

Minutes
Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee
March 16, 2023

In attendance: Chris Russo-Fraysier, Tim Rapczynski, Jim Deshler, Janette Shaffer, Nicolas Storellicastro. (5:30- 6:20)

Guests: Stephanie Olsen – Central Vermont Career Center (5:55 – 6:35)

1. **Call to order:** 5:36 p.m.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Chris requested addition of agenda item: Cow Pasture Property Survey. Tim requested CVCC discussion to be moved forward to accommodate Stephanie Olsen (CVCC).

3. Agenda Items:

Approval of Minutes- January 19, 2023. Motion moved Janette, 2nd Jim. All in favor -motion passes.

ERSA Grant Update: Janet Shatney received a *draft* Agreement with requests for additional information. Janette Shaffer and Jim Deshler provided timely responses for information/clarification prior to the February 14th due date. City Response was submitted on February 23rd. A final Agreement has not been received as of March 16, 2023. There was a discussion on what actions the City can initiate without a final Agreement in hand. The Council has already approved accepting the ERSA Grant in 2022 and Janet's review has been completed. Council's final Approval will be a a formality and approved as a Consent Agenda item). Nicolas thought that action could be taken on some items of urgency and will assist the Committee by communicating with Janet. The City has < 2 years to complete *all* work. Both City in-kind and contracted field work must be completed within two short windows of seasonal opportunity. The completion date listed in the Draft Grant Agreement is December 30, 2024.

Ford Property: There is an urgency to action items associated with the purchase of the Ford Property which includes: Hiring an Assessor, verifying that that a property survey has been recorded and follow-up if a survey cannot be located, and City Attorney's draft of a Purchase and Sales Agreement.

Trail Crew: Securing a Trail Crew is an immediate need. The ERSA Sub-Committee drafted an RFP for the field work/Trails Assessment and provided the document to Janet Shatney for final review. The Committee discussed whether to include a "not to exceed \$24,000" in the RFP. All agreed that there is some value in including the budgeted amount. Chris will convey the Committee's desire to Janet who will be finalizing and posting the RFP ASAP. The ERSA Sub-Committee will continue to work on action items to finalize the Agreement and initiate the Grant action items.

Ford Property: The parcel off Maplewood Avenue has been sold. The new owner Brad Eastman, has approached Nicholas to let him know that he may be interested in selling the upper portion of the property that has development limitations. Brad agreed to keep Nicolas informed on this option.

A Fact Sheet on the importance of this parcel was developed in 2019. Future Committee action items discussed were: Invite Brad to the Cow Pasture to learn about the Cow Pasture property and discuss concerns he may have as an abutting landowner; and draft a letter to the Council requesting Council consideration of the purchase of the property if it is offered up for-sale. Chris

did express an opinion that the mature hardwood forest on the undeveloped upper parcel should remain intact.

Survey - Cow Pasture Property: Property line boundaries are not known. Prior to a Trail Assessment and consideration of future trails the boundaries should be identified. Nicola,s will discuss this with Bill Ahearn. The City owned parcel between Quinlan Drive and Mead Ave. (paper street) should be included in the survey and the steep undeveloped property included as part of the Cow Pasture Conservation lands.

Central Vermont Career Center Partnership: Stephanie Olson- and this year's Exploratory Class of 25 students, will partner with the Committee for the 2nd year to assist with Invasive Plant Removal. The Committee will meet and greet the class to demonstrate Committee and Community appreciation for their efforts. Stephanie reported the Cow Pasture work was a favorite unit for the class Of 2022. Burning Bush above Route 14 will be targeted. The Committee is very appreciative of Stephanie's energy and willingness to educate and engage students on environmental issues. The unit explores the Cow Pasture Management Plan and significance of stewardship of the property.

The class schedule is:

April 14th - Field Trip; April 19th – Field Work ((20th rain date); April 21st – Field Work

Motion: Tim - to allow CVCC Exploratory Class to conduct Invasive plant removal and educational activities on the Cow Pasture Property. 2nd: Janette. All in Favor. Motion Passes.

Green-Up Day: May 6, 2023.

