

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of June 26, 2023

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Kimberly Caldwell, Melody Currier, Lucas Herring, Jason Endres, Andrew Padilla, Colin Bright and Lydia Petty. Also present were Tom Davis (Economic Development Director), Mary Nadon Scott, Gerard LaVarnway.

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

II. Public Participation (Scheduled):

- 1. Tom Davis, Economic Development Director.** Please see the discussion below.

- III. Approval of Minutes: June 12, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

IV. Discussion

- a. Grant Opportunities.** Economic Development Director Tom Davis said there are a considerable number of grant opportunities for outdoor recreation projects. He is willing to work with the committee members on any grant applications and also will bring to their attention any particular ones that have a good chance of success. Earlier this year Mr. Davis submitted two (2) separate grant applications through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). One was on behalf of the municipality and the other for the local schools. Neither application was successful and he felt the VOREC grant award the municipality received last year may have lessened its chances for this one. The application on behalf of the schools had to be rushed in order to meet the submission deadline and therefore was not as complete as he would have liked. Mr. Davis then discussed some current grant opportunities, some of which had firm submission deadlines that are annual, semi-annual, or quarterly while others will accept grant applications throughout the year. Even the first grant application to one source is not successful, Mr. Davis felt forming relationships with the grant awarders might provide long-term benefits. He will keep in contact with Committee Chair Zuaro should any new opportunities arise. Mr. Davis added that although larger grants do get a lot of publicity, sometimes smaller grants are very useful in helping complete ongoing projects when the initial funding proves insufficient. In addition, there are grant programs that provide stipends to youth volunteers assisting with outdoor recreation projects, such as trail restoration, etc. Committee member Petty thought such a program would be helpful to the upcoming removal of knotweed along the Dog River, which will require several hours of volunteer labor. In any case, Mr. Davis will keep the committee members informed of any new grant opportunities in order to gauge their interest.
- b. Business Sponsorship on Print Maps.** The committee members have been discussing the possibility of contacting Northfield merchants and other local businesses to see if they would like to help sponsor the printing of the new maps coming from the Wayfinding project. This would both help defray printing costs and also inform visitors to the community of local restaurants, stores, etc. Mr. Davis thought that was a good idea but felt having "push ads" on the digital maps would be even more effective in getting visitors to patronize local businesses. In addition, the fact that local businesses would donate funds to this local project would demonstrate to residents their community spirit.

- c. **Economic Impact of VOREC Grant Projects.** Mr. Davis felt the many and varied outdoor recreation opportunities in Northfield make this community very marketable to potential visitors. In addition, circulating surveys on what kind of outdoor recreation amenities Northfield residents would like would have the dual benefit of providing feedback on new projects as well as informing the survey taker of what currently exists. Committee Chair Zuaro thanked Mr. Davis for the information provided tonight and she will keep in contact with him regarding grant opportunities, etc.
- d. **Review of Latest Map Draft.** The committee members reviewed the latest draft maps of the trail system. Emily Lewis from DuBois & King, who has been contracted to help with the Wayfinding Master Plan project, will be present at the next meeting (07/10/23) to discuss the most recent map upgrades based on committee feedback. The committee members discussed the various options for indicating the different trails on the map, such as solid or dotted lines, etc. Mr. Bright would like more contrast between the trails in the Town Forest and those on Norwich University (NU) property. Mr. Endres prefers having solid lines for the trail paths rather than dots or dashes. He felt that made it easier to see where trails converge for short distances. The committee members also reviewed the map legend, which explains the various icons used on the maps. Committee Chair Zuaro will inform Ms. Lewis of the committee members preferences before the next set of draft maps are produced.

V. Updates

- a. **Parking at Shaw Outdoor Center.** As part of the VOREC grant implementation's goal of improving trailhead access for Town Forest users, twelve (12) new parking spaces would be created near the Shaw Outdoor Center. There remain some questions as to whether a new Act 250 permit would be required, etc. Mr. Padilla will meet with Town Manager Jeff Schulz to discuss this project. Mr. Bright thought it possible that the current Act 250 permit for the Shaw Outdoor Center might allow for additional parking spaces to be added without having to file a new permit. This also will be researched.
- b. **Programming.** The discussion of planned group recreational events was tabled until the next meeting.
- c. **Trail Counters.** The counters have been installed in the Town Forest and soon will provide data on the amount of trail usage over specific time periods. Committee member Barrett asked if mountain bikers counted the same as hikers on the counters. Committee member Herring said they did. He did note that since hikers tend to bunch up, it is possible two hikers walking abreast will end up being counted as only one person.

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the committee meeting of July 17, 2023.