

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of July 25, 2022

- I. Roll Call.** Present were Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative Committee (VOREC) Grant Implementation Chair Deborah Zuaro, committee members Russ Barrett, Kimberly Caldwell, Melody Currier, Lucas Herring, Colin O'Neil, Nancy Peck, Lydia Petty (6:22 p.m.), and Jeff Schulz. Also present was Tim Swartz. Committee member Erin Viera was absent.

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

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: July 11, 2022.** Motion by Committee member Barrett, seconded by Committee member Herring, to approve the minutes. There was a request to remove the word "pesticides" from the discussion regarding invasive species removal. There was no objection. **Motion to approve amended minutes passed 8-0-0.**

- IV. Discussion**

- a. RFP for Wayfinding Masterplan.** Committee Chair Zuaro said Committee member (and Town Manager) Schulz has revised this RFP as requested at the previous meeting. The revised document was emailed to the Committee members for review tonight. Committee Chair Zuaro confirmed she spoke to local graphic designer Jason Endres after the last meeting about his willingness to be part of this project. Mr. Endres has agreed to serve in the capacity of "Design Director" as he would like to be sure existing municipal design guidelines regarding informational and/or directional signs, etc. are followed. Mr. Endres therefore would like the RFP wording to be revised to stipulate the Design Engineer will be included in the project progress meetings held with this committee. Committee member O'Neil agrees with this change. In addition, Mr. Endres believes "Strategy Designs" should be included in the deliverables provided by the hired consultant. Committee member O'Neil thinks it is Mr. Endres' own strategy to use a color-coded system to identify specific trails along with their difficulty levels. Committee Chair Zuaro felt it might be useful to state in the RFP that Northfield already has a logo (designed by Mr. Endres) that will be used on any new signage. This will inform bidders that they will not be expected to design a new one. Committee member Herring asked if the municipality had the authorization to use this logo. Committee member Schulz said Mr. Endres designed this logo at the behest of the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) and the Select Board has no objections to it being used for community projects. In the section "Proposal Selection," Committee Chair Zuaro would like it stated the VOREC Grant Implementation Committee would review all submitted proposals (to make its own recommendation) before they are provided to the Select Board members for their approval. Committee member O'Neil said this made sense.

Committee Chair Zuaro asked if any of the other committee members had any suggestions. Committee member Herring noted under the section "Deliverables" there is a reference to certain mapping software programs (i.e. Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign, etc.). He wanted to be sure the municipality had the licenses in place to use these computer programs. Committee member O'Neil, who serves as Manager of Northfield University's Shaw Outdoor Center, said NU would be making use of the consultant's mapping work since much of the trail system is located on NU property. He said NU has licenses for these programs and convert the files to any format the municipality now uses. Committee Chair Zuaro said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) also would have access to this software and so would Mr. Endres. The municipality certainly could purchase licenses to any computer programs should it prove necessary.

In the section "Evaluation Criteria," Committee member Herring felt it might be good to develop a numerical scale (0-100 points) to be used to rank submitted proposals. He felt having hard numbers in developing a bid award recommendation would make it easier to explain to the Select Board members (and the general public) why one bidder was preferred over others. This would be especially helpful if the recommended company was not the low bidder.

Committee member Petty arrived at this time.

Committee Chair Zuaro noted four criteria are specified in the RFP: Quality of Proposal; Technical & Specialized Knowledge; Professional Qualifications, Knowledge, and demonstrated related Experience; and Cost. Committee member O'Neil feels a fifth category should be added: Consultant Location. He felt it was preferable to hire a consultant that was more local in order to keep funds within the Central Vermont region, perhaps establish a relationship for possible future projects, reduce the carbon footprint of consultants commuting to Northfield, etc. After some discussion (and some slight revision), Committee Chair Zuaro suggested the following percentages for each category: Quality of Proposal 40%; Technical & Specialized Knowledge 15%; Professional Qualifications... 25%; Cost 10%; and Consultant Location 10%. After additional discussion regarding this scale, Committee Chair Zuaro suggested removing the percentages and specify that the first three criteria are major factors and the remaining two would be minor ones. Committee member Petty would like it understood that cost considerations should be considered more important than consultant location. Committee member O'Neil still feels it might be useful to retain the fixed percentage scale in order to justify any recommendation this committee makes. In her experience, Committee member Caldwell has found having rigid numerical scales can cause more problems than they solve. It usually is better to start with a general discussion of the submitted proposals based on the initial impressions of the committee members. Further discussion can lead to a ranking of proposals from least to most favorable. It is possible some proposals would be eliminated right away due to much higher costs, lack of qualifications, etc. After additional discussion, it was the consensus of the committee members that the five criteria would be specified in the RFP without reference to fixed percentages. Should it happen that several qualified bidders provide submissions with reasonable costs, at that point an evaluation procedure could be developed that might include weighted percentages.

