

Minutes June 1, 2026 Buffalo Mountain Steering Committee Meeting

Steering Committee Members

James Kelley
Brendan Buckley
Julie Sullivan
Leif Goldberg
Lucian Avery
Paul Cillo
Renaud Demers

Potential Members

Marie
Rachel Kane

Advisors/Non-voting members

Hannah Redmon
Jack Travelstead
David Upson

6:05 pm David Upson opened the meeting and asked for nominations for Chair

Marie nominated Paul for Chair, Brendan seconded. Paul suggested we delay electing a chair until next meeting for a larger quorum.

David Upson explained open meeting law. A quorum of members cannot meet without the meeting being warned. Minutes need to be taken and posted.

Marie explained that she is not yet appointed. David explained she could submit a letter of interest before noon June 2nd to be appointed at the next Selectboard meeting.

David shared that the Secretary would take minutes and send them to the town manager's office to be posted on the website.

6:12 pm Introductions.

Rachel Kane—CC member of public, involved in process so far, not Steering Committee member but might apply.

James Kelley—lived in Hardwick for three years, loves hiking and sees the Town Forest as a way to increase what we have in Hardwick.

Leif Goldberg—community member, interested in the process and would like to learn what it takes to do something of this scale. Sees Buffalo Mountain as having a lot of potential for the town. Looking forward to being a sounding board for ideas. Has kids and works with kids, believes kids need to get outside.

Lucien Avery—spent time over the years up on Buffalo Mountain hiking, walking, hunting, sledding.

Joe Nuddell—Conservation commission, involved with the project, spends time hiking on Buffalo Mtn

Julie Sullivan—Forest advocate. Loves to hike and bike. Sees Buffalo Mountain as a great gift for the town. Interested in thinking about accessibility and activities for all ages.

Marie Lapre Grabon—former NRLT Trustee. Believes in land conservation and recreation access. Thinks Buffalo Mountain is a very special mountain that represents Hardwick in a way. Not Steering Committee member but plans to apply.

Renaud Demers—Interested in seeing Buffalo Mountain stay open for all purposes and uses as it has for the past six decades.

Paul Cillo—NRLT Board Member. Involved with project from beginning. No particular idea in mind for future of the mountain; very interested in community input.

Hannah Redmon—Trust for Public Land project manager (not Steering Committee member). Here to support Steering Committee and manage transaction nuts and bolts.

Jack Travelstead—NRLT Board Member (not Steering Committee member). Thanks everyone for the time they took to volunteer. Explains NRLT will be the partner working to ensure the conservation values of the property are upheld throughout the future years and keep the town apprised of the conditions of the mountain.

Brendan Buckley—lived in East Hardwick 40 years and has played in the woods since he was a child. Agreed with Marie that Buffalo Mountain represents Hardwick.

6:21 pm David shares that one of the first tasks in his time as Town Manager was working with Wiz Dow to name Buffalo Mountain officially.

Hannah, Paul, and Jack discuss history of project and timeline of upcoming tasks.

Timeline	To Date (June 1, 2026)
2010s-2025	Local interest in additional community forest land on Buffalo Mountain
Winter 2025	Davis property on Buffalo Mountain goes on the market
June 2025	Landowner outreach
June 2025	Conservation Commission expresses support for new Town Forest
July 2025	Selectboard agrees to accept ownership of property for Town Forest
Summer 2025	Initial landowner agreement
Fall 2025	Appraisal, title work, and ecological analysis are contracted
Fall 2025	Funding applications to VHCB and TNC submitted
January 2026	Option Agreement with landowner
March 3, 2026	Town Meeting vote to allocate \$25,000 to Buffalo Mountain Town Forest
Winter/Spring 2026	Funding awards: VHCB (\$465,000), TNC (\$100,000), Fieldstone (\$10,000)
Spring 2026	Establish Steering Committee
May 19, 2026	Special Town Meeting Reconsideration Vote on Funding for Buffalo Mountain

Projected Timing	Event
Winter— Fall 2026	Individual and Foundation Funding Campaign
Spring— Fall 2026	Steering Committee meets; Community input about uses of the property; draft management plan
Spring— Fall 2026	Survey, Forest Management Plan, Environmental Site Assessment, draft Baseline Report and Easement Agreement
Fall 2026	Finalize Town Management Plan
Late 2026	Acquire property and begin implementing management activities

6:57 pm Jack explains Steering Committee duties and shares copy of community survey. Duties include collecting public input, consulting experts, and drafting the management plan.

7:00 pm Brendan asked about the timeline for public input. Jack said the Wolcott community survey was out for a couple of months.

James suggested tabling at the farmers' market. Brendan suggested the library and post office. Leif raised that only a subset of people may respond to the survey.

David shared that the Town of Hardwick has a good survey response rate and an established system to get the word out through email and text about surveys. Marie asked who is in charge of the online survey. David said the online responses are auto compiled and the Steering Committee would be responsible for interpreting them.

David shared that the Town staff can create a Google Drive for file sharing and a Google form for the survey.

There was a discussion about the potential for swimming holes. The Lamoille River was identified as the only possible location on Buffalo Mountain for swimming.

7:12 pm Julie asked if there could be a hiking linkage between Wolcott Community Forest and Buffalo Mountain. David shared there are back roads that could provide bike routes in addition to the LVRT.

7:15 pm David shared that Wright Farm Road was recently upgraded by VASA through an RTP grant.

Lucien suggested making a timeline of upcoming tasks at the next meeting.

7:20 pm Hannah described the potential for an Ecological Protection Zone over the Northern Hardwood Talus Woodland areas, which would make the primary goal in those cliff areas ecological management.

Rachel asked about the legality of camping. David said camping brings more management problems. Reno felt the private lodging options would bring more revenue into town than camping. Hannah said the conservation easement allows camping, so the management plan would need to address it.

James shared that there is a demand for camping on private land now. Marie asked about the VT Huts hostel. David said the process is underway with a Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment going on now.

Joe recommended consulting with police, fire, and other emergency services during planning. Jack shared that Wolcott hosted an emergency training on their Community Forest for regional professional teams.

Hannah and David reminded the group that the management plan is updated every decade or so and activities can change, so the first management plan does not have to allow for every use that might happen in the future.

James raised the Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District as a possible expert group to consult.

7:38 pm Discussion of timing of meetings. Twice a month on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 6:00 pm. David will find a space for the meeting,

7:42 pm Paul said the community survey seems like it should be the focus of the next meeting.

7:51 pm Hannah reviewed the budget for the acquisition and the funding already secured.

8:10 pm Adjourned.