

BMPOA Monthly Meeting Minutes:

Minutes recorded by: Sarah Vernier

Board Members Present: Greg Young, Mike Veasey, Jonathan Morrison, Carl Herz, Jim Cook, Jim Critcher, Sarah Vernier

Members Present: Bev Pond, Ben Hutchison, Jackie Veasey, Walter Mabe, John Crawford, Ken Rutherford, Cindy Musick

Called to Order: 6:01 PM

General Notes: August's last month meeting minutes (canceled due to no quorum) were not approved at this meeting. Rappahannock came to speak about the spraying being done on the mountain to control overgrowth.

Item: Rappahannock, here to discuss spraying on the mountain.

Discussion: Cindy Musick - director of REC, introduces herself to the board. She proceeds to give her background. John Crawford introduces himself, he is the Manager of Safety Operations and Support Functions. Ken Rutherford introduces himself, head of Engineering and operations.

Cindy gives an overview of their work and educates the board about vegetation management. They try to stay on a 5 year cycle, this includes trimming trees based on species composition (invasive vs noninvasive species), as well as the amount of rainfall given within a year, which greatly affects growth. Over the past few years, there has been tremendous growth due to rainfall. More growth means more trimming to be done. The second part of the work is cutting down dead and hazardous trees, and lastly, integrative vegetation management - trimming back low vegetation and returning the following year with herbicide. She mentions that they do not spray wherever, they specifically spray areas that may grow into power lines.

Jim Cook interjects with a comment, mentioning that Wild Cherry was sprayed everywhere, not just bushes that grow into power lines. Cindy replies, explaining the primary goal is to keep it (the underbrush, overgrowth) down. She says that if a power line goes down and needs to be repaired, for safety and to enable the workers to get the problem quicker, they spray a four-foot section around the pole line. She also explained that all of the spraying by the guard rails is VDOT responsibility, not REC. Carl agrees with Jim's concerns. Says that the past years have not been as bad as this year throughout the neighborhood.

Jim Cook brings up the Ash trees that were chopped and left that increased our fireload on the mountain overall. He asks why they leave the fallen trees and let them lay but say they want to clean things up at the same time, leaving the large trees but getting rid of small bushes.

Cindy explains that when they cut down the Ash trees, they are then the responsibility of the property owner to take care of. They have to take down the Ash trees methodically due to the fragile nature of the bored wood and are left on site.

Greg says that, as a customer, we are pleased they are doing investment work. However, we would like to coordinate with them dealing with Ash trees, since we will keep having this same issue, and not all are dying in the same year. He explains the neighborhood was founded by an individual that believed everything needs to blend into the woods, and where the covenants are based on a mountain community, which we would like to keep that way. He says seeing the wineberries, milkweed, trees, bushes, etc. and then having huge brown patches around the area hurts the community standards and makes it unattractive as a property owner and for potential buyers on the mountain. Greg mentions we want to do everything we can to maintain the lushness of the mountain, and would opt-out as an association to the spraying of the community, but that's not feasible.

Carl volunteers to be the point of contact for REC. He suggests pursuing a partnership, relying on mechanical means rather than chemical means. Otherwise, the directors are unanimous to the desire to preclude the use of herbicides in the association-owned property. Cindy says REC deals with individual property owners, and requests to have a map of the area, that would make it ideal for them so that the property owner can opt-out of herbicide. Cindy mentions that they will give out signs that indicate it's not to be sprayed - NHA (no herbicide application). The board agrees and will provide maps for them.

Cindy goes on to say that the work they do is precise, and they try not to place herbicide on milkweed or any other type of pollinating types of plants. She mentions how REC prides themselves on this, and how they serve Shenandoah National Park in this aspect as well. Ken speaks about what type of herbicide they use, how it is a three-way mix, and virtually safe after it has dried. Jonathan brings up the concern about the deer eating from the wineberries right after they have been sprayed with herbicide, and wonders if this will harm the deer or other wildlife that eat from the plants right after they have been sprayed. Cindy says they have to eat a ton of them for them to die from the herbicide. Jackie asks for clarification on whether it truly is safe for kids, animals, pets, etc. Cindy assures REC would not be using chemicals that were even thought to be dangerous.

Mike asks about the fire danger after the brush is sprayed and dies, and becomes very dry. Cindy says that the fire danger is pretty minimal as a whole.

Carl asks that when all is said and done and we pursue these agreements and understands, if there could be a scheduling change that might prevent the visual blight of the dead bushes and shrubs. Also inquires if there is a way or time we could do it that does not create any type of visual disturbance. Ken responds, saying that if they spray later in the season, the impact it has on keeping the brush down is less, since the plants are already in the process of going dormant.

Greg mentions whatever they can do to coordinate the next five-year cycle to reduce the impact of the visual disturbance would be ideal. He also suggests giving us a heads-up when they're going to be coming, six months in advance being ideal, so that someone can remember to opt out of the spraying of herbicide on their property if they want to. Greg also puts an emphasis on spraying as little as possible in our associations, and if it requires the action on our property owners, then we will let them know their options and how to opt-out if needed. The board will reach out to our community to discuss their options regarding spraying herbicide on their property. Mike mentions consulting requests to opt-out, rather than each individual homeowner to opt-out on their own. Cindy will look into this to see if it is a possibility.

Mike asks when the NHA (no herbicide application) will expire. Cindy says that it will remain in effect for as long as the same property owner owns the property.

The board thanked REC for coming out to discuss and educate us on how to proceed forward with future herbicide applications.

Action:

Other Business: Walter "Walt" Mabe (County Board Chairman), who joined us in this meeting, was informed about the issues regarding the tower on Blue Mountain as well as the 467 Rocky Spring property issue. Explains that the county is aware of the tower, but no further action has been taken, and the board is wondering what is going on. Walt will speak with the county for further information.

Other meeting items (Financials, Recreation Report, Roads Report, Etc. were not addressed at this meeting due to time constraints, and will be addressed at the October meeting)

Adjourned: 7:26 PM