



**Town of Berlin
Municipal Office Building
108 Shed Road**

Berlin, VT. 05602

Special Meeting

**Tuesday, November 10, 2020
7:00 PM**

Selectboard Members: Bradley Towne, Chair; Flo Smith, Co-Vice Chair; Justin Lawrence, Co-Vice Chair; John Quinn III, Secretary; Angelina Capron. Present: Tom Badowski, Assistant Town Administrator; Phil Gentile, Conservation Commission; Wendlynn Bolles, Conservation Commission; Tom Willard, Conservation Commission; Ken Coffey; Josh Walker; Richard Watson; Deborah Zuaro; Eric Peterson; and Dave Packie. All items are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

APPROVED MINUTES

Call to Order

Towne called the meeting to order. Capron absent.

Public Comment

None.

Use of Town Land for Recreational Purposes

Phil Gentile, Co-Chair of the Conservation Commission, attended the meeting. He led the conversation by explaining the special meeting was called to address VAST's interest in utilizing town land for trails. Gentile briefly discussed a need for a formalized process for interested parties to approach the Commission about use of town land. Tom Willard discussed the purchase of parcels over time, including the three parcels involved in the VAST request. Two of those parcels were combined (Lawson and Ridgeline lots) before acquiring the Dufresene lot. The 2008 combined VLT easement agreement includes all three lots. The management plan was not amended for new trails. The management plan will need amendment to allow for updates and any added trail.

Quinn expressed a desire to move forward with opening the trails to snowmobiles this winter to allow more outdoor recreation. Bolles explained that the process can be expedited only so much due to public hearing requirements and easement considerations including a regulation plan for snowmobiles that addresses speed limits, trash if left, etc. She also discussed the bridge that is not in a condition for snowmobiles. Bolles briefly explained her understanding of agreements with VAST for bridge repair or building. The VAST Bridge Agreement states that if the VAST trail associated with the bridge is discontinued, VAST will either remove the bridge or the town can keep the bridge by paying fair market value for it. She explained the need for information regarding cost of

a bridge that will accommodate the width needed. Lawrence asked for an updated map of the town forest lands. Bolles indicated that a map can be provided.

Discussion continued regarding easement with the Vermont Land Trust. Currently, the easement allows for conservation and non-motorized recreation with the ability for other recreation compatible with the main two purposes. Conversation moved to timing involved in creating a new management plan, pursuing the public process, and receiving approval from the Vermont Land Trust; specifically, about whether the process can be achieved this winter. The general indication was that the process may take considerable time. Part of the desired trail is not in easement land and that part may be more expedient but the process to allow snowmobiles on easement land and town forest land is more involved.

Gentile suggested a written proposal to begin the process with formality. A resident on the phone line expressed concern over an urgent push to put the trail through and desired to see a formal process followed to allow public input. Members of the Conservation Commission were hesitant to commit to promising their availability as volunteers to expedite a process that may unforeseeably become tedious and time consuming at times. The Conservation Commission has a recreation toolkit that will be used to compile what information is needed in a letter of intent or application. The commission will provide the details of what information should appear in an application to the interested snowmobile clubs so that the clubs may submit an application or letter of intent to begin formal process.

The Conservation Commission will share the link to the recreation toolkit with members of the board. All can then review the material and begin to determine what needed information will be provided by the snowmobile groups, town, or others. There was a brief conversation about safety, signage, and other regulation that will be discussed further. Quinn volunteered to provide a list of potential action items for the next meeting that the group at large can correct if needed. Lawrence moved to adjourn. Seconded by Quinn. Passed unanimously.

For the Select Board:

Bethany A. Towne