

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**VOREC Grant Implementation Committee**  
**Minutes of March 27, 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, and Lydia Petty. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Colin Bright, and Jason Endres. Committee member Colin O'Neil was absent.

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

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: February 13, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Caldwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

- IV. Wayfinding Master Plan Project.** Committee Chair Zuaro said she recently spoke with Emily Lewis from DuBois & King, which is the consulting firm the municipality hired for this project. Not much progress has been made to date since the project contract was only signed a couple weeks ago. There had been some delay as the State of Vermont had not provided Northfield a signed VOREC grant agreement until fairly recently. Ms. Lewis will attend the next committee meeting (04/10/23) at which time she will share the latest version of the master plan map. Committee Chair Zuaro thought it might be good to review a few project-related matters beforehand so the committee members will be fully prepared to meet with her.

- a. Review Schedule from Consultant.** Committee Chair Zuaro has distributed to the committee members the proposed project schedule, which includes public meetings in June 2023 and January 2024. These meetings will provide opportunities for local feedback on how the Wayfinding Master Plan Project is progressing. In addition, the state grant administrators would like periodic progress reports before funds are expended on major purchases, such as kiosks, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro said the project currently is a little behind schedule but we should be able to make up some time in coming weeks. Committee member Petty thought it would be best to extensively advertise the public meetings in order to get more participation. Committee Chair Zuaro said it might be best to have these held during Select Board regular meetings in order to better reach the public. She also thought it might be useful to have additional project information made available online. Committee member Petty said these meetings should focus on providing progress reports on what has been and will be achieved through this project rather than soliciting input on how the maps should appear, etc. Manager Schulz felt it was important to keep the public informed regarding how grant funds are being spent so there won't be any surprises when the project is completed. There can be notices put on Front Porch Forum as the project proceeds in case residents would like to attend future VOREC Committee meetings. Committee member Petty noted recreation was a major topic at the first Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) community forum held last week (03/21/23). Committee Chair Zuaro attended that session and was surprised how uninformed some Northfield residents were regarding the work now being done with the VOREC grant funds. There were requests for some items that have already been achieved or are in process.

- b. Site Visit from Project Consultants.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the DuBois & King consultants will be coming for a site visit this coming Thursday (03/20/23) starting at 9:00 a.m. on the Northfield Common. Committee members Caldwell and O’Neil will meet them there but any additional committee members are welcome to join them. The downtown area will be reviewed first followed by stops at the Brown Public Library, the Shaw Outdoor Center at Norwich University (NU), etc. The site visit will focus on areas that would be good locations for the installation of new signage and/or kiosks. It also might be a good idea at that time to designate the Shaw Outdoor Center as the formal entrance to the trail system as it has available public parking and other amenities. Committee Chair Zuaro said numerous pictures of various locations will be taken during the site visit in order to help determine the best locations for new signage and/or kiosks. Some trail access locations, such as Turkey Hill, probably would be best visited after Mud Season. Committee member Caldwell thought it might be possible to at least show the start of the backroads that allow for trail access. Committee member Petty thought there could be a stop at the Barrows Road/Kingston Road area as the consultants would pass this way on their way back to Randolph. There would be a need to indicate where trail access parking would be available at that location. Colin Bright said this area has such limited public parking that only a few trail visitors could park there at the same time. He thought it might be best to spotlight the Shaw Outdoor Center as the better trail access location. Committee Chair Zuaro said it is unfortunate Committee member O’Neil isn’t here tonight as he has been the committee’s NU liaison. She felt the university’s cooperation with this project is vital.
- c. Additional Feedback for Consultant.** Committee Chair Zuaro said Committee member Petty has created a summary of the last meeting with bullet points on items that should be discussed with the project consultants at the next meeting. She asked if there were any comments regarding these items or if anything should be added. Committee member Caldwell said the list seems fairly exhaustive but she would like it clarified that the trail maps should include the length of certain sections, specific place names, etc. She also would like to see directional arrows installed along the trail system indicating various points of interest. Committee Chair Zuaro thought that would be especially useful for junction points where trails intersect. She also felt it would be useful to discuss how the completed master plan might affect local economic development, whether local sponsorship of the printed maps should be sought, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro felt it might be useful to work with Economic Development Director Tom Davis and members of the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) on this. There would need to be a significant conversation on these matters later this year.
- d. Review Examples of Kiosks.** The project consultants referred the committee members to a website (<https://timberhomesllc.com>) to indicate the various configurations of trail kiosks that are available along with the costs. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if there were any comments on this website. Committee member Barrett thought the model kiosks looked very good. Committee member Herring asked if we were committing ourselves to purchase from Timberhomes Vermont or if these were just examples of what could be purchased. Manager Schulz said quotes would be obtained from several companies.

- V. Trail Counting System Implementation.** As part of the VOREC grant proposal, three (3) trail use counters have been purchased and are ready for installation. It was suggested members of the Town Forest Stewardship Committee could assist with their placement. Mr. Bright had some questions regarding whether the counters needed to be charged first, how long the charge would last, etc. There also were questions regarding who would analyze the data. Committee member Petty felt the resultant information would be helpful in determining which trail systems are most used, how many people actually use the more isolated trails, etc. Committee member Herring reviewed the instructional manual that came with the counters and noted that they first needed to be configured with the starting date and time, etc. The installed batteries last between three (3) and six (6) months so they probably should be checked every three (3) months. The tracking can be done over specific periods of time, such as weekly beginning on Monday morning.
- VI. Recreational Equipment for Library Implementation.** Committee Chair Zuaro spoke to Brown Public Library (BPL) Director Sherri Brickey earlier today to discuss the recreational equipment lending facility there. Committee Chair Zuaro noted that the lateness of the grant agreement precluded some purchases this last winter, including additional snowshoes, and asked if now was the time to start making some purchases. The BPL staff does track when equipment is borrowed and which items are the most popular so perhaps that information can be used for prioritizing purchases. Manager Schulz said now that the grant funds have been provided, there is no reason why the equipment purchases can't go forward. Committee Chair Zuaro said there should be a determination of the exact dimensions of the current equipment storage racks and what additional storage space needs to be installed. Committee member Petty noted the equipment on hand includes hiking poles, snowshoes, backpacks, binoculars, etc. Mr. Bright felt it would be good to better publicize the fact that this equipment lending program is available to Northfield residents. Committee Chair Zuaro doesn't believe this information is on the BPL website. Committee member Petty would prefer higher quality items be purchased in future in the interest of greater durability. She asked if quotes should be obtained for individual items or if there should be bulk purchases. Committee member Barrett suggested contacting major retailers in the area to see if they have past experience with similar equipment lending sites such as schools, libraries, etc. Committee member Herring said he could look into this. It might be best to start with items such as backpacks, hiking poles, lamps, snowshoes, etc. that are either one-size-fits-all or are adjustable. Once we have a better idea of the makeup of borrowers, we can make purchases of adult and child gear of different sizes. Committee Chair Zuaro thanked Committee member Herring for volunteering to get started on this. Manager Schulz asked if we are ready to start making purchases or if the committee members wanted further discussion on this. Committee Chair Zuaro said Committee member Herring is going to do additional research on this and work with Manager Schulz on the actual purchases. There shouldn't be any need to return to the other committee members for further discussion and specific authorization for equipment purchases.
- VII. Public Participation (Unscheduled).** There was none.
- VIII. Other Business.** Committee member Herring would like included on future meeting agendas the municipal website link for previous committee meeting minutes. That could help inform residents of the work the committee members already have done.
- IX. Adjournment.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Caldwell, to adjourn. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of April 10, 2023.