

Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee

Minutes

Thursday September 17, 2026

Call to Order – Time: 5:35 pm.

- Committee Members Present: Chris Russo, Janette Shaffer, Jim Deshler, Ryan Horvath, Susan McDowell, Greg Rouleau (arrived ~5:40 pm)
- Others: Amanda Gustin (Council Liaison). Guests: None.

Adjustments to Agenda

- Remove discussion of VAST stream crossing – have not received anything from Zac.
- Add Amanda to end of agenda for an update regarding new City Manager.

Agenda Items:

Approval of Minutes: July 16, 2026

- Motion by Chris R: Approve minutes as written. Second, by Susan. Vote: All in favor.

Trail Closure Discussion (Trail Cutting / Unofficial Shortcuts)

Visitors are cutting off-trail in two locations: just past the 1st new bridge (built 2025) (despite brush placed to block it), and between the new trail and Wolf Tree Trail near the parking lot, where the trails run close together.

Discussion:

- Ryan: Because the trails are so close, cutting will be hard to stop. Suggested accepting the reality and establishing a single designated connector to channel foot traffic to one crossing point.
- Chris: Wants the public to understand why the trail was closed, based on Zac's recommendation to limit intersections and signage. Concerned that accommodating requests for new trails could set a precedent. Suggested an educational flyer summarizing the previous management plan and Zac's assessment.
- Amanda: Expects people will continue using the route near Wolf Tree Trail. Questioned whether traffic is heavy enough to damage vegetation.
- Janette: Suggested gathering public feedback to learn what users want, with stewardship as the goal. Ideally, concerned users would attend a meeting to voice concerns and discuss options.
- Jim: Raised possible winter-use conflicts if new connectors are added – goal of trail project was to separate VAST and walkers. Pointed out need to add signage and update the map for clarity if we decide to add new trail(s).
- Ryan: Proposed a public survey, which could also collect email addresses from people interested in getting involved.
- Chris: Suggested promoting out-and-back walks as an alternative to people creating loops through off-trail areas.
- Greg: Noted VAST has similar problems. Questioned whether the damage is significant enough to act on and recommended waiting to see how the situation develops.

Decision: No changes at this time. Will see if this problem persists and address it next spring/summer if it continues to be an issue and/or if concerned users attend meeting to discuss options.

ERSA Grant Subcommittee

Plaque at 2026 bridge: Authorize purchase of stainless-steel plaque. Funds would come from Semprebon Fund. 4"x10" on top of railing. Janette shared draft image with group, received positive feedback.

- Motion by Greg R: Approve purchase of plaque and sign as designed, funded by Semprebon Funds, (approx. cost for fabrication, design, labor up to \$250). Second, by Ryan H. Vote: All in favor.

Community Event: Committee discussed hosting a low-key event to introduce the public to the new trail.

Discussion:

- Janette: CP members have limited availability. Asked who was free on 10/3; Ryan is available.
- Amanda: Suggested tying the event to Halloween (Sat 10/31), possibly a costume walk.
- Greg: Saturday mornings are busy with kids' sports, which could reduce turnout. Suggested considering a Sunday.
- Susan: Has limited availability in October and can't take this on. Thought a Halloween theme would suit the space (crows, wolves, owls) and suggested cider.
- Janette: Suggested moving the Halloween idea to next year, possibly as a lantern walk, and asked whether lanterns raise insurance concerns. Proposed revisiting these ideas in the spring, when there is more lead time. Also suggested involving kids through a school art project.
- Ryan: Suggested planning by next September for a spooky-themed walk.
- Jim: Will be out of town on 10/31.
- Amanda: The Barre beer garden on 10/3 starts at 3:00, so an event from 1:00 to 2:00 could work.

Event Plan: Saturday, 10/3, starting at 1:00 or 1:30 (exact time not confirmed)

- Ryan will lead a kids' hike.
- Janette will lead a hike.
- Danielle may lead a hike; Jim will check with her.
- Amanda and Chris are available. Susan is likely available but cannot handle social media.
- Chris suggested stationing someone at the trail entrance for late arrivals.
- Promotion: invitation, press release, and the Barre Rec calendar (barrecity.org/recreation). Ryan will coordinate the calendar listing with Michelle Labarge-Burke.

Motion by Ryan H: CP will host three hikes on October 3. Chris R. seconded. All in favor; motion carried.

Property Maintenance Updates

- **Owl Trail:** Heavily overgrown with invasives. Susan and Chris selected a site for the 10/24 invasives workshop.
- **Property signs:** Chris made repeated attempts to contact the Fords about removing signs attached to trees but did not receive a response. She will proceed with removal.
- **Directional arrows:** Three remain. Proposed locations are the far end of the Owl Trail and the CP Loop near Killer Hill, pointing right to keep clockwise walkers off the Perrin property. A third location is still to be determined.
- **Boxelder/Norway maple removal:** The City will assist once its current work is complete. Chris will follow up in October.
- **Action Items:**
 - Chris: remove signs; follow up with the City in October
 - Committee: identify a third arrow location

Invasives Workshop: 10/24 (9:00 am?), rain date 10/25

- **Format:** Start at the kiosk with examples and removal techniques, then visit Owl Trail (or another site) to see invasives in the field.
- **Handout:** Susan is drafting a two-sided handout covering three invasive species.

- **Promotion:** Susan will handle social media, the Barre Rec calendar, and FPF.
- **Staffing:** Chris will co-facilitate. Ryan and Amanda will likely attend.
- **Tools:** Chris has a weed remover. Chris and Jim have loppers, and only a few pairs are needed for cut-and-cover practice.

Stream Crossing on the Wolf Tree Trail: The Apex Trailworks proposal was deferred to the next meeting because Zac has not responded, but discussion was had.

- Greg: He and Dave inspected the stones and suggested the work can be done by hand with a bar and wood blocks, with no machine or contractor needed.
- Chris: Zac acknowledged the crossing could be made more groomer-friendly and has ideas for doing this. Zac is busy wrapping up summer projects, so hasn't had a chance to follow-up.
- Janette: Wants to compare alternatives and asked Greg for a written proposal to weigh against Zac's.
- Ryan: Asked about the timeline and whether an RFP is needed.
- Amanda: The next scheduled CP meeting is 11/19. A special meeting can be warned with 24 hours' notice if a quorum is available.
- Jim: The area is officially mapped as a Class 2 wetland, will need to consult the State wetlands program before any work can be performed.

Motion Greg R: The Snobees will submit a proposal to adjust the two water bars approaching the stream crossing, for committee review. Chris R. seconded. All in favor; motion carried.

VT Urban and Community Forestry Program Grant: Opportunity to receive tree(s).

- Chris will work with Ellen Sivret, committee can suggest what trees we want (species/size/number). They provide planting/staking. Could be seed trees for native trees and help reduce invasives. Proposal needed by December, can discuss at next meeting?
- Amanda – the new Barre City tree warden can be looped in to assist.

Amanda – new City manager update:

- City Council has hired a new city manager for a 1-year contract. Patrick Cushing from Killington where he was former town manager.

Updates and Discussions:

Invasive Species Awareness Sub-Committee: none

Social Media: none

Snobees: none

Adjourn at 7:08 – Greg motion to adjourn. Ryan seconded.

Meeting Minutes Submitted by Jim Deshler

2026 Meeting Dates:

November 19, 2026

Dates of Interest:

Guided Trail Walk – October 3, 2026

Invasive Workshop – October 24, 2026 (Rain date: October 25th)