

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**VOREC Grant Implementation Committee**  
**Minutes of April 10, 2023**

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

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**II. Public Participation (Scheduled):**

- a. Emily Lewis, Dubois and King: Wayfinding Master Plan Project.** Committee Chair Zuaro noted Ms. Lewis is present tonight to discuss the recent site visit and provide an update on the project to date (see below).

- III. Approval of Minutes: March 27, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Herring, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

**IV. Discussion**

- a. Review of Site Visit Notes & Wayfinding Map.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the site visit was held on Thursday, March 30, 2023 and the weather wasn't that pleasant. As indicated in the notes, Committee Chair Zuaro attended along with Committee member Caldwell, Ms. Lewis, her colleague Dan Mallach, and Colin Bright. The locations visited were the Town Common; the Brown Public Library; and Town Forest access sites on Slate Avenue, Byam Hill, the Green Mountain Family Practice, the Shaw Outdoor Center, and Barrow/Kingston Roads. Committee Chair Zuaro said the notes provided of the site visit were very helpful and asked if there were any comments or questions. There were none. Committee Chair Zuaro said the site visit resulted in a preliminary map that showed yellow points indicating the locations that were viewed. Ms. Lewis said she wanted to document these points of interest. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if the committee members had any additional locations that should be highlighted. Mr. Bright thought the map could indicate Northfield Falls. Mr. Lewis said the new trail signage could indicate the direction and distance of Northfield Falls as well as other community points of interest. These would be reevaluated as the project continues but she wanted to get started on a few of them first. Committee member Petty thought the top of Cheney Field might be a good addition as this is a popular hiking destination that can be accessed by several different entry points. Ms. Lewis added that there was some discussion of including Turkey Hill as a Town Forest access point. Committee Chair Zuaro believes there was some discussion of siting a kiosk there. There followed a discussion of the Turkey Hill trail access point as well as the ones in the Barrows and Kingston Roads area and whether these access points require going through private property. Committee member Petty would like it clarified on the maps whether certain trails are appropriate for public use. There also should be signage installed that indicates when trails cross or abut private property. Committee member O'Neil felt using Kingston Road as an access point should be discouraged as the parking there is insufficient. Ms. Lewis said the Town of Braintree's trail system does have a number of them that either traverse private property or come very close. Signage was installed along the trail system that made this clear and asked that trail users be respectful of the private property owners as public access permission might be withdrawn. There were some trails that had to be closed down due to such concerns.

Committee member Petty thought it important that the maps indicate where public parking is permitted. Mr. Bright noted that there is a gate at the end of Forest Road (off Turkey Hill Road) and asked if this gate belonged to the Town or the property owners. Manager Schulz thought it belonged to the Town but will check. Committee member Petty believes the property owners installed the gate but would open it when requested for trail access. Committee member Barrett said state maps indicate Forest Road as a Class 4 road. He is unsure who put up the gate but noted the Class 4 road goes about halfway to the Town Forest boundary line. Committee Chair Zuaro said more research on this will need to be done before new signage is installed. Ms. Lewis had located the Braintree maps and said they indicate when trails by private lands and these areas were designated as quiet zones. The maps also include a request to show respect to adjacent property owners. That also could be done with the new Northfield trail maps as well as indications of where public parking is and is not allowed. Committee member Barrett has been reviewing the property records of the Turkey Hill area and especially Forest Road to determine if there were designated rights-of-way that provided access to the Town Forest. He does believe there is a public right-of-way from the end of Kingston Road to the summit of Paine Mountain. Committee member Barrett felt it might be necessary to hire a professional surveyor to confirm this. Mr. Bright felt it also might be good to determine proper access for EMS responses to any Town Forest emergencies. Committee member Petty felt the Forest Road access point would be preferable for emergency access.

