

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of October 30, 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 Gerard LaVarnway and Mary Nadon Scott.

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

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

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

IV. Discussion

- a. Review Maps and Wayfinding Plan.** Committee Chair Zuaro would like the subcommittee members to review the current draft maps in case they have any additional updates to suggest. She has a number of them herself. Emily Lewis from DuBois & King, the consultant on this project, will be attending the next meeting (11/13/23) so if any remaining concerns are provided to her at that time, the maps themselves should be finalized within the next month. Committee Chair Zuaro said she and other committee members then would address the Select Board members regarding this progress at one of their upcoming regular meetings. The committee members then looked at the draft trail system map. Committee Chair Zuaro asked the committee members who use the trail system on a more regular basis if the depiction of the trails seemed accurate. Committee member Padilla, who manages the Northfield University (NU) Shaw Outdoor Center, said the NU trail listed as the "Yellow Trail" is popularly known as the "Southbound Trail." He then asked if the trail known as the "Hawk Watch Trail" was shown accurately. Committee member Bright did not think so and will provide a correction to Ms. Lewis. Committee member Padilla said there is an unused access road on NU property that is depicted as a hiking trail when it actually is part of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) snowmobiling trail. It was agreed that the trail map color will be changed to reflect this. It was noted that there are other access roads that are not indicated as part of the trail system. Committee member Padilla plans to walk on some of the higher elevation trails himself to check the trail map accuracy. He will have a list of trail map colors that Ms. Lewis needs to change. Committee member Padilla then reported that engineers will be coming later this week to evaluate repairs on some of the NU trails that were damaged by the July flooding rainstorm. He will obtain cost estimates in order to file the proper paperwork for FEMA reimbursement. He also has asked some NU geology professors for some assistance with this process. They did indicate some interest but Committee member Padilla is unsure whether they will have the actual time to commit to this. He added that FEMA would like to make sure the trail system is restored to its pre-storm damage condition. Committee Chair Zuaro thanked him for this update.

Committee Chair Zuaro then asked if the committee members had any other suggested changes to the trail system map. Committee member Endres thought the sidebar legends were a little repetitive and confusing. After some discussion, there was consensus to remove the box labelled "Trails and Routes" and include the trail mileage it contained on other map inserts. This also will allow the box labelled "Legends" to be enlarged and expanded. Committee member Petty noted the trail by the Cheney Farm quarry is unnamed on the map. She thought it possible that frequent users of this particular trail have their own name for it. Committee Chair Zuaro thought having a name for this trail would be helpful. Committee member Petty thought that if there is no current name, perhaps the committee members could create their own like, for instance, "Old Quarry Trail." Committee member Herring thought it would be good to highlight the VAST trail system on the map.

Committee member Petty also found a misplaced trail by the Cheney Field. Committee member Padilla thought this was an important connector trail that should be corrected and recolored on the map. Committee member Barrett suggested changing the background color for the Cheney Field so it would be more noticeable on the map. Committee member Currier noted this is another important point of interest along with the Anchor and Summit and thus shown as such on the map. Committee member Endres said these locations were considered as destination sites and thus provided with star symbols as markers. Committee member Barrett would like a similar marker for the stone foundation. Committee member Bright noted a dogleg trail that has a connection to the VAST trail system. Committee member Caldwell saw a couple important access roads that are not labelled on this map but are on the separate town-wide map. She would also like to have the symbols for points of interest made a little larger. Committee member Currier also felt the road names of access roads, such as Turkey Hill Road, Forest Road, etc., should be included on this map. She also felt there should be parking symbols for limited on-street parking locations near trail access points. Committee member Caldwell felt Barrows Road and Byam Road, which also provide access to trailheads, should be labelled as well. Committee member Petty didn't think the map should show possible parking locations where there are limited on-street spaces. There should be emphasis on the parking area near the NU Shaw Outdoor Center when trail users are encouraged to park rather than in residential neighborhoods. Committee member Bright thought this should be indicated on the map with a more prominent parking symbol. Committee member Currier thought the dead end streets near the trail system should not be shown on the map in order to discourage parking on these relatively narrow streets. Committee Chair Zuaro will collate all these suggested map refinements and provide a complete list for the committee members to review at their next meeting. This is to make sure that none of the current or previous suggestions have been excluded.

