

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of January 29, 2024

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

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

II. Public Participation (Scheduled):

- a. Emily Lewis, Dubois & King.** Please see below.

- III. Approval of Minutes: January 8, 2024.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Bright, to approve the minutes.
Motion passed 6-0-0.

IV. Discussion

- a. Wayfinding Plan Wrap-up.** Ms. Lewis demonstrated on the computer screen how the updated Paine Mountain Trail System map will appear on the trailfinder.info website. She added that the webpage displayed was still in edit mode and had not yet been published. Ms. Lewis will provide a link to the committee members so they can review the update and make their final comments or suggestions before it goes online. She noted that the webpage will require designating a contact person at some point. Ms. Lewis then showed additional local information on the website including text descriptions of where trail access parking is available, where it is encouraged, etc. Committee member Petty would like trail users directed to park at the Shaw Outdoor Center. In addition, she noted that the webpage has links to local businesses but currently the closest ones are located in the Mad River Valley. Board member Petty suggested that either Economic Development Director Tom Davis and/or the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) could assist with adding links to Northfield businesses. Committee Chair Zuaro asked the other committee members to check out the webpage and contact her with any further suggestions before it goes online. Ms. Lewis is also uploading the updated local trail maps to Open Street Maps. This is a wiki-based website that users can edit themselves on a regular basis. She then showed the www.alltrails.com website that makes use of the Open Street Maps information. This website hasn't been synched to the most recent trail map updates but Ms. Lewis will look into the steps that this requires. Board member Bright asked if the trailfinder.info website also can be updated by users. Ms. Lewis said this could not be done directly but there is an online form to fill out with updates. She will provide this information to the committee members.

Ms. Lewis said DuBois & King has produced a summary document of the wayfinding masterplan project now that its direct contractual role in the process is concluding. This summary includes the project goals, the timeline, vendor costs, etc. As indicated above, DuBois & King will provide an instructional guide on updating online information and other future needs. Ms. Lewis is also forwarding to Committee Chair Zuaro the final trail maps and other computer files from this project. At this time, these online documents are only available for viewing by request. The committee members are the only ones with permission to view them currently. Committee member Bright said the committee will need to create guidelines for updating the online maps, etc. and determine who would be responsible for this in future.

Committee Chair Zuaro said it now seems that DuBois & King's contribution to this wayfinding masterplan project is now ending. She noted the committee members have been working with Ms. Lewis for over a year in order to get to this point. Committee Chair Zuaro said a lot of hours and hard work have been put into this project but added that working with Ms. Lewis has been a real pleasure. She noted Ms. Lewis was willing to work with the committee members regarding their vision for this project and there never were any communication problems regarding this. Committee Chair Zuaro said we now have an excellent product that is nearly ready to share with the Northfield community. Ms. Lewis thanked Committee Chair Zuaro for her kind words. She noted that she will have some upcoming Northfield projects to work on so this is not her farewell to the community.

Committee Chair Zuaro said her original focus in this project was the production of print maps that could be distributed throughout the community, displayed on kiosks, etc. However, she is very impressed with the possibilities provided by the online mapping websites and how Northfield restaurants, businesses, etc. will benefit from having this information available on the internet.

Committee members Bright and Petty left at this time.

Committee members Barret and Currier also expressed how pleased they were with the final product and agreed Ms. Lewis had provided invaluable service throughout the project. Committee Chair Zuaro said she would be sending the project files out to the committee members for last comments before the information goes online. She added that it would be sad to no longer be working with Ms. Lewis on a regular basis but is glad to hear that she will be continuing to work with the Town of Northfield in the near future.

- b. Programming Outreach.** Committee Chair Zuaro said Committee member Petty would like to see some winter group events planned for this year. These group events could include snowshoeing and possibly cross-country skiing.

