

Town of Randolph

Planning Board Minutes - draft
June 6, 2024

Members Present: June Hammond Rowan, Robert Ross, Tim Mather, Michele Cormier, William Demers, and Kevin Rousseau (7:05pm)

Members Excused: None

Public Present: Jeremiah Hawkins, Chris Hawkins, and Shelli Fortin, Minutes Taker

1. Call to Order

June Hammond Rowan called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

2. Roll Call

William Demers was appointed as a voting member until Kevin Rousseau arrived.

3. Review of Minutes

On a motion by Robert Ross, seconded by Tim Mather, the Board voted to accept the minutes of the May 2, 2024, meeting as presented.

4. Communications to the Board

There were no new communications to the Board.

5. Report of Officers and Committees

a. Selectboard

Michele Cormier advised that members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment will be participating in a workshop via Zoom.

b. Randolph Forest Commission

Tim Mather advised that Fuller's Sugarhouse send the check for maple taps for last year, which was approximately \$32,000, for about 25,000 taps. Forest Day will be held on August 10 this year, one week later than usual due to the town's bicentennial celebration. They received a quote of \$21,000 for road work on the Pond of Safety Road, Hunter's Pass, and the culverts on Jimtown Road. The new trailhead signs have been installed on Randolph Hill Road and the Pond of Safety. Part of one of the transects will be cleared by LandVest for Forest Day, and they received a quote to clear the remaining ones which will be done at the end of August.

6. Applications

There were no new applications.

7. Public Hearings - none

8. Other Business

a. Activity Manager for Backcountry Glade Skiing on Randolph Community Forest

June Hammond Rowan advised that an email was forward from Mark Kelley advising that Tyler Ray will be stepping down as the Executive Director for Granite Backcountry Alliance (GBA) after June 30, so he will no longer be the point of contact. GBA is the current activity manager for the Crescent Ridge backcountry ski glad on the Randolph Community Forest.

Robert Ross asked who assumes liability for the glades, and was advised that similar to hiking in the WMNF, those participating in recreational activities on public land do so at their own risk. This is covered under NH law, which provides protection for landowners, and has been strengthened by court decisions. June Hammond Rowan advised that there may be liability for activities such as work days.

The Board discussed comments from the April public hearing regarding management of the glade. They considered Findings of Fact presented by board members, noting that some of what was heard at the public hearing was opinion, and not fact.

The Board agreed that parking is an issue, especially when it comes to emergency vehicles needing access, and that traffic is bothersome to those living on the road. Tim Mather noted that the agreement stated that GBA was to use restraint in publicizing the area, however it has been listed on their website, social media, and in publications. The question was asked as to whether Randolph could request GBA remove the Crescent Ridge Glade from their . It was also noted that GBA was to establish rules, limit groups to ten, and meet annually with the Forester, which has not been done.

Hammond Rowan noted that she requested additional monitoring data, which has not been received. Data provided showed 675 for 2023 and 737 for 2024, however they were averaging the number counted with the number of days available.

The possible disconnect with the mission of GBA and the mission of the Randolph Community Forest was discussed. Some present suggested that GBA seeks to create business for the Town of Gorham and other communities, as shown in their economic impact statement, which states that the glades have helped to create 2.8 jobs, \$95,000 in sales, and \$21,300 in tax revenue. This impact has not been felt in Randolph.

The Board noted that there were far more at the public hearing in April that were unhappy with the current situation, and that complaints concerning the area predate 2022. Although solutions proposed by GBA improved conditions in 2023, they were still not enough in 2024.

The Board agreed to the following findings of fact:

- In 2017, the Randolph Forest Commission (RFC) proposed to the Planning Board backcountry glade skiing as a use in the RCF and recommended Granite Backcountry Alliance (GBA) as the activity manager for this use.
- In July 2017, the Planning Board voted to allow backcountry glade skiing as a use in the Randolph Community Forest (RCF) with GBA as the activity manager for this use per a cooperative agreement.
- In 2017, GBA volunteers cleared an area between Mount Crescent and Mount Randolph, known as the Crescent Ridge Glade, for backcountry glade skiing and have maintained this area since that time.
- The Town of Randolph maintains Randolph Hill Road and also, per the cooperative agreement, the parking lot at the end of the road which is used as the parking area to access the Crescent Ridge Glade.
- Since 2017, backcountry glade skiing has increased in popularity and the Crescent Ridge Glade has been regularly used for this purpose.
- The cooperative agreement with GBA states that they are to make periodic reports to the Town about past and future activities. GBA has met with the RFC to discuss glade management work plans.
- In 2022 and 2023 and at other times, the RFC has received complaints about overuse of the Crescent Ridge Glade.
- The RFC has received numerous complaints from residents of Randolph about the volume of traffic, speeding, and parking at the Randolph Hill Road trail head. The number of visitors to the Crescent Ridge Glade has exceeded the parking lot capacity resulting in cars parking on the road which, at times, has impeded traffic and emergency services. GBA proposed solutions to these complaints included signage regarding speed and respect for the neighborhood, specific parking rules, and encouraging carpooling from Big Day in Gorham, but residents have found these efforts have not been satisfactory.
- The RFC met with GBA in the fall of 2023 to discuss specific issues related to parking, traffic, and overuse and asked GBA to address these issues in 2013-2024 ski season. At an April 11, 2024 public hearing, several Randolph residents expressed that these issues have not adequately been addressed by GBA and that these issues remain a problem.
- At the April 2024 public hearing, the Planning Board requested monitoring data about the number of users to the Crescent Ridge Glade. This information was provided in May 2024 and the Planning Board found that:
 - The *Granite Backcountry Alliance 2019 Economic Impact Analysis* reported 1,706 visitors to the Crescent Ridge Glade in 2019. This number of visitors was based on based on average daily use collected by a trail counter multiplied by the number of days from December 1 to April 30.
 - GBA has reported a decrease in the number of visitors to the Crescent Ridge Glade with 675 visitors in 2023 and 737 visitors in 2024. However, these numbers are from trail counters only and are not comparable to the methodology used to calculate the number of visitors in 2019.
 - No data on the number of visitors has been provided for other ski seasons.