Turning to the town-wide map, Committee Chair Zuaro said she found the detailed map inserts of Memorial Park, Dog River Park, and Northfield Falls Park difficult to see. Committee member Bright suggested putting all three in a single column and slightly enlarging the maps for easier viewing. Committee member Herring would like to see map labels for Vermont Routes 12 and 64. Committee member Petty said the detailed map insert for downtown Northfield is linked to the larger map with dotted lines to indicate the exact location. She would like the linking lines made less prominent. She also would like it indicated on the map that trail use parking at the Brown Public Library (BPL) is only available when the building is closed. The BPL parking icon on the map states this is "limited parking," unlike the icon for Depot Square parking, which doesn't have this restriction. Committee member Bright felt the parking situation, such as the area where public parking is more encouraged, should be explained better in the map legends. It also was noted that the detailed public park maps were created for a Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) town map a number of years ago and might need to be updated. Committee Chair Zuaro noted two (2) small QR codes on the town-wide map. She asked if it might be better to have one large QR code instead. After some discussion, the consensus was to remove the QR codes from the map for now. The concern is that the website links for the QR codes might become invalid at some point.

Regarding the outdoor recreation equipment available at the BPL, it was noted that library cards are needed to borrow the equipment. These library cards are free to Northfield residents but also available to non-residents for a small charge. Given the limited amount of gear at this time, it was debatable whether this service should be indicated on the town-wide map. Committee Chair Zuaro noted since the BPL is closed on Sundays, its public restrooms and the equipment lending facility would not be available for much of the weekend. On the map's "Visitor Information" insert, Committee Chair Zuaro would like some rewording: she would prefer the phrase "continuous forest area" changed to "contiguous forest area." It was noted that of the 1,700 acres of available forest area, the Town Forest contributes 400 acres and the balance is NU property.

Committee member Petty then asked if the “View from Paine Mountain Summit” insert should be maintained. This insert is based on an illustration in the “Paine Mountain Guidebook” that was written over twenty-five (25) years ago and might no longer be accurate. After some discussion, it was decided to leave this insert off the map and instead encourage people to read the source. The BPL has some copies and a scanned copy could be put online. Committee member Endres revived the QR code question, suggesting that separate QR codes could be put on the town-wide map for information about the BPL equipment lending library and another for on-site trail guidance. There also was a discussion about asking the BPL to host some Town Forest information, including the new maps, on its website. The consensus seemed to be to ask BPL officials to have this done but also to have this information available on the Northfield municipal website. Committee member Bright believes some work still needs to be done with the map’s color usage. He demonstrated that if you shifted the map view to the “color blindness” setting, the lack of contrast resulted in a muddied appearance. Committee member Petty said we should ask Ms. Lewis to look into revising the map’s color scheme to avoid this potential problem. Committee Chair Zuaro will forward this concern along with the other matters discussed tonight to Ms. Lewis. She felt tonight’s discussion had been very productive; the end of this project now is in sight.

V. Updates

- a. Trail Counting Data.** Committee member Herring just received this data so he will be able to discuss it fully at the next meeting.
- b. Shaw Outdoor Center Parking.** Committee Chair Zuaro spoke to Manager Jeff Schulz recently about the remaining uncertainty over whether expansion of the current parking area would require new state and/or local permits or not. Manager Schulz has spoken about this to Ronald Lyon, who was with DuBois & King when the parking lot was first built and worked on this project. Mr. Lyon will check to see if the original Act 250 and other permits were sufficient or whether amendments are needed. This matter should be resolved relatively quickly so the work can begin.
- c. Kingston Road Access.** Committee Chair Zuaro also spoke to Manager Schulz about the committee’s request to grade this road for improved trail access at its termination. Manager Schulz said about two hundred and fifty feet (250’) of the road was recently graded. As this road abuts NU property, Committee member Padilla will review the road tomorrow to determine if new parking spaces can now be added.
- d. FEMA Work at Norwich University.** Committee member Padilla provided this update earlier in the meeting.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of November 13, 2023.