

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**VOREC Grant Implementation Committee**  
**Minutes of August 8, 2022**

- I. Roll Call.** Present were Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative Committee (VOREC) Grant Implementation Chair Deborah Zuaro, committee members Russ Barrett, Kimberly Caldwell, Lucas Herring, Colin O'Neil, Nancy Peck, Lydia Petty, and Jeff Schulz. Also present was Tim Swartz. Committee members Melody Currier and Erin Viera were absent.

Chair Deborah Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: July 25, 2022.** Motion by Committee member Herring, seconded by Committee member Caldwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

**IV. Updates**

- a. Slate Avenue Trail Work.** Committee Chair Zuaro has been told by a number of people who have seen the recent trail work how impressed they were. She has asked Committee member Petty to provide a full report. Committee member Petty said the trail restoration work was completed last Friday (08/05/22). Culverts were installed to divert stormwater away from the trail path, which was laid with stone. Committee member Petty said due to the work, the path looks much more like a forest trail rather than a narrow ditch. Committee member O'Neil noted seventy-five hundred pounds of stone was installed during the project. Committee member Petty added that three benches were installed along the path, two at its beginning near Slate Avenue, even though this was not part of the project RFP. Committee member O'Neil said he interacted with the Apex Trailworks contractor (Zac Freeman) during the project about this. The two benches near Slate Avenue will be relocated later further up the trail including one near the "Beaver Pond." The benches are composed of slate that was found on site. Committee member O'Neil, who serves as Manager of Northfield University's Shaw Outdoor Center, said the benches would be moved when classes restart later this month and he can get assistance from NU students. Committee member Schulz, who also serves as Northfield Town Manager, said Apex Trailworks did a good job overall. However, due to liability concerns, it might be good to add some type of fencing at one location where the trail was narrowed next to a steep drop off. Committee member O'Neil spoke to Mr. Freeman about that and he agreed some fencing should be installed. Committee member Schulz said it probably would be best to err on the side of caution. Committee member O'Neil said three sections of split rail fencing should suffice. Committee member Schulz will reach out to Mr. Freeman about this. The cost would be covered by VOREC grant funds. Municipal funds budgeted for the Town Forest matters could be used if necessary. As for the benches, Committee member O'Neil said the intention was to provide resting stops for older hikers. Committee member Caldwell thought it would be good to leave one bench near the Slate Avenue trail entrance to mark the start of the trail and to provide some rest to those coming back from a hike. Committee member Schulz repeated how pleased he was with the completed work and believes the municipality should be able to sign off on the project. He felt some of the culverts installed were perhaps a little smaller than he expected but also believes they should be sufficient to handle stormwater in the area. Committee member O'Neil agrees with Committee member Schulz regarding the culverts and with signing off on the project. There was no objection from the other committee members.

- b. Removal of Invasive Species and View Clearing.** Committee member Schulz confirmed that Committee member Barrett is on tomorrow night's Select Board meeting agenda to provide an overview of this upcoming project. Committee member Barrett said he would advise the Select Board members of the extent of the problem and the need to address it as soon as possible. The way the invasive flora will be removed depends on whether heavy equipment can be brought on site. Machines that can mulch the invasive plants will be used if possible. If not, it might be necessary to brush burn in the affected areas. Committee member Barrett will discuss these options with the Select Board members. Provided the Select Board members do not object, Committee member Barrett afterwards will work with Manager Schulz on a project RFP. Committee member Petty asked if Committee member Barrett has reached out to potential bidders for this project. He confirmed he has and at least one has expressed interest and would like to take part in any pre-bid site visit. Committee member Barrett then noted the logistics of the site visit will need to be worked out in order to make the target area accessible by motorized vehicle(s) without too much hiking. Committee member O'Neil noted the snowmobile trail originating by the Shaw Outdoor Center is one possibility. There are other access points on Turkey Hill Road, Kingston Road, etc. Committee member Barrett said it might be necessary to make use of old municipal rights-of-way that bisect private property. He will research this further. Committee Chair Zuaro thanked him for all the work he has done on this project to date.
- c. Wayfinding Masterplan RFP.** The wording of this RFP was discussed at the previous meeting and the committee members provided several suggestions. Committee member Schulz said he tried to incorporate these suggestions into the final version of the RFP, which he forwarded to Committee Chair Zuaro for review before advertising. The notice was sent to the *Times Argus*, the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) website, and to several potential bidders. The full RFP is ready for download on the municipal website at <https://www.northfield-vt.gov/public-notices>. Committee member Schulz already has received some positive feedback from potential bidders. One change he did make was to extend the submission deadline to Friday, September 2, 2022. He felt this extra time might result in a greater number of bid submissions. Committee Chair Zuaro said the committee members would be able to review the bids at their next regular meeting (09/13/22) in order to provide a recommendation to the Select Board members, who meet the following night.

