

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of September 18, 2023

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Colin Bright, Melody Currier (6:23 p.m.) Jason Endres, Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty. Also present was Emily Lewis (DuBois & King).

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

II. Public Participation (Scheduled):

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: August 14, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

IV. Updates

- a. Wayfinding Plan.** Ms. Lewis has been working with a supplier (Flywheel Industrial Arts) regarding cost estimates for the new signage, kiosks, etc. There was a question about who would be doing the installation: the Town, the supplier, or someone else. Committee Chair Zuaro said the grant application stated that the Town would provide its local grant share amount through in-kind services and that might include the installation. There is the possibility that local volunteers could also assist with this. Ms. Lewis said the supplier would also like to know if the signage, etc., would be installed directly into the ground or if there would be a concrete footer, etc. This could help determine which materials would be used. Committee member Petty said cost considerations would be a factor in this decision. There also is the need to prevent potential theft so having permanent installation might deter this. Committee member Padilla said the signage along the trail system is rather narrow with a spike at the bottom so installation set in concrete might be good. Ms. Lewis thought having the kiosks and larger signage set in concrete would be best. However, should any of the Town Forest and/or Norwich University trails be relocated in future, it might be best to have movable signs. She added that the signage design provided by Committee member Endres seems to indicate a metal sleeve that could be set into the ground. Committee member Padilla said it was possible to have plastic sleeves that could be melted with a blow torch for sturdier ground installation. Committee member Endres said cost might be an issue as to whether plastic or more expensive metal sleeves are purchased. Committee member Petty thought the nicer looking metal sleeves could be used in more travelled areas. It should be possible to get price quotes for both options. Ms. Lewis said simple wooden stakes could be used at some locations and plastic or metal sleeves at others. She will obtain quotes for all possibilities. Committee member Bright thought the ground hardness at the various installation sites might be another factor.

As for who would perform the installation, Committee Chair Zuaro felt the Town Highway crew should be able to do most of the work. If they are unable to install some of the heavier fixtures, this work would be contracted out. Committee member Bright thought there also might be a liability concern if Town employees installing a heavier item might damage the structure in the process. Committee Chair Zuaro said we probably should get a quote for installing the kiosks, which should be the heaviest items.

Ms. Lewis said another question from the supplier was about the wood finish for the signage, etc. Committee member Endres thought the finish the supplier used for the trailside benches should work well. Committee member Barrett thought we should get separate price estimates based on the wood used, i.e., pressure-treated pine, ash, etc. There are different types of pressure treatment that can limit the chemical hazards to individuals, the environment, etc. Committee member Petty said unless there are serious cost concerns, she would prefer not to use any pressure-treated wood.

Ms. Lewis said she could coordinate directly with Committee member Endres regarding signage dimensions, etc. Committee member Endres will provide this information. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if we need to get price estimates from a second supplier. Committee member Petty said the municipality's purchasing policy probably would require this. We should check with Town Manager Jeff Schulz regarding the bidding process as the anticipated total cost of the project does determine the number of different suppliers to be contacted, whether sealed bids or just verbal quotes are needed, etc. There also are waivers if only one supplier can meet all the project requirements. Committee Chair Zuaro cannot think of anyone other than Flywheel that can perform this type of design work. They have produced some existing fixtures in the Town Forest so there might be some argument for waiving the purchasing policy to maintain some continuity. Committee Chair Zuaro will discuss this with Manager Schulz.

Ms. Lewis then asked about the wayfinding plan locations for new signage along Main Street. She wanted to know if these would be standalone signs or attached to existing street signs. Committee Chair Zuaro said that decision would be based on cost estimates. She would prefer attractive standalone signs. Ms. Lewis will obtain cost estimates for both options. Committee member Petty asked if these directional signs would be scaled for pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Ms. Lewis said the latter (probably).

Committee member Currier arrived at this time.

Ms. Lewis said DuBois & King has hired a new designer who will be working on creating a spreadsheet that will indicate all the project configurations. As for putting the new trail maps online, Ms. Lewis has spoken to Committee member Padilla, who manages the Northfield University (NU) Shaw Outdoor Center, about what is now available on the NU website. Committee member Padilla said NU spent considerable resources in creating an interactive campus map on its website. There have been some suggestions about expanding this map to include the NU trail system. Committee member Padilla thought whether this would be done would be based on the anticipated cost. Ms. Lewis asked if Committee member Padilla has reached out to www.trailforks.com about including the new trail maps on their website. He is planning to do this in the near future. Ms. Lewis has been in contact with the www.trailfinder.info about adding the new trail maps to their website. It appears that the process would be quite simple and she will forward the new trail maps to them when they are finalized. Ms. Lewis asked if we should look for additional websites or just stick with these for the time being. Committee member Padilla thought we should focus on these two until we better understand the process through which they integrate local information on their websites. Committee Chair Zuaro felt we definitely should hold back the new trail maps until they are finalized and perhaps also consider including the NU trail system in the submissions. Committee member Padilla asked if there is reliable cell phone service in the Town Forest in case hikers, etc. want to download the maps on site. Committee member Petty said there usually is reliable AT&T cell service in the Town Forest although this service was unavailable for some time after the July floods.

Ms. Lewis also will look into the potential cost of the municipality hosting these new maps on its website. Committee Chair Zuaro felt the municipality really should have its capability if there are plans to widely publicize the expanding outside recreational activities in Northfield. She added that at their meeting tomorrow night (09/19/23), the Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC) plans to review the draft trail and wayfinding maps and provide some feedback. Committee Chair Zuaro said we certainly are moving in the right direction on this project and making considerable progress. Ms. Lewis said she would not be able to attend the next scheduled committee meeting on October 9, 2023 due to travel plans. She should be able to attend the next one (10/23/23). Committee Chair Zuaro said it will be very nice when this project can finally be "put to bed." She then thanked Ms. Lewis for all her assistance to date.