- b. Apex Trailworks Update.** Committee member Schulz said there was good news. Apex Trailworks would be able to start work on the trail restoration later this week. He and Committee member Petty walked the site with an Apex Trailworks representative and discussed the necessity of temporarily closing this part of the trail system to the public. Committee member Schulz has put a notice on Front Porch Forum notifying the public of the trail closure. At the last meeting, it was noted there is a locked gate by the trail entrance. If the padlock's key cannot be found, Committee member Schulz it will be removed with bolt cutters and a new one (with available keys) installed. The trail work should take a couple weeks and Committee member Petty thought it might be possible to reopen the trail each late afternoon when Apex Trailworks completes its work for the day. Committee member O'Neil felt there might be liability issues should someone be injured in the work zone. He felt it would be more acceptable if the work area was closed down and made safe at the end of the week so that the trail could be used on the weekends. After additional discussion, it was the consensus of the committee members to have this trail reopened on weekends only if the contractor could guarantee no safety risks to the public.

- c. **Select Board Presentation: Invasives Removal.** Committee member Barrett said he would like to address the Select Board members regarding this upcoming project at their regular meeting of August 9, 2022. It would not be a formal presentation but rather a brief overview of the need for the invasives removal, the removal process and potential financial costs, etc. Committee member Barrett afterwards will work with Manager Schulz on the project RFP that would be discussed at this committee's meeting of August 22, 2022. Committee member Barrett also has looked into possible locations (Kingston Road?) where trucks could gain access to the target areas. Committee Chair Zuaro thanked Committee member Barrett for all his work on this project.
 - d. **Revised Timeline for Implementation.** Committee member Schulz reported the state has extended its deadline for expending these grant funds into 2024. Committee Chair Zuaro felt it best to postpone further discussion of revising the committee's written timeline until another meeting. Board member Petty thought exact dates on the timeline were less important than prioritizing items that needed to be completed first before other projects could even be started.
 - e. **Other Business.** Committee member O'Neil has heard from some residents that they don't feel especially comfortable using the trail system as much of it traverses NU property. He felt it might be a good idea to hold some kind of Open House at the bottom of Paine Mountain in order to let people know these facilities are for everyone's use. This could become a regular event throughout the year since the trail system is designed for four seasons of recreation. This also could include providing awareness of the rules developed for shared usage of the trail system. Committee member Petty noted an organized hike was held earlier this year and it included some first-time visitors to the Town Forest. Some residents had been interested in taking part but couldn't attend due to other commitments, etc. It might be very useful to hold these cost-free events at various times of the year with some dedicated to hiking, biking, snowshoeing, etc. Some could be designated as "family" events with lower difficulty levels. Committee member Petty felt this would be a good way to get the public involved in Town Forest matters. Committee member O'Neil noted NU used to hold annual winter carnivals. Perhaps a smaller scale event could be held at that time of year in the Town Forest that could involve residents, NU students, community visitors, etc. Committee member Petty suggested that the possibility of developing a schedule of future Town Forest events. This could be discussed in depth at a future meeting. Committee member Caldwell thought it might be useful to have a Town Forest informational booth on the Common during Farmers Markets, over the Labor Day Festivities Weekend, etc. Committee member O'Neil thought this would be helpful in educating the public about trail system access locations, nearby parking spaces, etc. Committee member Herring thought surveys could be distributed at that time to discover what residents would like in terms of organized events, etc. Committee member O'Neil believes when university classes resume next month, several NU students might be willing to provide volunteer work through the Center for Civic Engagement.
- V. Public Participation (Unscheduled).** There was none.
- VI. Adjournment.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member O'Neil, to adjourn. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of August 8, 2022.