecting and restoring riparian buffers – similar language already in place in existing Plan
- Management of invasive species within the forest should be included as a strategy
- Several other bullets were included in donor preferences
- Agreed that addressing donor's intent does not need to be specifically called out as a goal, but that these preferences should be addressed in the Plan where appropriate
- Addressing restoration work – everybody agreed to give more though to define what would be restored and what the restoration goals would be
    - Michael Brown will be asked to provide input on resilience practices

Potential edits to the existing vison statement, which was generally agreed to still be valid, were agreed upon:

- Change 'forestry' to 'forest management'
- Change 'maintain their value' to 'maintain and enhance their value'

It was also agreed that promoting old growth forest should not be integrated into a current goal statement, but rather add separately and be worded along the lines of 'where appropriate, implement forest management that promotes old growth characteristics.'

Gail and Chris will work on these and additional edits, based upon this conversation, and present an updated draft of the Plan's vision and goals to the group before it is discussed with Michael Brown.

7. Financial Matters
Bruno reviewed the General Fund budget, noting that he will be conferring with Steve Lewis regarding the balance, as Bruno believed that all funds had been expended. Bruno had sent a current financial statement to all the members, and he reviewed the balances in the Scrag funds, and the Commission's asset position in general.

8. Other Business

- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on September 16, 2026; plan to have Michael B at that meeting.
- Other – No other matters were addressed.

9. Executive Session
MOTION: *A motion to enter Executive Session passed unanimously.*

The meeting entered Executive Session at 8:02 pm and returned to open session at 8:14 pm.

No further action was taken by the Commission.

10. Adjournment
The meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary