

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of August 14, 2023

- I. Roll Call.** Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Implementation Committee Chair Deborah Zuaro, members Russ Barrett, Colin Bright, Kim Caldwell, Jason Endres, Lucas Herring, Lydia Petty, and Andrew Padilla. Also present was Emily Lewis (DuBois & King).

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

II. Public Participation (Scheduled):

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: July 17, 2023.** Motion by Committee member Barrett, seconded by Committee member Petty, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

IV. Discussion

- a. Maps - Review Updated Drafts and Public Feedback.** Committee member Petty noted that there had been a number of positive reactions when Committee Chair Zuaro and Ms. Lewis presented a project update at a recent Select Board regular meeting (07/25/23). This included favorable comments from Select Board members and members of the public. However, Committee member Petty doesn't remember any specific suggestions for map revisions, etc. She then asked if the trails maps would need to be adjusted due to damage sustained during the July 10, 2023, flooding rainstorm. It was reported that some trails had been damaged by landslides and might not be accessible for some time. Committee Chair Zuaro did reach out to the Central Vermont regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) about possible state grant funds to scope the trail system and perhaps repair any storm damage. Committee member Padilla, who is the Director of Norwich University's Shaw Outdoor Center, said NU definitely will be applying for grant funds to repair its storm damage, especially the Rugby Field on Water Street. Committee member Barrett said it might be possible to slightly relocate some trail system segments to avoid landslide areas. Committee member Petty noted that since the trail maps will be digital, it would be possible to put now damaged trails on hidden layers that could be restored for viewing when the trails are back in service. Ms. Lewis confirmed this was possible. Committee member Petty added that the larger, permanent maps to be displayed in the downtown area would not have much detail of the trail system so probably wouldn't be affected by the new developments. Committee Chair Zuaro has received some separate feedback on the draft maps, such as whether separate wintertime maps could be produced that would show cross-country ski trails, snowshoe trails, etc. This could be a future mapping project. Committee member Barrett had received a similar request for adding a cross-country skiing corridor to the Town Forest map. Such a change probably would require the approval of the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) and/or the Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC). Committee member Padilla said this also could be incorporated in the map of NU Paine Mountain property. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if the trails map should indicate mountain bike trails and/or one-way trails. Ms. Lewis said a one-way trails already is included on the draft map. Committee member Petty thought it might be good if this was better indicated on the map. Committee Chair Zuaro suggested this information also could be included on the accompanying map legend. Committee Chair Zuaro believes all the map feedback has been completely positive and that the committee has considered all possible map alternatives. Ms. Lewis said one suggestion at the Select Board meeting was to indicate challenge levels for the various trails. She will need that information from the committee members to include that in the next draft map. Committee member Padilla said trail difficulty (i.e., beginner, intermediate, and advanced) already is shown on the NU trail system map. This information can also be indicated for Town Forest trails (i.e., the Ridgeline trail, the Lybrand trail, etc.). Committee member Petty noted that some Town Forest trails do have stream crossings that might be difficult for less abled individuals. She suggested that separate trail descriptions could be linked to the trail map. Committee member Petty also noted that none of the existing Town Forest trails are especially difficult to navigate as none require rock climbing, etc.

However, since none of these trails include flatland, most can be considered to be some level of moderate difficulty. There then was a discussion of trail system websites, such as www.trailfinder.info and www.trailforks.com. These website would need to be contacted in order to have updated information on updated Northfield trail conditions, new trail maps, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro asked if there were any remaining issues with the draft trail maps. Committee member Petty believes the committee is fairly close to finalizing them. Ms. Lewis would like to revise the town-wide map by adding additional street names, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro thought it might be good to reach out to the NCC and TFSC members to see if they had any suggestions of their own. Mr. Endres thought it might be good to show the local public parks (i.e., Memorial Park, Northfield Falls Park, and Dog River Park) on the town-wide map. He will get that information to Ms. Lewis for inclusion in the next draft map.

- b. Wayfinding Plan - Review and Determine Next Steps.** Unless the committee members have any significant changes to suggest, Ms. Lewis plans to start contacting manufacturers for quotes for the new kiosks, stand-alone signage, etc. Committee member Bright has provided her with a list of possible suppliers. Ms. Lewis then showed a map that showed the suggested locations for kiosks, directional signs, trail signs, etc. that would be sited both in the downtown area and along the trail system. Committee Chair Zuaro felt it might be a good idea to submit this map to the state's VOREC grant administrator to see if this projection is going in the correct direction. Even if the list of locations is not finalized, it would be good to obtain some official feedback on this. Mr. Endres thought this would be helpful, especially if the grant administrator is made aware that this is still a draft version subject to change. Committee Chair Zuaro will review the VOREC grant agreement to determine what wayfinding elements will be required in the final product. On the wayfinding plan map, Ms. Lewis marked every trail intersection as a possible site for new signage, which might be overkill. The committee members then went through the list of possible locations to prioritize possible signage sites based on trail importance, etc. It might be necessary for budgetary reasons to reduce the number of new signage locations. NU will purchase its own new trail signage, which will include wording to indicate the sign is located on NU property. It was suggested that trails signs also could indicate when the trail user is leaving the Town Forest, etc. There will need to be further discussion regarding whether Town Forest access from the Vermont Route 64 area (i.e., Kingston Road, etc.) would be encouraged or discouraged. This would help determine the type of new signage to be installed there. Committee Chair Zuaro will speak to Town Manager Jeff Schulz about whether Kingston Road, which is a Class 4 Road, could be better maintained by the municipality in order to provide improved Town Forest access from Vermont Route 64. Mr. Endres felt it this did happen, the new map could direct Town Forest users to this access point. Committee Chair Zuaro then suggested splitting the wayfinding map into two pages for easier reading. Ms. Lewis will do this. She also will incorporate the suggested sign location priorities and begin the process of seeking quotes for the new kiosks, signage, etc.
- c. Other Business.** Committee Chair Zuaro then distributed a quote from Apex Trailworks for expanding the parking area near the NU Shaw Outdoor Center. Manager Schulz has requested that at least one more quote be solicited (Gillespie's?) before moving forward. It will also need to be determined whether a new Act 250 permit will be needed for this project or whether NU's current Act 250 permit for the center is sufficient. There were mixed views on this subject. The project also might need local approval from the Northfield Development Review Board (DRB). This possibility will be explored as well.

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

VI. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Petty, to adjourn. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular committee meeting of September 18, 2023.