

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of November 27, 2023

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Colin Bright, Kim Caldwell (absent), Melody Currier, Jason Endres, Lucas Herring, Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty. Also present was Mary Nadon Scott.

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

- II. Public Participation (Scheduled):** None.

- III. Approval of Minutes: November 13, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

IV. Updates

- a. Select Board Meeting Presentation (11/28/23).** Committee Chair Zuaro said tomorrow night she and consultant Emily Lewis (DuBois & King) will provide the Select Board members with an overview of this committee's activities in recent months. The focus will be on the Wayfinding Masterplan and the nearly finalized maps and signage designs. There also will be information provided about plans to expand the Town Forest access parking at the Shaw Outdoor Center and about the recreational equipment lending library now situated at the Brown Public Library (BPL). Committee member Barrett thought it might be good to provide the Select Board members with a timeline for the completion of the remaining projects. Committee Chair Zuaro noted that the current grant agreement stipulates that all the grant funds need to be expended by the end of December 2024. That would mean the new signage and kiosk installation would occur next summer. Committee Chair Zuaro noted that holding this presentation would fulfill the VOREC grant agreement requirement for a second public meeting as the grant implementation process progresses.
- b. Status of Norwich University (NU) FEMA Request.** Committee member Padilla, who serves as Director of the NU Shaw Outdoor Center, has received quotes for repairing the July 2023 trail damage that occurred on NU property. There also is a quote for \$38,000 to repair the skills and pump track located near the Shaw Outdoor Center. Committee member Padilla also is considering applying for additional VOREC grant funds in order to install a new two (2) mile trail that would lead to the summit of Paine Mountain. He would like to discuss this possibility with the Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC) at their next meeting. Committee member Padilla also would like to get an estimate to restore the Lybrand Trail to its pre-flooding condition. He also is looking into possibly installing a disk golf course near the Shaw Outdoor Center using non-FEMA funding. Committee member Padilla believes the FEMA process is to restore the damaged areas and then seek FEMA reimbursement for the work done. He is unsure whether NU administrators would like to put significant money into these restoration projects before. He added the cost of fixing the flood damage on NU property on Paine Mountain would be much more than was spent restoring the NU rugby field. As for expanding the Shaw Outdoor Center parking area, the timing of that project would depend on whether new permits would be required or if the current ones could be merely amended. If everything can be resolved this winter, the new parking areas will be built next spring. Committee Chair Zuaro thought that would be an encouraging development. Committee member Padilla will check on the status of the permitting process.
- c. Final Draft of Maps and Wayfinding Plan.** The committee members viewed the shared computer screen to view the latest versions of the trails map, the townwide map, and the wayfinding plan map. There had been some updates that had incorporated some of the changes suggested at the last committee meeting (11/13/23). In addition, Committee member Padilla walked a few of the smaller trails to confirm their accurate depiction on the maps. There are some older, unmarked trails that might still exist and he will try to walk them in the spring when trail conditions and accessibility have improved. Committee member Padilla believes the trail system maps are as accurate as they can be at this time.

Some of the committee members still have some minor concerns but there were not considered significant enough to delay the finalization of the maps. If real concerns are found in future, the digital versions of the trail maps could be revised in future. It was a similar situation with the townwide map. There were some concerns with some features but these were not considered important enough to delay the project. Committee Chair Zuaro thought the townwide map looked very good given all the time and discussion that went into producing the current version. This is the map that will be physically posted in the downtown area on new signage, kiosks, etc. The wayfinding plan map was also accepted as is. One remaining question is the schedule for purchasing and installing the new signage. That will depend on the project budget (see below).

V. Discussion

- a. Budget.** Committee Chair Zuaro has provided a spreadsheet that shows how much of the VOREC grant funds have been expended or allocated to date and for which projects. She noted that some project budgets, such as for outdoor recreation equipment purchases, still have funds remaining. It is very likely that the Wayfinding Masterplan budget will be fully spent so there might need to be some discussion with the state grant administrators and Town Manager Jeff Schulz about reallocating some budget funds from one project to another. Committee member Petty thought that might be a good idea given the higher than anticipated costs for signage purchases and installation.
- b. Quotes from Signage Companies.** Committee Chair Zuaro said two (2) quotes have been received to date. One is from Wood & Wood Signs, which provided a detailed quote in the \$80,000 to \$90,000 range. The other was from Flywheel Industrial Arts, which wasn't broken down into categories like the other but did provide a rough estimate between \$60,000 and \$65,000. Committee Chair Zuaro expects additional quotes to arrive soon and would like to postpone any detailed discussion until they have been received. Depending on the final costs of this project, the signage purchases and installations may have to be phased in over time.
- c. New VOREC Grant – Yes or No.** Committee Chair Zuaro said an additional round of VOREC grant funding has opened up and it might be useful to apply in order to funds new projects and/or make up shortfalls in any current project budgets. The application deadline is December 15, 2023 so the decision whether or not to apply needs to be made soon. Committee Chair Zuaro noted that Economic Development Director Tom Davis has indicated that he would be willing to assist the committee members with drafting the application. Committee member Padilla said there are some new projects that he would like to explore. This might involve a separate application on behalf of the university. He will look further into the grant application process later this week. Committee Chair Zuaro said there was a separate buildings grant that NU might be interested in exploring. Committee member Padilla will look into this as well. Committee Chair Zuaro will report on her own efforts at the next committee meeting (12/11/23), which is a few days before the application deadline.

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

VII. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Bright, to adjourn. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular meeting.