

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of May 8, 2023

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Kimberly Caldwell, Melody Currier, Lucas Herring, and Lydia Petty. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Emily Lewis (DuBois & King), Andrew Padilla (Director, NU Shaw Outdoor Center), Colin Bright, and Jason Endres. Committee member Colin O'Neil was absent.

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Public Participation (Scheduled):

- a. Emily Lewis, Dubois and King.** Please see Wayfinding discussion below.

- III. Approval of Minutes: April 10, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Petty, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

IV. Discussion

- a. Review of Wayfinding Map.** Ms. Lewis said she implemented a number of the changes requested at the last meeting (04/10/23). The different trail routes now have different colors and the map extends from Northfield Falls to Vermont Route 64. She did ask about a number of trails indicated as dots/dashes on previous maps. Committee member Petty believes most of these are unofficial trails that would not be included on the finalized map. Mr. Bright thinks the extent of the map is good. Ms. Lewis said the finalized maps would include additional captions and other written information. Mr. Bright said the dotted trail located in the Town Forest has been approved and should be included in the finalized map. The dotted/dashed trails outside the Town Forest have not been approved. Ms. Lewis asked about showing a connection from the Turkey Hill trailhead to the road itself. Mr. Bright said this route probably should be a dotted/dashed line as some private property will be crossed. Committee member Petty said it would be aspirational at this time to include a trail to the summit of Irish Hill since permission from the abutting property owners has not yet been received. There is another trail in the area that would have to be removed from the map for now pending property owner permission. Ms. Lewis said it would be possible to retain this map as a hidden layer that can be restored should permission be provided. Committee member Petty and Mr. Bright then further clarified which dotted/dashed trails should be removed for now and which could be retained on the map. There then was a discussion of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) trails in the area. Ms. Lewis reviewed a VAST trail map for Northfield and found it did correspond well to the current draft trail map. Committee member Barrett said some VAST trails went through Norwich University (NU) property. There should be some reach out to VAST about their wintertime only trails and whether they should be included on this trail map. Ms. Lewis said if these seasonal trails are included, there should be some indication on the maps to differentiate them from the year-round trails. Mr. Padilla will look into the list of existing trails on NU property in regard to exact locations, designations, etc. Ms. Lewis is more interested in locking down GIS locations at this time and returning to the question of trail names at a later time. She would also like a list of specific points of interest (and their locations) to be included on the map. Committee member Petty suggested including the "Beaver Pond." Committee member Barrett noted the Maple Junction near the summit of Paine Mountain. There also are the Spruce Junction and the Butternut Junction that are lower on the mountain. Committee member Petty said there are some trail intersections that are currently unnamed. She felt Cheney Farm definitely should be indicated on the trail map as that is a popular destination. Mr. Bright said there were a couple of slate quarries that should be on the map as well as the Hawk Watch located at the southern border of the Town Forest. There also are the locations popularly known as the "Ski Anchor" and "Fern Alley."

Ms. Lewis was grateful for this initial list. More can be added as the project progresses. As for the colored lines indicating the various trails, she felt there should be different colors for Town Forest trails, NU trails, and VAST trails. Committee member Petty noted on existing NU trail maps, the trails themselves have different colors and some are known by their map color, i.e., the "Red Trail." As he is new to his position, Mr. Padilla will research this further and report back to the committee members. Mr. Bright thought it possible to have all NU trails the same color but include wording with their popular names. Committee member Petty said there was a previous suggestion that the Town Forest and NY property would be shaded differently on the map. Mr. Lewis said that was the plan and the difference between the two will be obvious. She will make these changes and bring back the revised map at a future meeting. Ms. Lewis then showed a larger scale map that showed where the Town Forest and other recreational areas were located in the Northfield community. Committee member Herring felt the borderline with Berlin should be more prominent. Ms. Lewis said she could add labels for other parcels, such as Dustin's Pasture, on this larger scale map if that is the preference.