Committee Chair Zuaro believes it might become necessary to establish designated public parking areas on Turkey Hill should this become a popular trail access point. Committee member Petty feels the municipality should encourage having the Norwich University (NU) Shaw Outdoor Center become the primary access point for the Town Forest. In that light, she asked if public parking should be encouraged at the Shaw Outdoor Center or at the nearby Green Mountain Family Practice, which has more spaces available. Committee member O'Neil feels that should be a conversation with NU officials. Committee member Petty believes there should be new signage installed at Green Mountain Family Practice indicating that some of its parking space can be used for access to the nearby trail systems. Committee member O'Neil noted that NU will be installing new sidewalk leading up to the Shaw Outdoor Center and that should direct people towards it.

Ms. Lewis then distributed some 11" x 17" hardcopies of some of the preliminary maps that would be installed on the new trail kiosks, etc. She also shared digital versions on the large meeting screen. Ms. Lewis said the maps themselves would come in various sizes since the kiosks purchased would not be all the same. The principal map would include the Town Forest access points from Turkey Hill to Kingston Road, etc. Some of the sample maps had the north compass point at the top but others had north on the left side. Others focused on the Town Forest but others included much of the surrounding community. Ms. Lewis said these maps were the "first pass" and she is looking for any feedback on how they could be improved. Some discussion followed regarding which local points of interest and how much detail should be incorporated into the maps. One possibility is to include map insets to indicate trail access points and public parking areas. Another question was whether the new kiosks would have just one large map installed or if there would be room to include a smaller, more detailed trail map. It was noted that there are several options for kiosk size and configuration.

Committee member Barrett would like there to be hardcopy maps available at the kiosks that hikers could take with them. There appeared to be consensus that the map orientation should be with the eastern compass point at the top in order to better illustrate the Town Forest boundaries and access points. There was a suggestion that the map coverage area be shifted slightly southward so that the Dog River Park could be included. There was overall satisfaction with the sample maps provided with only minor "tweaks" required.

In addition, the scale of the map might need to be slightly reduced to include such features as Dog River Park, Memorial Park, the Falls Park, etc. Committee member O’Neil would like it to include the intersection of Vermont Routes 12 and 64. Ms. Lewis would like all these tweaks clarified before she gets much further into the project. Committee member Petty would like the trail maps to have sufficient detail so hikers don’t get lost along the way. Committee member O’Neil said when the trail maps are made available online, hikers can download them ahead of time and thus be able to zoom in on their electronic devices. Committee member Petty said she would like a large map of the community for welcoming people to Northfield and smaller, more detailed maps of the trail system for hikers, etc. Ms. Lewis said she would adjust the master map to incorporate the features requested tonight and come back to the committee members for additional feedback.

Ms. Lewis also would like some verification that the trail routes are depicted correctly. Ms. Lewis currently is basing them on maps she received from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). Mr. Bright noted that there are some trails that have been mapped but not yet approved because they encroach on sensitive areas, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro said this matter will be discussed further at the next committee meeting in two (2) weeks (04/24/23). Ms. Lewis will provide additional updates at that time. She then asked if there were any additional map issues at this time. Committee member Barrett would like to see NU property provided with a distinct shading on the map as now is done with the Town Forest. Ms. Lewis said that will be done at a later time once it has been determined what specific features will be included on the master map. Committee member Barrett also would like the kiosk map at the top of Cheney Field to include trail details. The kiosk map on the Common would be more of a general locator map of the community. Committee Chair Zuaro then thanked Ms. Lewis for attending tonight and providing much valuable information about this ongoing project.

- b. Equipment Purchases for Lending.** Committee member Herring said he has done further research into equipment purchases and would like to make the purchases mostly for items that will be used by hikers, birdwatchers, etc. from late spring through autumn. This includes binoculars, trekking poles, headlamps, etc. He will get the municipality’s tax-exemption information from Manager Schulz and buy the items. Committee member Petty would like to get some public feedback from some of the initial purchases before additional buying of the same items is done. Also, some of the equipment budget needs to be reserved in order to buy cold weather equipment for next winter.
- c. Invasive Vegetation Removal and View Clearing.** Given the length of tonight’s meeting, this matter will be discussed fully at the next one.

**V. Public Participation (Unscheduled).** There was none.

**VI. Adjournment.** Motion by Committee member O’Neil, seconded by Committee member Herring, to adjourn. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of May 8, 2023.