- b. Parking at NU Shaw Outdoor Center.** Committee Chair Zuaro asked for an update on plans to expand the available parking at the center. Committee member Padilla said he still needs to confirm with Manager Schulz whether this project will require any additional state and/or local permits. Committee Chair Zuaro said we received a second bid for this project from Gillespie Fuels & Propane. It was about \$10,000 more than the one previously received from Apex Trailworks. She believes Manager Schulz was ready to go ahead and award the project to Apex Trailworks, which did excellent restoration work on the Lybrand trail last year.
- Committee Chair Zuaro will need to confirm this with Manager Schulz along with her understanding that no other permits will be required for this project. It would be great if the work could start soon so that it could be completed before winter. Committee member Petty thought it might be good to add some additional lighting to the parking area. Committee member Padilla noted that it won't be necessary to remove any trees or other vegetation in the new parking area. Committee Chair Zuaro said it was good news that this project is going forward. She will update the other committee members regarding her upcoming meeting with Manager Schulz.
- c. Barrows and Kingston Roads Trailhead Access.** Committee Chair Zuaro said she already has spoken to Manager Schulz about the Highway Department improving vehicular access to this trailhead by widening Barrows Road to allow for improved access and additional roadside parking. Committee member Padilla said this also should be done along Kingston Road as NU owns the adjacent properties. Committee member Barrett said someone else drove to the end of Kingston Road yesterday. He did not see them but he did see the tire tracks afterwards. Committee member Padilla felt it would be very beneficial to create a new parking area for two (2) to three (3) vehicles at the Kingston Road trailhead. Committee Chair Zuaro thought having this parking area also would be very useful should the Conservation Commission recommend some additional tree harvesting in the nearby Town Forest. Committee member Barrett agreed this would be a good access location for such work. He added that this access road was pretty good until Tropical Storm Irene and other storms did some damage. Some all-wheel drive jeeps also have torn up the road in recent months. Committee member Padilla thought putting a gate and trailhead signage near the top of the road would be a good next step. He will review a map of the area with Manager Schulz and they could try to identify a good place for the new parking spaces. Committee member Petty thought it also might be good to check with Highway Foremen Trent Tucker to confirm whether his department's vehicles regularly travel to the top of this Class 4 road. Committee member Padilla said it would be necessary to get GPS mapping of this area in order to make sure that the new parking area is located on NU or municipal land rather than on private property. Committee Chair Zuaro said this is on her list of items to discuss with Manager Schulz soon.
- d. Library Gear and Rack.** Committee Chair Zuaro reported that her husband Joseph is building this storage rack for the snowshoes, hiking poles, birdwatching binoculars, etc. that were purchased with VOREC grant funds to be lent out at the Brown Public Library (BPL). He had relocated the equipment to the BPL so he can determine the best rack configuration for proper storage and to fit into the designated location. BPL Director Sherri Brickey has asked that the storage rack be movable with wheels so that it can be put in storage when not in use. Mr. Zuaro will be donating his time and labor but will be reimbursed for the materials. He should have it constructed and the lending program operational in time for winter.

- e. **Invasive Vegetation Removal and View Clearing.** Committee member Barrett said he went to the site last weekend to perform some area cleanup. Some NU student volunteers were supposed to assist but never showed up due to some miscommunication, etc. He and TFSC member Ray Crowder ended up doing the work themselves. Committee member Barrett said the contractor will be coming back at least one more time to complete the project. He added that some of the trees that had been trimmed back for improved vistas have been further reduced by passing deer. Committee Chair Zuaro thanked Committee member Barrett for spearheading this project. She plans to visit the area with her (leashed) dog in the near future. Committee member Barrett noted that this particular grant project came under budget so we might have the contractor come back to do some additional work in other parts of the Town Forest (if needed).

V. DISCUSSION

- a. **“Night on the Common.”** Committee Chair Zuaro said this annual event will be held tomorrow night (09/19/23) starting at 5:30 p.m. in conjunction with this week’s Farmers Market. This committee will have a table in order to display the draft maps and answer any questions about the committee’s various projects. The Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) will have a nearby display table and Committee Chair Zuaro would be grateful if some committee members would be able to assist her in this. Committee member Petty thought having the latest versions of the trail maps, etc. would be very useful in engaging Northfield residents as well as demonstrating what the committee members have done and plan to do with the grant funds. Committee Chair Zuaro said it would be good to get some in-person feedback on the maps. Committee member Currier thought any suggestions that could be incorporated into the current planning could be brought back to the full committee for discussion.
- b. **Storm Damage.** Committee member Padilla thought it might be possible to apply for additional state grant money to fund the restoration of the trails that were damaged by the July flooding rainstorm. Committee Chair Zuaro would like to see a written proposal for this since there will be another round of VOREC grant opportunities in the near future. Committee member Petty said state officials already are aware of the damage done to Northfield’s trail system so there should be some new funding available. Committee Chair Zuaro thought there also might be some flood mitigation state grant funds that might become available. Committee member Barrett said the State of Vermont fully paid for the replacement of a trail bridge in Berlin that was destroyed in the flooding. The new bridge was built to code because snowmobilers will be using it this winter. Committee member Barrett will look into the source of these funds.
- c. **Paine Mountain Trail Race.** Committee member Petty noted that this trail race will be held this Friday afternoon (09/22/23). NU is organizing this event, which is a six kilometer (6k) trail race from the Shaw Outdoor Center up to “the Anchor” and back down again. There also will be shorter kids’ races. They are looking for volunteers to help with signups and assist racers along the course.

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

VII. Adjournment.

Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to adjourn. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of October 9, 2023.