

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**VOREC Grant Implementation Committee**  
**Minutes of February 26, 2024**

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Colin Bright (absent), Kim Caldwell, Melody Currier, Jason Endres (absent), Lucas Herring, Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty (absent).

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

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: January 29, 2024.** Motion by Committee member Barrett, seconded by Committee member Padilla, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

**IV. Updates**

- a. Report on Recent Meeting with Town Manager Jeff Schulz.** Committee Chair Zuaro said she and Committee member Petty had a productive meeting with Manager Schulz last week (02/21/24). She has prepared a summary of that meeting that was distributed to the other committee members. Committee Chair Zuaro also has contacted the SE Group about them possibly conducting the economic impact survey that must be completed before the grant can be closed out. She informed them that the committee members should be able to assist with this report by supplying local information, etc. There also was discussion about how the Wayfinding Master Plan electronic documents will be handled. The mapping document will be made available on the municipal website, where there already is a webpage dedicated to the Town Forest. In addition, large hardcopies will be made available for distribution around town at the Shaw Outdoor Center, the Brown Public Library, and other locations. Committee member Herring suggested that some copies could be made available for distribution at the Town Meeting Day Open Session next Monday night (03/04/24). Committee Chair Zuaro thought that was a good idea and will contact Manager Schulz about having some copies printed. In addition, once the maps are made available online on the municipal website and other locations, there will be notices on local social media to inform the public.

Committee Chair Zuaro also said there was some discussion of having Economic Development Director Tom Davis act as the digital trail map steward who would update the interactive online trail maps whenever changes need to be made. In the future, the Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC) members will keep track of whenever changes are needed. The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) also might be able to assist with the process.

Committee Chair Zuaro said the plan to expand the parking at the Shaw Outdoor Center has been put on hold until any remaining Act 250 permitting issues have been resolved. If this delay lasts beyond May 1, 2024, we may need to contact the VOREC grant administration about the best path forward with this particular project. Committee member Padilla will check again with Norwich University (NU) administrators about the status of the NU stormwater permit. He will remind them that this is a time-sensitive project.

Committee Chair Zuaro said she signed into the [www.trailfinder.info](http://www.trailfinder.info) website to check on whether the local trail updates have been added. That has not been done yet. We also should ascertain the process of adding links to Northfield businesses to the local trail maps. As for purchasing the kiosks and new signage, the committee is now waiting to see if the recent VOREC grant application has been successful. We should find out about that in the next couple of weeks and then make plans for full or partial purchases based on the amount of funding available.

## V. Discussion

- a. **Programming.** Committee Chair Zuaro said it might be a good idea to start a listing of upcoming events that will include whatever NU is planning. Committee member Padilla noted that NU now is talking about holding a viewing party for the total solar eclipse that will occur on the afternoon of Monday, April 8, 2024. This will happen at the Shaw Outdoor Center and/or Sabine Field. Committee Chair Zuaro said there also has been talk of having a viewing party at Memorial Park and/or Cheney Field. She thought it might be useful to have maps created that directed non-residents to those locations. Safe viewing glasses will be distributed beforehand and at the viewing parties.

Committee Chair Zuaro was pleased to meet recently with Cara Gauthier and Leslie Striebe from "Welcome Home Northfield) as well as with Jeanne Bright (Community Center Task Force) and Susan Barnard (Northfield-Roxbury Outing Club). There was a discussion about creating programming for outdoor recreational events in the near future. The participants all had different suggestions about what could be done and will be back at the meeting scheduled for Monday, March 25, 2024 with proposals. Ms. Barnard organizes the local walking excursions that take place Tuesday and Thursday mornings, usually starting at the United Church. She said about twenty (20) people attend their events that, depending on the season, involve hiking, snowshoeing, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro said Ms. Barnard and her group are interested in the wildflower hike in the Town Forest with a state botanist that Committee member Barrett had proposed. It has been suggested that the second week in May 2024 would be the best time for the inaugural event. Committee Chair Zuaro said Cara Gauthier and "Welcome Home Northfield" has organized toddler outdoor play groups as well as other activities for young children and their parents. She thought it might be useful to expand the outdoor equipment lending library to include toddler backpacks and other items for young children. It also might be good to bring in outdoor recreation speakers to interact with the children. Leslie Striebe is also a part of this group and she thought it might be useful to include copies of the new trail maps in the information packets they prepare for new community members. Committee member Caldwell thought that would be a good idea. Committee member Padilla thought they could also include the QR code that links to the online interactive maps. Jeanne Bright is a members of the Community Center Task Force and she suggested holding plein air group painting events in the Cheney Field or other outside recreation locations.

Committee member Padilla is involved with the "Let's Go Fishing" program that encourage local youth and their parents to fish in local streams, ponds, etc. He would like to organize a local event as the state will provide all the fishing equipment and the need for fishing licenses is waived for these group fishing events. The appropriate locations for these group events often depends on available parking spaces nearby, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro is going to start organizing a list of future outdoor recreation events. The Northfield-Roxbury Outing Club group excursions will be included in this listing. Committee member Padilla said there might be mountain biking races this summer. He would like to hold them while the NU students are still here but the course might still be too muddy in the late spring. Committee Chair Zuaro asked the committee members to share with her any upcoming events they know about so that the list she is compiling will be as comprehensive as possible.

- b. **Trail Counters.** Committee member Herring would like to know where and when the counters should be reinstalled along the trail system. He could coordinate this with Committee member Bright, who is currently out of town. It was suggested that the reinstallation probably should wait until after NU conducts its Paine Mountain training in mid-March as that would skew the numbers. After some discussion, it was thought best to have them put back in place by Monday, April 1, 2024. Committee Chair Zuaro thought that would be good as the trail use numbers could be a very valuable resource when the economic impact study is drafted.

**VI. Other Business.**

- a. Disc Golf Course Design, etc.** Committee member Padilla noted he has asked the Select Board members for \$7,800 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the professional design of a disc golf course near the Shaw Outdoor Center. He will be attending their meeting tomorrow night to answer any questions, etc. Committee member Padilla added all the needed equipment is already on hand but he would prefer that a professional disc golf course designer be engaged. That way, serious disc golfers will be more likely to visit the finished product. The consultant will design the course but it is possible that volunteers would be able to perform most if not all of the course construction. Committee Chair Zuaro said many local people have commented on the lack of recreational opportunities for younger people in this community so this disc golf course would definitely fill a void.

Committee member Padilla said he has other grant applications in the works including those that would provide funds to repair the flood damage along the trail system due to the big storm last July. He also would like to seek grant funds to make the trail system more accessible to less abled members of the community. The amount of work to be done on the trail system depends on the amount of outside funding that becomes available. Committee member Padilla also would like authorization to purchase additional plastic colored blazes that can be installed along the various trails. There are a number of trails that definitely need additional marking. Committee Chair Zuaro will check with Manager Schulz about authorizing this purchase.

- b. Invasive Species Removal update.** Committee Chair Zuaro asked if another application of herbicide would be needed this spring. Committee member Barrett will check on this. The last application took place late last fall so it might not be necessary. He also will inspect the site to see if anything else needs to be done for vista clearing, etc. at this time. Committee Chair Zuaro is pleased with all the work that has been done in the Town Forest since the Town Forest Stewardship Plan was drafted and approved in 2019.
- c. Next Meeting.** Committee Chair Zuaro would like to hold the next meeting on Monday, March 26, 2024. If we hear about the VOREC grant application results sooner, an earlier meeting could be held as well.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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