

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of January 8, 2024

- 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 (absent), Jason Endres, Lucas Herring, Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty. Also present were Emily Lewis (Dubois & King) and Kait Campbell (Dubois & King).

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. Public Participation (Scheduled)

- a. Emily Lewis, Dubois & King.** Please see below.

- III. Approval of Minutes: December 11, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Padilla, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-2, with Committee members Bright and Petty abstaining.**

IV. Updates

- a. VOREC Next Round Award (after March 1, 2024).** Committee Chair Zuaro confirmed that the grant application was submitted before last month's deadline. The request is for \$70,000 and there will not be any feedback regarding the application until after March 1, 2024. There were 127 applications for VOREC grant funds this time so there will be some competition. Committee member Petty remembers there were only about 60 applicants when Northfield submitted its grant application two (2) years ago.

V. Discussion

- a. Criteria for Evaluating Bids for Signage/Comparison Chart.** Committee member Petty thought it might be difficult to select a vendor to manufacture the new signage when the committee members don't know if the additional \$70,000 in grant funds will be awarded to Northfield. Ms. Lewis said the project bidders were informed that this project might need to be phased in over the next couple of years if there are insufficient funds to complete the project this year. Committee member Petty said if we knew that additional funds would not be forthcoming, she would be more inclined to accept the more economical bid from Timberhomes. This would allow for some new signage to be installed this year. If we knew some or all of the grant funds would be coming this summer, Committee member Petty would be more inclined to favor another proposal that might produce a higher quality product. She would like to base her decisions regarding new signage based on what was possible with the funding available. Committee member Herring suggested purchasing a lesser amount of signage based on the current funding with the possibility of ordering more should more grant funds become available. Committee member Bright noted that reducing the amount of signage ordered might result in a higher per unit price as we would no longer be purchasing in volume.

Ms. Lewis noted that Timberhomes had warned that it would be increasing its pricing later this year. If the sign order is broken into phases, the initial order would be at the prices now quoted but subsequent purchases would be more expensive. Committee member Herring said some price inflation does seem inevitable these days. Ms. Lewis warned that if the signage orders are not made until after the new grant funds arrive, it is possible that no new signage will be installed this year due to the time it takes to produce the signage. Committee Chair Zuaro said if the grant funds were awarded, the monies would not be released until June 2024.

Ms. Lewis wanted it clarified that she has no vested interest regarding which signage vendor is ultimately chosen. Committee member Bright said if we received word sometime in March that additional VOREC grant funds would be awarded to Northfield, it might be possible to make a down payment to one of the signage providers to start producing the new signage. This would be with the understanding that the full project invoice would be paid once the grant funds are released. If this scenario is acceptable to the signage vendor, it probably would be possible to have the new signage installed this summer. Committee member Bright believes reducing the scope of the signage project would significantly undermine its impact on the community. Committee member Herring asked when the bid quotes already submitted would expire. Committee Chair Zuaro believes the quotes should be good for ninety (90) days. Given the total cost of this project, Committee member Bright believes the signage vendors would be understanding if the final payment was delayed until the grant funds were released by the state. Committee member Padilla would be happy to delay choosing a vendor (or vendors) for this project until after it can be determined whether or not Northfield will receive additional VOREC grant funds. Committee member Herring agrees with this. Should the decision be made earlier, the signage order would have to be greatly reduced and the committee members would have to decide which high visibility locations should be prioritized. Committee Chair Zuaro doesn't oppose this delay but feels in the meantime a rubric should be developed to help determine which vendor proposals should be favored based on cost and quality of work. Ms. Lewis believes it might be useful for committee members to tour the vendors' workshops to get a better idea of their capabilities. She also will contact the vendors to let them know to directly contact Committee Chair Zuaro in future as Ms. Lewis' role in this project will be ending soon. Committee Chair Zuaro concluded that it probably would be best to wait for the VOREC grant results before proceeding further with the bid process.

- b. Wayfinding Mapping update.** Ms. Campbell believes that all the new mapping information for the www.trailfinder.net website has been forwarded to them. She also has been working with the website www.openstreetmap.org. The process of updating online Northfield trail maps seems to be progressing well. Ms. Campbell will provide a one-page guide showing how to contact these websites in order to have information regarding Northfield trails updated in future.

Committee member Padilla also will confirm with the local branch of Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) about which of their Northfield trails are still active, etc. We would like the new Paine Mountain trail maps to be as accurate as possible and not include any abandoned trails. Committee Chair Zuaro would like to be informed when the updated local trail maps are up and running on these websites so she can inform the public on Front Porch Forum. Ms. Campbell thought that should be before the end of this month.

Committee member Herring left the meeting at this time.

- c. Phasing of Wayfinding Signage.** Ms. Lewis then showed a spreadsheet that had a listing of the new signage, where they would be located, and whether they would be installed as part of Phase 1, or Phase 2 of this project. It also indicated the color scheme for trailside signs, which correlated to the map color associated with that particular trail. There are also suggestions for future sign purchases that could be part of a third project phase. The specific locations where these supplemental signs would be located could be determined at a later time. Possible installation sites could include the walking trail system near the public schools or the covered bridges located in Northfield Falls. Ms. Lewis will forward this spreadsheet to Committee Chair Zuaro. She will also be forwarding the other project work files to the committee members in the near future. The format for these files can be discussed at an upcoming meeting. Committee Chair Zuaro said she is truly looking forward to seeing the mapping and signage projects basically completed this year.

VI. Other Business. Committee Chair Zuaro then tried to set up a future meeting date when the remaining mapping and signage issues can be discussed. After some discussion, a special meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 29, 2024. Ms. Lewis said there might not be an update regarding the online mapping websites by then but other related matters could be discussed. Committee Chair Zuaro noted that she will be unavailable for the first regular meeting in February (02/12/24). That meeting will be cancelled.

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

VIII. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Bright, to adjourn. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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