## V. Discussion

- a. Programming Ideas and Need for a Work Group.** Committee Chair Zuaro said this agenda item was in response to a discussion at the last meeting over developing a program of scheduled group events in the Town Forest. It was felt a working group could be formed to develop ideas about possible events that could be discussed at a later time by the full committee. Committee member Barrett noted a public hike to the summit of Paine Mountain is scheduled for this coming Sunday (08/14/22). Participants will meet at the Green Mountain Medical Center (87 Paine Mountain Drive) at 10:00 a.m. The hike should take between three and four hours. There also are plans for another Paine Mountain hike the weekend of August 27/28, 2022 and another along the Waitsfield/Northfield border the weekend of September 17/18, 2022. Committee member Barrett said another possible hike for late September or early October could be held along the ridgeline connecting Paine Mountain and Irish Hill. Committee member Petty asked if these events should have rain dates advertised. Committee member Barrett said he usually plans events for Saturdays so they can be delayed until the next day (Sunday) if needed. Longer delays might be needed for prolonged storms, etc. Committee member O'Neil felt it would be very beneficial for committee members to do some outreach to local media regarding not only upcoming scheduled events but also to celebrate the trail work recently completed.

It also would be good to further publicize the fact that the cost of the recently completed trail restoration work was covered completely by grant funds with no expense to local taxpayers. Committee member Petty believes the *Northfield News* will publish submitted photos with captions and this could be a useful resource. It was noted Committee member Barrett has put notices on Front Porch Forum and also posted on local Facebook websites. Committee Chair Zuaro suggested holding a ribbon cutting ceremony for the recent trail work and specifically inviting *Times Argus* reporters and/or photographers to cover the event. Committee member Petty thought it might be good to hold the ceremony in conjunction with the planned hike at the end of the month. She felt it would not be good to wait too long or the recent improvements won't appear as fresh. After further discussion, the consensus was to hold this event on Saturday, August 27, 2022 starting at 2:00 p.m. at the Brown Public Library. Committee members Herring and O'Neil will help with local outreach. Committee member Petty will provide photographs of the trail improvements. Committee members will start posting notices on Front Porch Forum next week (after this weekend's public hike to avoid confusion). Special invitations will be sent to local officials and relevant state officials.

As for the working group, Committee members Petty and Peck volunteered to serve on it. Committee Chair Zuaro said it might be useful to have future discussions with Economic Development Director Tom Davis as well as members of the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) regarding local economic benefits of the VOREC grant spending. Committee member Petty thought it might be useful to install trail counters in order to demonstrate the growing popularity of the Town Forest trail system. Committee member O'Neil believes the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) has a couple that they could let us install at no cost. Committee member Schulz said CVRPC has helped with pedestrian counts in the past; he will contact them about this possibility. Committee member O'Neil reminded the other committee members that NU has many resources to contribute through its Shaw Outdoor Center as well as its Center for Civic Engagement, which could provide some student volunteer hours when classes resume. Committee member Petty noted Committee member Caldwell is Vice-President of Central Vermont Runners, which organizes mass cross-country runs that sometimes include public forest land. This might be another useful venue for group events. It might also be possible to work with mountain bike groups on possible events in the Town Forest. Committee member O'Neil has concerns about possible liability if someone should be injured during one of these events while on NU property. Committee member Schulz said the municipality has liability insurance through VLCT and it is likely NU has similar coverage. Committee member O'Neil will check on this.

- b. Other Business.** Committee member Schulz has been informed that another round of VOREC grant funding may become available in the near future. The additional amount available to Northfield might be significant and he will keep the other committee members informed should this information be confirmed.

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

**VII. Adjournment.** Motion by Committee member O'Neil, seconded by Committee member Petty, to adjourn. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved at the regular meeting of September 12, 2022.