- b. Wayfinding Sign Types, Signage Information, etc.** Ms. Lewis said the new signage to be installed as part of this project fell into five (5) categories: 1. Trailhead Kiosks, 2. Welcome Kiosk/Sign, 3. Vehicular/Pedestrian Oriented Signs, 4. Directional Signage/Smaller Maps within the Trail Network, and 5. Town Forest Signs at Rt 12/Rt 64 intersection and in Northfield Falls. She then showed photographs that provided example of each category. Some sign designs were more elaborate than others and Ms. Lewis asked for some feedback. It was suggested that the trail signs should include distances to trail intersections, points of interest, etc. Ms. Lewis said DuBois & King (D&K) is compiling a table that includes the locations of the different types of signs, the information to be included on each, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro said the kiosks located within the trail system would include much different information than those located in the downtown area, etc. Ms. Lewis said the kiosks located near trailheads would be paired with a smaller one showing where parking was available and directing people to the trail entrance where the larger kiosk would be located. Mr. Endres felt the signs should include the local branding, such as the community logo he developed for the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN). That would provide these signs with a look unique to Northfield. Ms. Lewis has already received copies of these graphics and they definitely would be incorporated on the new signage. Mr. Bright asked what specific decisions are needed at this time to allow D&K to move forward on the new signage. Ms. Lewis said she and D&K have some guidance regarding the aforementioned sign categories but would like to know how the vehicular/pedestrian signs should appear, i.e., size, wording, images, etc. Committee member Caldwell believes these signs should be fairly simple since they will be largely viewed by car drivers. Ms. Lewis said these signs could be as simple as having directional arrows, the wording "Town Forest," and perhaps a generic hiker icon. The signs could include municipal branding, distance indication, etc. Mr. Bright said these signs should be minimalistic as they are just pointing to trailheads where the informational kiosks are located. Committee Chair Zuaro said the directional sign to be located at the bottom of Slate Avenue probably will be the only one utilized by both pedestrians and drivers. The others will mainly be for the benefit of drivers looking for dedicated parking areas, etc. Ms. Lewis then showed on the map the locations where the paired signs would be installed, i.e., the Shaw Outdoor Center, Byam Road/Cheney Farm, etc. Mr. Bright felt the signage should try to direct potential trail users to the Shaw Outdoor Center since that is the preferred location for Town Forest parking. Ms. Lewis then asked the committee members to forward any additional suggestions about maps and signage to her and/or Committee Chair Zuaro so that they can be incorporated in the updated maps and designs to be presented at a future meeting.

It was suggested that the kiosk to be installed on Depot Square should be installed at the northeast corner of the Common. It would be angled towards the Common interior. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if municipal employees would be able to install this sign or would this have to be outsourced. Manager Schulz said the Highway employees probably would be able to do it but that would depend on its size and weight. Ms. Lewis said it would be possible to have a smaller directional sign in the area pointing to the kiosk. Mr. Bright thought it might be good to have some iconography on the back of the kiosk that would inform drivers of its purpose. Ms. Lewis believes she now has sufficient guidance regarding the maps and signs. She will present updated sketches at the first meeting in June (06/12/23). Committee Chair Zuaro said the committee members will meet in two (2) weeks to finalize their preferred map and sign configurations. She then thanked Ms. Lewis for the valuable information provided tonight.

- c. **Information Sharing with Community.** Committee Chair Zuaro felt a good number of Northfield residents are unaware of this committee's existence and what it is trying to accomplish. This includes the planned recreation equipment sharing library to be located at the Brown Public Library (BPL). She felt this should be addressed with Front Porch Forum postings and perhaps an article in the local newspaper. Committee member Herring noted a storage rack had to be installed at the BPL before the equipment can be distributed. Committee Chair Zuaro felt information about the sharing library should be publicized not long before it is operational. Committee member Herring thought a presentation at a Select Board meeting was another possibility. Mr. Bright thought a series of periodic updates before the opening could also be helpful. Manager Schulz thought Front Porch Forum and the local Facebook sites would be good locales to distribute this info.

V. Updates

- a. **Surveyor to Research Town Access.** There had been a previous discussion about hiring a surveyor to look into public access points for the Town Forest. Committee Chair Zuaro asked for an update on this. Manager Schulz said he has found it difficult to find an available surveyor but will redouble his efforts on this. He will check with Rob Townsend (American Consulting Engineers & Surveyors) from Williamstown as he has worked before on various Northfield projects. Committee Chair Zuaro said it would be important to have this information before the new trail access signage locations are finalized. Manager Schulz said there also would be research for possible easements at the Town Forest access points at Forest Drive and Kingston Road. Committee member Barrett said we need to know if there are existing rights-of-way at these locations.
- b. **View Clearing and Invasive Species & Vegetation Removal.** Committee member Barrett said the contractor for this project (Fogarty Forestry) wanted to return for some follow-up work next week but Committee member Barrett asked them to wait until he has had a chance to walk the site first. We probably now are looking at the end of May for this. Manager Schulz said there should be some public notification before this project starts up again. There would be no impact on public safety but people who use the Town Forest would like to know what's going on. Committee Chair Zuaro said she will work on this with Committee member Barrett.

VI. Public Participation (Unscheduled). There was none.

VII. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Barrett, seconded by Committee member Herring, to adjourn. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of May 22, 2023.