Draft Minutes of the
Town Forest Steering Committee Meeting
5/9/18

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Wendsay, May 9, 2018.

Steering Committee Members: Jon Bouton, Mary Hutchins, Tom Kahl, Allan McDougall, Sean Ogle, Lisa Philips and chair/facilitator Angie Emerson.
Staff: Planner Matt Osborn.
Others: None.

Chair Angie Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Introductions were made.

Steering Committee Minutes of January 23, 2018: Angie Emerson asked if there are any corrections to the Minutes of January 23rd. There were none. The minutes were accepted as written.

Trails Assessment: Sean Ogle of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance reported that the Town has hired the Trails Alliance to undertake a trails assessment of all of the trails in the Town Forest. Work will begin soon and the project will be completed by the June 7th Steering Committee meeting. Matt Osborn asked if the problems areas will be georeferenced. Sean responded yes. The information will be included in G.I.S. files and maps.

Allan McDougall noted that hazard trees exist along some trails and we may want to cut them down to eliminate danger to recreationists. Sean Ogle responded that hazard trees will be documented during the trails assessment.

Vision Framework and Draft Strategies Worksheet: Angie Emerson stated that the purpose of the meeting is for the Steering Committee to review and comment on the Draft Vision Framework and Draft Strategies Worksheet. The Steering Committee proceeded to go through the draft.

Management Balance/Public Workshop Survey: Tom Kahl noted that the survey results under management balance don't seem to match the bar graph. Matt Osborn responded that it appears that the "more important" and "equally important" categories are combined.

Survey and Workshop Visioning Input: The Steering Committee reviewed the existing experience and future desired experience responses from the visioning workshop.

Key Attributes: The Steering Committee reviewed the key attributes and did not have any comments.

Issues, Needs and Ideas: Responding to the question, are there any issues, needs, or ideas we did not properly characterize, Matt Osborn suggested modifying the statement "no program in place for trail maintenance" to "need to establish a formal trail maintenance program". The Steering Committee agreed.

Draft Strategies: The Steering Committee reviewed the draft strategies. There was consensus that there is a distinction between a forest and a park and that the Town Forest should remain a forest and not a park. As a result, improvements should be limited.

The Steering Committee came up with revisions noted in slash-out/underlined. The Steering Committee also developed a recommendation and comments in the far right column. There are a few strategies that the Steering Committee felt needed further discussion. Those are identified with a "?" followed by "need further discussion".

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost ($-$$-$$$-$$$$)	Toolkit & Support Resources	Steering Committee Recommendations and Input
1. Parking & Access				
a. Vehicle wayfinding signage	Add vehicle directional wayfinding signage from villages on Route 4, Center of Town Road, Kings Highway and Reservoir Road major roadways to the forest.	$$	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -VTrans Signage Program	Yes, but need to discuss further.
2. Trails				
a. Existing trail conditions assessment and review	Study existing trails, especially those following former logging roads and unsanctioned trails, and evaluate for potential ecological harm and mitigate the site through necessary means. Adopt, reroute, and decommission as appropriate	$	-Trail assessment forms -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards	Yes
b. Redesign Existing Trail System	Based on the results of the existing trail conditions assessment and review, reroute, redesign, or replace trails to enhance experiences for all user groups, improve drainage, and limit erosion. Ensure system includes a mix of traditional footpaths and "bike-optimized" multi-use natural surface trails to provide desired experiences.	$$-$$$	-Trail assessment forms -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards	Yes
c. Hartford Trails Collaborative	Convene mountain bikers, hikers, and other user groups to begin an on-going dialogue around trails and to. Establish a	$	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit	Yes

	framework for collaboration in the future. Build upon partnerships with Upper Valley Trail Alliance (UVTA).			
d. Groom trails for cross-country skiing and fat biking	Groom wider trails for public cross-country skiing and fat biking.	$$	-Sustainable Trail Standards	No
e. Trail markers and signage	Add signage in the forest for wayfinding, information, and trail etiquette. Ensure it communicates town ownership and/or conservation commission management.	$$	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit	Yes
f. New ADA accessible path	Build a graded, ADA accessible path for all ages and abilities to enjoy the forest. Such paths are typically short (~1 mile) and provide ample opportunities for rest and education with stations or stops next to points of natural or cultural interest. Coordinate with educational programming.	$$$	-Sustainable Trail Standards	? Need further discussion.
3. Other Facilities and Structures				
a. ~~Reservoir Improvements~~	~~Explore improving Wright's Reservoir for swimming, fishing, ice skating, and paddlesports.~~	~~$$-$$$~~	~~-Sustainable Facility Standards -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit~~	No Wrights Reservoir not in Town Forest
b. Pause Places	Develop a series of "Pause Places" or "mini-destinations' along the trail system. These may be a rest stop, an informational stop, or both. All pause places should include a bench or appropriate rocks/boulders for seating and should capitalize on locations with the potential for views, sunsets, rest, and	$$	- Pause Places Toolkit -Bench Volunteer Designs '-Interpretation Guidance Toolkit	Yes

