

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of June 10, 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 (absent), Jason Endres, Lucas Herring, Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz and Mary Nadon Scott.

Committee Chair Zuaro called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

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

- III. Approval of Minutes: May 13, 2024.** Motion by Committee member Bright, seconded by Committee member Petty, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

IV. Discussion

- a. Review Trail and Business Surveys, Stakeholder Interview Guide, Process for Survey Distribution & Delivery, and Stakeholder Interviews.** Committee Chair Zuaro had provided the other committee members with copies of the list of questions developed by the SE Group that will be asked of local business owners/stakeholders. It was noted that the outreach to local business owners and trail users is a vital component of the Economic Impact Study that is a grant completion requirement. Also distributed were copies of the survey flyers that include QR codes that link to the online survey questions. The committee members then reviewed the online survey questions. Committee Chair Zuaro said the flyer for the trail user survey would be posted along Town Forest trails, including all entry points, so that hikers can take the survey by scanning the QR code. There also will be in-person interactions along the trail system. Committee member Padilla volunteers to post the flyers in the Town Forest and also on Norwich University (NU) property. The in-person interviews will be held weekdays with the actual dates depending on weather conditions. Committee members Bright and Petty said they would be willing to help with this. Committee Chair Zuaro then offered to distribute the business survey to local restaurants, accommodations, etc. The SE Group developed a preliminary list of the businesses targeted to be included in this survey. It was suggested that some of the smaller businesses, especially restaurants, might not be able to participate in the survey during business hours but they will be given the opportunity to participate. After a short discussion, it was decided that the survey flyers with pictures will be the ones used. Manager Schulz suggested that Economic Development Director Tom Davis might be the best person to interact with the local businesses as he has existing relationships with many of the local business leaders. Committee member Petty is willing to help with some of the smaller businesses and Committee Chair Zuaro will make the outreach to the Northfield Farmers Market.

V. Updates

- a. RFPs for Signage.** Committee Chair Zuaro noted that two (2) bid submissions for the production and installation of the Phase 1 Signage project were received by last Friday's deadline (06/07/24). The bids were from Flywheel Industrial Arts (Montpelier, VT) and Wood & Wood (Waitsfield, VT). The bids were both in the \$40,000 range so much of the discussion regarding the relative merits of the bids focused more on the amount of information provided with the submission, the materials to be used, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro said it was a good sign that two qualified businesses were willing to bid on this project. Committee member Petty felt either company probably would be able to do a good job with this project. Committee Chair Zuaro was confident that either company would be able to manufacture and install the new signage by this fall. She then noted that Wood & Wood did not provide a firm amount of signage installation. There was some indication in the RFP that local volunteers and/or municipal employees would be able to assist with the installation process and that is the reason Wood & Wood provided for not providing an amount. Committee member Petty noted that the current VOREC grant budget for Phase 1 signage now has a \$59,000 balance so there should not be any undue concern about additional installation costs.

Committee Chair Zuaro asked if any of the committee members had any preferences for either of the two companies at this time. Committee member Bright had more confidence regarding the ability of Wood & Wood to be able to complete the project in a timely manner given its greater past experience with similar signage projects. They did produce and install a good amount of outdoors recreational signage in the Mad River Valley. Committee member Petty noted that Wood & Wood's submission had a stronger commitment to using the materials specified in the RFP. By contrast, Flywheel offered to hold a Constructability Review to determine the proper signage materials. Committee member Petty also agreed that Wood & Wood has greater experience with such signage projects. Committee member Bright felt it was important to make a decision tonight so that the signage production and installation process would not be delayed by another couple of weeks. Committee Chair Zuaro asked for Manager Schulz's opinion on this. He said he was quite impressed by the bid package that Wood & Wood provided and also felt their past work experience was a significant factor. Manager Schulz did recommend engaging Wood & Wood for this project. Committee Chair Zuaro then polled the other committee members, who either supported Wood & Wood or didn't have a strong commitment to either company. Committee member Endres said he would have a higher comfort level with Wood & Wood given their proven track record in these matters. Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to recommend that Manager Schulz accept the bid submission from Wood & Wood. **Motion passed 7-0-0.** Committee Chair Zuaro said this was an exciting development. Committee member Padilla said NU has expressed interest in providing additional funding so that two (2) additional signs could be purchased. This will be brought up during the upcoming interactions with Wood & Wood.

- b. Programming.** Committee Chair Zuaro said that dates, times, and locations are being developed for the planned events involving wildlife demonstrations, etc. In addition, some of the authorized recreational equipment purchases, such as for children's backpacks, are now underway. Once the events schedule has been finalized, it will be extensively advertised to the Northfield community. Committee member Petty said the Yoga Hike schedule has been set so these events should be advertised as soon as possible. Committee Chair Zuaro said that Nigel Hicks-Tibble, who is the Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC) Chair, suggested that flyers with Town Forest usage rules could be distributed at these events. The Town Forest Stewardship Committee (TFSC) is finalizing the list of rules at this time. Committee member Petty has learned from NU Cross Country Coach Michael McGrane that two (2) NU trail races will be held later this year. The first will be held in mid-August and the other as part of NU's Homecoming Weekend. Mr. McGrane is looking for volunteers to help out with these races. Committee member Barrett was hoping to organize a Town Forest hike later this month but now is unable to take part himself. Committee member Petty is willing to help organize the first hike but would like some assistance, possibly from a TFSC member. Committee member Barrett is both a NCC member and TFSC member so he will check if any of them are interested.

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

VII. Adjournment. Motion by Committee member Bright, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to adjourn. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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