

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD RIVER PATH PROJECT
WORKING GROUP MEETING
Minutes of September 16, 2026**

Merry Shernock called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Community Room of the Brown Public Library.

Attending in person: Merry Shernock, Tim Swartz, Sue McCormack of Creative Discourse, Janan Hamm, Pat Meehan, John Stevens, Michele Braun of Friends of the Winooski.

Attending Virtually: Kaitlyn Keating and Mary Nadon Scott.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): Sue McCormack of Creative Discourse and a consultant to the "Reconnecting with Rivers" project of the Friends of the Winooski, presented two activities for NIGHT ON THE COMMON. These were

- 1) a guided walk from the Common to the site of the removal of the Cross Brothers Dam. This route constitutes Section D of the proposed Northfield Dog River Path. The walk will be led by Taylor Litwin, of the Friends of the Winooski, plus someone (it turned out to be Janan Hamm) from the River Path Working Group.
- 2) would use handouts and an interactive map to introduce the Nature Passport and solicit feedback from the public. It would be "hosted" by one of the consultants plus someone (it turned out to be Merry Shernock) from the River Path Working Group.

Sue McCormack also invited all present to the Cross Committee Meeting on 9/17/2026, and invited the group to consider planning future activities to build public interest and support; e.g. a forum or survey to solicit ideas for future uses/events/signage at the site, and/or a Volunteer Day.

Sue will send a check list to facilitate this planning.

OLD BUSINESS: Merry reviewed the progress on the removal of the dam over the summer, and praised the collaboration of all parties. She directed members to the video posted recently on the Town Facebook page by Tom Davis, Town Director of Economic Development.

NEW BUSINESS: First, Michele Braun of Friends of the Winooski discussed a grant recently received by that organization that supports employing the VT Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) to plant willow stakes at the dam removal site. Michele stressed the value to getting a landscape design for the upper area (behind Dollar General) to create amenities such as a picnic area, a pollinator garden and/or a viewing platform. Michele, together with Pat Meehan, estimated the cost for the design work to be \$2-4K and reminded the group that there are ARPA funds earmarked for the River Path Project. (We don't want to use it all up on one section, however.)

The group then discussed scheduling continued improvements around the Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. Michele reported that she has been advised that nothing can be done within ~75 feet of the road until the bridge work is completed.

Meanwhile, Merry reported that Rose Watts of VT Rivers Program, VT Dept. Environmental Conservation advised the it would be a good idea to change the contours of the area using "cut & fill" techniques, thus permitting a path down to the river's edge with the ADA-dictated 1/20 slope for shared paths. Bill Anderson of the VYCC has said he would sketch such a path and Pat Meehan said he will contact Bill to get the sketch. Michele reminded the group that a permit from the Town will be required for that work and the plan will be submitted to Rose Watts. Merry reminded the group that Rose Watts has said there is value to respecting the river and planning for flood: "We are guests of the River" per Ms. Watts. The group agreed this slogan would be good on signage.

This reminder led to a discussion of flooding and its impacts. Michele put up the most recent flood map for the area which shows the current path of the river + a 500 yr flood line + the actual river corridor; the latter extending almost up to the Gray Building. The group agreed that this graphic also should be included in the signage for the River Path.

One of the impacts of flooding is the spread of Japanese Knot Weed. Merry reported discussing knot weed control with Professor Simon Pearish of Norwich University. Dr. Pearish said that it is impossible to remove 100% of the noxious weed so areas of control should be prioritized according to the perspectives of river guests with limited mobility. Michele noted that there is both mechanical control and chemical control with herbicide. Merry proposed a "knot weed corps" which would engage in mechanical control which Michele advised must begin on May 1 annual and remove all plants <6inches. Merry repeated Dr. Pearish's advice that removal begin immediately after any flood event. Michele advised that herbicide is most advantageously applied when the plant is in full leaf; i.e. it should not be cut so that the herbicide gets down into the roots.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD: Janan reported that a sub-group of the Accessibility, Walkability & Pedestrian Safety Task Force (AWPSTF) and a sub-group of the Conservation Commission have met with the Town Forest Stewardship Committee, and together they have developed a plan for periodic access in vehicles to Cheney Field by persons with limited mobility. She also reported that Bill Clements of the AWPSTF has submitted a grant to VT Humanities Council (?) for path design by Norwich University Students. Finally, Janan and Tim together reported that there are plans to have senior citizens discuss the history of Cheney Field at the 2027 Cabin Fever Block Party that is organized by the AWPSTF.

Merry reported that Ragnar Eberle of the Northfield Conservation Commission is thinking about organizing NMHS students to do some river cleanup.

NEXT MEETING: The group will meet monthly until the end of the year; i.e. 10/21 + 11/18 + 12/16.

Meetings will happen at the Community Room to facilitate accessibility and will begin at 6 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.