

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of November 13, 2023

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Colin Bright, Kim Caldwell, Melody Currier, Jason Endres, Lucas Herring, Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty. Also present were Emily Lewis and Kait Campbell from DuBois & King.

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. Public Participation (Scheduled):

- a. Emily Lewis and Kate Campbell, DuBois & King.** Please see the discussion below.

- III. Approval of Minutes: October 30, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Bright, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

IV. Discussion

- a. Review Updated Maps.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the committee members will be providing Ms. Lewis and Ms. Campbell tonight with some minor feedback regarding remaining issues with the draft maps. The committee met a couple of weeks ago (10/30/23) and did provide considerable examples of items that needed to be addressed before the maps were finalized. This included a minor trail connection near the Hawk Watch. In addition, Committee member Padilla had walked the trail system recently and could not find one connector trail. Committee members Petty and Bright used this trail in recent months and will make sure it is correctly depicted on the trail system maps. Ms. Lewis did receive and implement those comments into the current draft maps. She also used GPS information to make corrections to some of the smaller trails. There is one trail loop near the Clark Junction that may not exist at all. Committee member Padilla will check this out later this week. Ms. Lewis added that the connector trail between the end of Forest Road and the Town Forest trail system has been added to the map as a dotted line. GPS data for this connector trail will be added as well. Committee member Petty thought there should be confirmation first that permission has been provided if this trail goes through private property. Committee Chair Zuaro said that Town Manager Jeff Schulz has hired a surveyor to determine if there is an existing municipal right-of-way for this connector trail. We don't know when the surveyor will submit his report on this. Committee member Barrett does have the GPS data for the end of Forest Road and the trailhead. He will provide this to Ms. Lewis. Committee member Bright then noted that there is a lean-to at the Hawk Watch that should be indicated on the trail map. Committee member Petty said there also was confusion regarding an ancient road on Norwich University (NU) property that appears to be adjacent to a Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) trail. Committee member Padilla will view the site to see if the ancient road still exists as a separate trail or has become part of the VAST trail system. Committee member Petty suggested contacting VAST directly to see if the ancient road is used by them. If not, it should be removed from the trail system map, especially if it crosses over onto private properties. If the trail is left on, perhaps some signage should be installed to show where private properties begin. As this ancient road is mostly on NU property, she suggested that Committee member Padilla, who manages NU Shaw Outdoor Center, should have last call on this.

Committee member Bright noted that the VAST trail system often goes through private property and they must make annual requests to the landowners for access permission. Ms. Lewis noted these VAST trails are only used during the winter months so it might be confusing to put them on the trail maps. Ms. Campbell noted that VAST snowmobilers probably use their own maps for navigation so perhaps their trail system should be deemphasized on the Northfield trail maps. Committee member Petty noted that some people use these trails for running or hiking at other times of the year so they probably should be indicated on the maps. Committee member Padilla said that VAST does post signage along its trail system that includes their phone number should snowmobilers require additional information. Committee member Petty felt the maps should emphasize the trails emanating from the NU Shaw Center as that is the location where trail users are encouraged to park their vehicles. Ms. Lewis said there are some overlapping trails on the map so we need to decide how the GPS links for them will be set up for the digital maps. Committee member Petty would like the trailhead near Byam Road to be better illustrated on the map. She also would like it shown that the Ridgeline Trail connects to a parallel trail at some point. Committee member Bright would like the parking symbols for the Shaw Outdoor Center parking area more emphasized on the maps. In addition, Committee member Petty would like the Red Trail shown to start at the Shaw Outdoor Center and not on Paine Mountain Drive. Committee member Barrett then provided the map location for the “Stone Foundation” point of interest included in the map legend. It is located near Beaver Pond. Committee member Padilla suggested dropping the “Pony Express” trail from the map as it is too difficult (i.e., too steep) for most people to hike. Committee member Herring asked if the Anchor should be indicated by a star on the map or if it should have the same symbol used as other points of interest. Committee member Bright it is indicated by a star on the maps since it is considered of the trail’s mountain summits. Committee Chair Zuaro said the parking indication for the Brown Public Library (BPL) should state that public parking there has limited hours. Perhaps this would require a larger legend box for the map’s depiction of the downtown area. Committee member Petty would like the Cheney Farm labelled on the map as this is a population hiking location. In addition, there should be some indication that there is limited parking at the trailhead located at the end of Barrow Road. Committee member Petty noted that on the public park map inserts, there are indications that there are horseshoe pits at Memorial Park and Northfield Falls Park but the park maps do not have corresponding icons for their location. Committee member Herring said there definitely is a horseshoe pit at Northfield Falls Park but he is unsure about Memorial Park. This should be confirmed one way or another. Committee member Padilla added that NU will soon be installing a disc golf course near the Shaw Outdoor Center. It might be a good idea to include an icon for this on the map. Committee member Herring felt the green stars incorporated into the public park map pointers were a bit confusing. Map users might think the stars indicate where the parks are actually located rather than being a highlighting feature. Committee member Endres agreed that the stars are confusing and should be deleted. Ms. Lewis said the pointer label could have a stroke added rather than the confusing stars. There also is a confusing map line near the Shaw Outdoor Center that will be removed.