Motion: Tim- The Committee will invite the public to participate in Green-Up Day activities on the Cow Pasture Property. 2nd Janette. All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Tim agreed to coordinate the Day once again. Public outreach will be initiated 2 weeks prior to the event. Volunteers and Committee members will work on a combination of trail maintenance, and invasive plant and trash removal.

Council Presentation:

Motion: Tim- Table discussion to the next Meeting. 2nd Jim. All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Updates:

- **T-shirts:** Janette will investigate purchase of T-shirts.
- **Central Vermont Career Center- Outreach:** See above.
- **Committee Reset-**Tim submitted a letter to City Council on behalf of the Committee requesting that the Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee remain a Committee and focus on the current mission. The letter (attached) was acknowledged by City Manager Nicolas Storrellicastro. The Committee reset discussion will be a March 28th Council Agenda Item.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn at 7:05 p.m. Tim. Seconded – Jim. All in favor. Motion passes

Important Dates:

March 28, 2023: Council Meeting Committee Reset Discussion

April 14th, 19th and 21st, 2023: Central Vermont Career Center Volunteer Days

May 6, 2023: Green-Up Day

May 20, 2023 (7-9 a.m.): North Branch Nature Center Sponsored Bird Walk.

Upcoming Committee Meetings

May 18, 2023

July 20, 2023

September 21, 2023

November 16, 2023

Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee Barre City, Vermont

January 22, 2023

City Council
Barre City, Vermont



Dear City Council members,

The Barre City Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee wants to thank the Council for providing additional time to discuss the proposed committee reset proposal. The Committee recognizes that city staff members are being tasked with the oversight of one or more committees and appreciates the need to reduce staff time spent overseeing numerous Committees.

The most recent proposal included a *Cow Pasture and Open Conservation Lands Committee*, which would restructure the current Committee by expanding its responsibilities. During the Cow Pasture Stewardship Committing meeting on January 19, this proposed Committee restructure was discussed and members unanimously agreed that the current structure should remain unchanged. Keeping the current structure will allow the Committee to continue to focus on the mission statement per the Barre City Cow Pasture Management Plan, which is:

To connect people to the place in ways that allow recreation, exploration, collaboration, and stewardship of the Cow Pasture.

The Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee strongly recommends to City Council that the current Committee structure is not modified and that the Committee restructure proposal is modified to reflect this. Committee members offer the following reasons to support this recommendation:

- The Committee partnered with the City to apply for a \$50,600 Enhancement of Recreation Stewardship and Access (ERSA) Trails Grant to enhance the Cow Pasture property. Once the grant agreement is received and approved the Committee will need to commit numerous volunteer hours to meet the requirements of the agreement; the additional responsibilities proposed by the City Council will hinder the Committee's ability to successfully administer the ERSA Grant. All proposed work must be completed within two years of acceptance.
- Committee members feel there is a lack of specifics on what the new Cow Pasture and Open Conservation Lands Committee's mission and expectations would be. It is also unclear how much support the Committee would receive from the City to effectively steward the Canales Woods Park.
- The Committee is unaware of other open conservation lands other than Canales Woods Park. It is the Committee's understanding that Canales Woods Park is under the

oversight of the City Department of Public Works, and neighborhood residents help with the maintenance. The park may not require oversight from a formal committee.

- All current Committee members joined the Committee because of a passion for the Cow Pasture. Expanding the Committee responsibilities to oversee more lands would diminish the passion for a particular piece of land, whether it be the Cow Pasture or other properties.
- Additional responsibilities will exceed the Committee's capacity to manage multiple projects effectively and successfully, resulting in a potential loss of Committee membership.
- It has been expressed by current and prior City staff members that the Committee is a model for other City committees and requires little oversight or "hand-holding" from City staff. Restructuring the Committee may result in a reduction of this demonstrated efficiency.

The Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee thanks the City Council for the opportunity to comment on the committee restructure proposal and appreciates the consideration of the Committee's recommendation to keep the current Committee's structure unchanged.

Sincerely,
Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee
Barre, Vermont

Current Members:

Chris Russo-Fraysier, Chair

Tim Rapczynski, Co-Chair

Janette Shaffer

Jim Deshler

Marc Cote