

WAITSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2006

DRAFT

Commissioners present: Mark Grosby (chair), Paul Hartshorn, Phil Huffman, Ted Joslin, Leo Laferriere

Members of the public present: John Atkinson (Mad River Riders)

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. at the Waitsfield Town Offices.

1. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November 6, 2006 meeting were approved as submitted.

2. Public comment: There was no public input.

3. Trail management: The Commission had an extended discussion with John Atkinson from the Mad River Riders (MRR) about trail management, particularly on the Wu Ledges Municipal Forest and adjacent town-controlled parcels. Atkinson described the agreement that was recently finalized between MRR and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for management of trails on state lands in Phen Basin and the Howe Block of Camel's Hump State Forest, and a similar agreement between MRR and the Town of Fayston for the Chase Brook parcel. He noted that MRR members and other mountain bikers in the Valley have been involved in maintaining trails on the Wu Ledges and adjacent parcels for many years, and MRR is very enthusiastic about establishing a more formal arrangement with the Commission to continue providing this service. He expressed confidence that MRR has sufficient capacity to take on this responsibility, with several dozen members actively involved in trail maintenance and additional help available from local students (e.g., Green Mountain Valley School) and others.

The group discussed the use of trails for a variety of activities, and Atkinson stated that while MRR is primarily focused on trail maintenance for mountain biking, they don't view the trails they work on as limited to that use. He noted that many MRR members and other trail users in the Valley use trails for many different activities, and that generally there are very few conflicts between those different activities. MRR has a good relationship with the Mad River Path Association, and bikers and hikers share access on many trails including several sections of the Path, the Chase Brook parcel, and the Wu Ledges area. The group discussed the potential for adverse impacts on trail and environmental conditions (e.g., erosion) if equestrian use of trails at Wu Ledges were to increase.

Atkinson stated that MRR generally adheres to the International Mountain Bike Association's (IMBA) standards for trail maintenance, although they do use some flexibility in adjusting the standards as appropriate based on specific site conditions (e.g., soil types). He emphasized that MRR applies strict erosion control measures, and tries to build easily maintained trails by avoiding wet or other sensitive areas. He indicated that MRR is receptive to temporary or permanent trail closures as needed to allow for site restoration, to avoid sensitive areas, etc.

All agreed on the desirability of a partnership with MRR for trail maintenance on Commission-managed parcels, and Atkinson offered to provide a copy of the recent agreement with Fayston as a possible model. He also suggested the possibility of a joint agreement that would involve the Mad River Path Association to involve that constituency and expand maintenance capacity. In response to a question from Paul Hartshorn, Atkinson noted that MRR has liability coverage of \$1 million per occurrence.

4. Trail mapping on Wu Ledges Municipal Forest and adjacent town parcels: Mark Grosby noted the need to work with Stephen Engle on some initial refinements to the draft map that was produced from the data gathered during the “trail-athon” on October 15. That process hopefully will be completed by mid-December, and then the map will be circulated to all trail-athon participants for their review and feedback.

5. Commission budget: There was a discussion about apparent discrepancies in the Commission’s expense report and Conservation Fund Revenue report. Mark Grosby offered to resolve these discrepancies with the Town Clerk. Members agreed on the need for separate income and expense accounts both for the Commission and for the Conservation Reserve Fund, and on the need to assure carry-over from year to year of any income the Commission raises from non-municipal sources (donations, grants, etc.). Ted Joslin moved and Paul Hartshorn seconded that the Commission allocate any balance remaining in its account just prior to year-end to the Northern Forest Alliance in support of the October 14th Valley-wide town forest celebration. The vote was unanimous, with Phil Huffman abstaining. Mark Grosby offered to make the necessary arrangements with the Town Clerk.

6. Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for Thursday, December 28, 2006, 7:00 p.m. at the Town Office.

7. Other Business: Mark Grosby confirmed that requests had been submitted to the Town Administrator (for presentation to the Selectboard) for a 2007 Commission budget of \$700 and for a Town Meeting article expanding the Commission membership to up to nine members.

8. Executive Session: Upon motion made and seconded, the Commission voted unanimously to go into executive session pursuant to 1 VSA 313(2) to discuss possible real estate acquisitions by the town.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Philip B. Huffman, Secretary