- b. Review Wayfinding Signage and Quotes.** Regarding the trail signage, Ms. Lewis said they took Committee member Endres’ schematics and local branding to a sign manufacturer in the area (Wood on Wood Sign Systems, Waitsfield VT) to determine proper sign dimensions, preliminary cost estimates, etc. The supplier is willing to provide sample reproductions that can be viewed at the selected signage locations.

Ms. Lewis said perhaps we should be looking for an additional signage format that would be easier for vehicle drivers to view on downtown streets. There also might be some project savings by only having sign sleeves installed on the signs to be located in the downtown area, where they would be viewed more frequently. Based on impressions gained from the appearance of the sample signs, there might be some consideration of changing sign dimensions in some locations, etc. In addition, if there are concerns about possible budget overruns, some of the signage purchases could be delayed to a later time. It was noted that \$16,000 in VOREC grant funds were budgeted for signage but the cost of the larger kiosks has been estimated at about \$9,000 apiece. Less expensive options might be found and it is possible other vendors could provide lower cost estimates. Committee member Bright believes the directional blades on the trailside signs should be placed at a proper height so as to not become a hazard for mountain bikers. Ms. Lewis said this height could be readjusted for safety reasons. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if any installation quotes had been provided. Ms. Lewis said she was under the impression that municipal employees would be doing most of the sign installation themselves. Ms. Lewis then showed on the computer screen the website for Wood on Wood Sign Systems, which had photos of other signage products that they had provided for other Vermont communities, including Brattleboro, Rutland, St. Albans, and Waterbury. Committee Chair Zuaro said we could also check out their signage shop in person. Ms. Lewis said if other sign providers also submit proposals, the committee members should have some good choices. Committee member Herring asked if new signage is installed along the VAST trail system, would VAST be willing to split the costs. Committee member Padilla said VAST puts up cheap plastic signs each winter to mark their trail system.

Committee Chair Zuaro said the Select Board members will have a regular meeting on Tuesday, November 28, 2023, so that might be a good time to provide an update on this committee's progress as well as provide examples of the finalized trail and wayfinding maps. Since we are still reaching out to suppliers, perhaps there should be more of a general project overview that doesn't include specific cost estimates for completing the work. Provide that the Select Board members are pleased with the progress and map samples, a project packet could be sent the state grant administrators so show them what has been done with the grant funds so far and the progress made on still uncompleted projects. Committee member Petty believes the Select Board members would like to see the draft maps and signage options before additional grant funds are committed.

Ms. Lewis asked if the committee members would like DuBois & King's assistance in helping to choose a signage vendor. Committee member Petty asked if that service was included in the current consultant's agreement. Ms. Lewis said it was not but there is some room in the project budget to include this additional service. Committee member Petty believes the committee members should discuss this possibility further before making a decision. Committee Chair Zuaro had assumed that she and Manager Schulz would work together on this. Committee member Bright thought it might be good to establish a solid working relationship with possible vendors as full implementation of all this committee's plans might need to be phased in over a three (3) to five (5) year period. Putting a structure in place could simplify the process in coming years. Committee member Herring would like to discuss a timeline for this and other VOREC grant projects at the next meeting. It was noted that there had been considerable delay in receiving the signed grant agreement from the State so that might have extended a number of grant deadlines.

Ms. Lewis said once she received the remaining information from Committee member Padilla, she would finalize the maps and start coordinating with vendors. She also will send the finalized maps to www.trailfinder.info and other recreational websites that host local trail system maps. If possible, Ms. Lewis will attend the next VOREC meeting (11/27/23) remotely.

- c. **New VOREC Grant Submission.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the submission deadline for another round of VOREC grant applications is coming soon (12/15/23). She asked if a grant application should be sent before the deadline to obtain funds that could be used to repair any trail damage that occurred during the July 2023 flooding storm. This will be discussed further at the next committee meeting. Committee member Padilla will be meeting next week with the engineer who will devise the plans to fix NU trail storm damage with FEMA reimbursement funds.

V. Updates

- a. **Permit Need for Shaw Outdoor Center Parking Expansion.** Committee Chair Zuaro has learned that an updated NU stormwater permit will be needed for this project (and other unrelated NU projects). NU will also probably need to amend their current Act 250 permit for this parking area. As a result, this parking expansion will take a bit longer than originally thought. Committee member Petty said we are probably looking at the next construction season.

VI. Other Business

- a. **Outdoor Recreation Equipment Lending Library.** Committee member Petty noted that the storage rack for the recreation equipment has been built and installed by Joe Zuaro at the BPL. Everybody should check it out when they get a chance. Committee Chair Zuaro said her husband devoted his time and labor for this but will be submitting an invoice for the materials.
- b. **Town Forest Trail Counters.** Committee member Herring reported that the data from the trail counters has been downloaded. He asked if the committee members would like to see the raw data or what for him to create a graphical representation. Committee member Bright said graphical representation would be more useful when additional data has been collected over the coming months. Committee member Herring noted the raw data from NU property does reflect when the NU Cadets do their morning run up Paine Mountain.

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

VIII. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Herring, to adjourn. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of November 27, 2023.