	rejuvenation. Opportunities for natural and historical interpretation should also be explored. Some could also include public art or a 'little free library.'			
c. Create and maintain locations for birding and viewing wildlife.	Build more locations to sit and observe wildlife. Benches are encouraged in a variety of locations. Coordinate with Pause Places.	$	- Pause Places Toolkit -Bench Volunteer Designs '-Interpretation Guidance Toolkit	Yes
d. Low Ropes Course	Add a low ropes course to facilitate team building and learning through challenging personal experiences in the forest. Coordinate with recreation department programs, other local camps, and possibly private events.	$$$	- Sustainable Facility Standards -Natural Resource Guidance toolkit	No
e. Develop an outdoor classroom	Create a small gathering space with log benches, earthen mounds etc. for schools and other groups.	$$	- Sustainable Facility Standards -Natural Resource Guidance toolkit - Interpretation Guidance Toolkit	? Need input from School District
4. Education & Programs				
a. Develop a trail maintenance program	Work with Hartford Career & Tech Center on a trail maintenance program. School groups or Boy Scouts are other possible maintenance groups. Coordinate with trails collaborative effort. Seek participation from all five villages.	$	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit - Programming Partnerships Toolkit	Yes
b. Host school group programs in the forest	Bring students to the forest for ecology programs, recreation	$	- Programming Partnerships	? Need input from School District

	programs, etc. Consider a high school mountain biking team.		Toolkit	
c. Ecology tours	Offer ecology tours (birdwatching, plant identification, etc.) for children and adults.	$	- Programming Partnerships Toolkit	Yes
d. Kids camps	Offer kids camps in the forest. Partner with ~~Bradford~~ Hartford Parks and Recreation, churches and others operating camps in the area.	$	- Programming Partnerships Toolkit	No
e. Lessons, skills camps, and clinics	Offer lessons, skills camps, and clinics for trail running and mountain biking.	$	- Programming Partnerships Toolkit	? Need further discussion
f. Species identification lists	Bird, plant and mammal species identification checklists could be developed and made available at the trailhead kiosk. Should also be utilized in education experiences.	$	- Programming Partnerships Toolkit	Yes
g. Story Walk	A StoryWalk is an innovative and delightful way for children — and adults! — to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children's book are attached to wooden stakes, which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll down the trail, you're directed to the next page in the story.	$$	- Story Walk Toolkit	? Need further discussion
5. Events				
a. Small scale Races in the forest	Hold small-scale mountain bike or trail running races in the forest. ~~Consider race series or local-serving adventure race (Tough Mudder, Warrior Dash, etc.) as well.~~ .	$	- Programming Partnerships Toolkit	Yes, but maintain small scale
6. Maps, Outreach, & Promotion				

	Description	Cost	Toolkit	
a. Improve maps of the forest	Create maps that show all trails in the forest and make these maps readily available both online and in print. Explore opportunities to engage local businesses in sponsoring map printing. Ads from local businesses can not only fund map printing, but can also help connect forest use with economic activity in the villages.	$-$$	-Mapping and Promotion Toolkit	Yes
b. Online presence	Improve the online presence of the forest with a forest specific website. Work with Chamber of Commerce to coordinate activities and continue working with Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA) to promote the forest.	$-$$	-Mapping and Promotion Toolkit	Yes
c. Town Forest Business Roundtable	Host a Town Forest Business Roundtable to share "trail friendly business" ideas that can help support trail use in the community, connect forest visitors with local businesses, and help support Town Forest efforts.	$	-Trail Friendly Business Toolkit	? Need further discussion
d. Town Forest Village Days	Organize village-specific hikes and events in the Town Forest that focus on local history, socializing, or volunteering/stewardship.	$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit	No
7. Administrative Actions				
a. Adopt formal process for proposing and reviewing new trails and facilities	Process will include ecological concerns and will provide all stakeholders and user groups an opportunity to propose new trails and facilities.	$	-Model Proposal Process -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit	Yes

b. Management zones	Revise management zones of the management plan to consider and plan for all uses. Designate areas more suitable for wildlife habitat, hunting, or mountain biking, for example.	$	- Management Zones Toolkit	Yes
c. Partner with Hartford Parks and Recreation	Partner with Hartford Parks and Recreation to utilize the Town Forest for Town recreation programs and to benefit from staff expertise.	$	- Programming Partnerships Toolkit	Yes
7. Additional Strategies				

The Steering Committee agreed that the priority should be making improvements for those who want to use and enjoy a town forest, not necessarily promoting the Town Forest for large groups as if it were a park.

Following review of the draft strategies, the Steering Committee agreed to continue discussion at the June 7th Steering Committee meeting to get input from other Steering Committee members not present tonight.

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Angie Emerson noted that the next Town Forest Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 7th.

Next Community Meeting: Angie Emerson noted that the next Community Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 18th.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.