In addition, Committee Chair Zuaro noted Committee member Padilla is helping organize Norwich University's winter carnival, which will be held at the Shaw Outdoor Center. Committee member Padilla said the flyers and posters for this event, which will be held the weekend of February 9-11, 2024, are now being finalized. Committee Chair Zuaro asked the other committee members if they had any other programming suggestions. She herself has been thinking of contacting Susan Barnard, who organizes the local community walks on Tuesday and Thursday mornings that first meet at the United Church before sometimes carpooling to other locations. Committee member Currier suggested seeing if Ms. Barnard could schedule weekend walking events so perhaps more people could take part. Committee Chair Zuaro will ask Ms. Barnard if this would be possible. She also knows of some other regularly scheduled events that mostly take place indoors that might be moved to the Town Forest as special events.

Committee member Padilla said Jeremy Whalen, who is the Chair of the Town Forest Stewardship Committee, has asked if there are any plans to organize a group viewing party for the total solar eclipse, which will be viewable in Northfield on Monday, April 8, 2024 at about 3:25 p.m. He is aware Norwich University (NU) is planning a group viewing on the NU campus. Committee member Padilla said Mr. Whalen was suggesting a viewing party to be held at Cheney Farm but there are no set plans at this time. Committee Chair Zuaro said we can't know what the condition of the ground will be at that time, i.e. some combination of snow, mud, etc. Also, special viewing glasses will need to be ordered. Committee member Padilla has been looking into this. He said you can get CE and ISO Certified eclipse viewing glasses for just over \$1 each. It probably would be better to order them sooner than later. Committee Chair Zuaro said it might be possible for this committee to organize a viewing party and pay for the viewing glasses with VOREC grant funds. Committee member Currier thought this would be a good idea. She is aware that the Northfield schools will be closing at 1:00 p.m. so families can watch the eclipse together. Committee member Padilla felt it was important to make sure any viewing glasses purchased by the municipality have the proper certification. We don't want people going blind. Committee Chair Zuaro said the total eclipse viewing area is rather narrow and the State of Vermont is anticipating a lot of visitors will be coming here from other states where it won't be viewable.

Committee member Barrett suggested it might be good to organize a wildflower viewing hike in the spring. This could include a trip to vernal pools and would take place in late April or early May. Committee Chair Zuaro thought that was a good idea. Whether this can happen this year will depend on whether a wildflower expert can be contacted to provide advice regarding the best trail route. Committee Chair Zuaro will reach out to find someone suitable. Committee member Currier also thought this was a good idea and hopes that it could be done this year.

Committee member Padilla is looking into holding some kind of mountain biking event. As there are no funds for this at this time, this will be long-term planning. He added that he has submitted to the Select Board members an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund request in the amount of \$7,800 in order to hire a disc golf course design consultant. He doesn't know the timing of when these funds might be awarded. Committee member Padilla added that if this project goes forward, it might be possible to put together disc golf equipment package that would be available as part of the Brown Public Library's outdoor recreational equipment lending library.

V. Update

- a. Trail Counters.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the trail counters were removed so the data could be downloaded. We now need to decide where they should be put along the trail system. Committee member Padilla thought the counters worked well at their previous location near the Shaw Outdoor Center.

VI. Other Business.

- a. Shaw Outdoor Center Parking Expansion.** Committee member Padilla asked if VOREC grant funds would be used to pay for the expanded parking area. Committee Chair Zuaro confirmed that was the case. However, there is a time limit for this as the funds need to be expended before the end of this year. She added that if all the required permits were in place, the project could start this spring. Committee member Padilla is unsure about the status of NU's existing Act 250 permit and whether it would cover this project. Now that he has a deadline for the work, he will reach out to NU officials for confirmation. Committee Chair Zuaro said we already have a contractor ready to do the work so the only remaining delay is determining permit status.
- b. Next VOREC Grant Implementation Meeting.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the next meeting will be held on Monday, February 26, 2024.

VII. Public Participation (Unscheduled)

- a. Mary Nadon Scott: Outdoor Event Programming.** Ms. Scott is co-chair of the Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety Task Force. During the discussion of programming future outdoor events, she tried to think of an event that could be available to all regardless of mobility issues, etc. Ms. Scott did not come up with anything at the time but will let the committee members know if she or the other task force members have any suggestions in future.

VIII. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Currier, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular meeting.