

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD RIVERWALK PROJECT
WORKING GROUP MEETING
Minutes of August 20, 2025
Full meeting recording is available at
<https://youtu.be/EOAcaNXiB4g>

I. ROLL CALL. Janan Hamm (Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety [AWPS] Task Force),, Kaitlyn Keating (Northfield Community Development Network [NCDN]), DeLane McIlvene (AWPS Task Force), Patrick Meehan (Energy Committee), Merry Shernock (Select Board member), Carolyn Stevens (NCDN), and Tim Swartz (AWPS Task Force).

The meeting started at 6:08 p.m.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 16, 2025. The minutes were approved without objection.

IV. OLD BUSINESS/UPDATES

a. Update on Timetable; New Funding Realities. Merry said that due to now uncertain funding for both the Cross Brother Dam Removal and for the Main Street Bridge Replacement, we now have no idea about what will happen with these two projects. The new funding realities have mainly to do with the federal government and recent cuts to FEMA programs and staffing. The dam removal scheduled already was tightly restricted due to concerns about disturbing nesting bats in July and making sure the river was restored for trout migration in October. Merry said there still are good chances that the dam removal will occur next year. The bridge replacement was scheduled for next year (2026) but a VTrans representative informed the Select Board members last week that a further project delay seemed likely. Patrick said it still seems likely that the dam removal will occur before the bridge replacement. It seems the only restriction is that both projects cannot occur simultaneously.

b. Update on Kiosk. Merry said one positive development is that the Dollar General is in the process for transferring land to the municipality that would be used to facilitate the Riverwalk project. That land, once formally transferred, also could be used as a new location for the kiosk (at least temporarily). Merry thinks this is a good location as it will bring people to an access point for the Riverwalk path. Patrick will need to confirm with Green Mountain Transit that this would be an acceptable location for a bus stop. There would be some disruption when the bridge is replaced but the contractor would need to restore any work done on the path beforehand. Tim felt it might be good to install a riverside path that is above the river level as that would at least get the project started. Patrick will reach out to the Riverwalk engineer regarding available possibilities. He also will find out the level of responsibility the contractor would have to restore any disturbed path.

c. Update Schedule for Guided Walks & Walkers' Input. Janan had anticipated holding these walks in conjunction with this year's "Night on the Common" but later realized she would be too busy with that event to hold any walks. She now is looking at Tuesday, September 16, 2025 for holding some organized walks. Janan has not heard any negative feedback from her group of sixteen (16) walkers for this change of plans.

She also will do a sharable Facebook post about the change of plans. Merry thought this also might be a good time to start outreach to local schools in order to schedule student walks. Leslie Striebe and Michael Gonneville have already been identified as the best contact persons for this. Janan thought October would be the best month to start planning these student walks. Kaitlyn thought holding such walks might be a good way to spread the word about organized adult walks to their parents, etc. Janan noted Mariela Swiech is a local high school student who now serves on the Conservation Commission and she is another useful contact to get students interested in outside recreation projects. After some discussion, the 09/16/25 walks were scheduled for 3:30 p.m. and 4:45 p.m.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Possible Work on Section C as Part of Temporary Detour.** Merry said during the bridge replacement project, there will be a three-month pedestrian detour route in the downtown area. This detour would roughly correspond to Section C of the Riverwalk path. Kaitlyn added that as a part of a separate pedestrian safety project, the Wall Street sidewalk that connects Deport Square to the Dog River Park also would be upgraded. Merry would like an improved permeable path installed between the Northfield Police Station parking lot and the existing path leading to the footbridge. Perhaps the municipality could do some of this work to save money.
- b. "Night on Common" (09/23/25) Thoughts & Opinions.** DeLane removed the large Riverwalk Project display signs from the Northfield Savings Bank recently and will bring them for the Riverwalk Project booth that night. It also might be possible to put on display some photos from some of the more recent organized walks. Merry added that on Saturday, October 18, 2025 Trout Unlimited will be holding an event on the Common that day and it might be good for the Riverwalk group to have an informational booth that day.
- c. Reports from the Field, i.e. updates from other committees, projects, etc.** Tim said we now have a handicapped accessible picnic table at the Municipal Pool. Merry said she and Janan met recently with Samantha Aronson, who is the Vice-President of Trout Unlimited. Merry felt she would be a good connection given the good number of state grant funds available for protection of Lake Champlain and its feeder rivers. She then added that the Friends of the Winooski River have planned an organized river cleanup on Saturday, September 6, 2025. This event will be held in Montpelier but future such events could be held in Northfield.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled). There was none.

VII. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: September 17, 2025

VIII. ADJOURNMENT. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.