- The cooperative agreement states that they are to use restraint in publicizing the opportunity offered by the glade with the aim of preventing overuse. However, the RFC and Planning Board have found that GBA has advertised the Crescent Ridge Glade on their website, via social media, and in numerous articles in the press.
- The cooperative agreement states that GBA is to establish, publish, and implement reasonable rules for skiing in the Glade to ensure that the backcountry skiing experience is not attenuated by overuse or careless users, but, due to comments made at the April 11, 2024 public hearing, the Planning Board finds that that GBA has not established adequate rules to address overuse or careless users.
- The cooperative agreement states that either party may terminate the agreement for any reason with six month's written notice to the other.
- On May 1, 2024, the Randolph Forest Commission voted to recommend to the Planning Board that the cooperative agreement with GBA be terminated.

On a motion by Michele Cormier, seconded by Kevin Rousseau, the Board voted unanimously to affirm the recommendation of the Randolph Forest Commission to terminate the agreement with GBA for the management of the Backcountry Glade Skiing on Randolph Community Forest.

June Hammond Rowan will draft a letter to GBA advising them of the same. The Forest Commission will need to discuss what the future management of this area will be.

A question was asked about the appeal process, and if GBA would be able to challenge the decision. Hammond Rowan noted that the contract states that the agreement can be terminated by either party for any reason with a 6-month notice.

b. Legislative Update – Accessory Dwelling Units

June Hammond Rowan advised that there was legislation that would have allowed two accessory dwelling units on a property as a right, however it did not pass. Hammond Rowan suggested that the Board think about where they would like to go with housing in general, both short and long term, and to read through the Land Use Ordinance to see if there are any changes they would like to make. Michele Cormier noted that the way to maintain control over development may be with lot size.

c. EMS Antenna Update

June Hammond Rowan advised that a group, including the Gorham and Randolph Fire Chiefs and the Gorham Town Manager, met on Tuesday for site visit at the proposed tower location. Gorham is working with the Selectboard on an agreement. Michele Cormier noted that currently Randolph is offering to donate the land and to plow the road, and the rest of the project will be the responsibility of Gorham. June Hammond Rowan noted that if the Randolph Community Forest is planning to cover part of the cost of the road with proceeds from the timber sale, they should bring that information to the Planning Board.

d. Planning Board – Alternate Members

June Hammond Rowan advised she will reach out to one person to see if they would like to join as alternate, and suggested the members continue to think about who else might be interested in serving on the Board.

e. Other

June Hammond Rowan advised that there will be no July meeting, since it falls on a holiday. If an application is received the Board could meet on July 11, 2024.

Hammond Rowan advised that the Office of Planning and Development held a recent training which is available online. William Demers attended the training and found some of the information, especially questions at the end, helpful.

Hammond Rowan shared a handout from Tara Bamford on the steps for subdivision and site plan review.

Hammond Rowan noted that Randy Meiklejohn was working on article for the Randolph Mountain Club (RMC) newsletter about the donations of land from the Brown's and Berry's and how they benefit the RMC trails. Hammond Rowan noted that she was asked to do an article for the Mountain View about the role of the Planning Board with the Randolph Community Forest.

Hammond Rowan advised that she would send out copies of the Forest Commission agreement with the Presidential Gem and Mineral Society, the snowmobile club, and the RMC for the Board to review. Hammond Rowan noted that any new agreements should be reviewed by legal counsel.

Hammond Rowan noted the timeline for any Land Use Ordinance amendments, and urged the Board to think about commercial solar and whether it is time to consider more than one zone in town. Michele Cormier noted that commercial properties have different taxation than residential, and are not subject to the view tax.

9. Public Comments

Chris Hawkins stated that he would like to see the speed limit on Randolph Hill Road dropped to 30, and was advised this would be a decision for the Selectboard.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Kevin Rousseau, seconded by Robert Ross, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelli Fortin
June 7, 2024