

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
VOREC Grant Implementation Committee
Minutes of May 13, 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 (6:05 p.m.), Lucas Herring (absent), Andrew Padilla, and Lydia Petty.

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

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

III. Approval of Minutes

- a. April 11, 2024.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to approve the minutes of April 11, 2024. **Motion passed 5-0-1, with Committee member Bright abstaining.**
- b. April 22, 2024.** Motion by Committee member Petty, seconded by Committee member Barrett, to approve the minutes of April 22, 2024. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

IV. Discussion

- a. Signage to include in RFP.** Committee Chair Zuaro said Committee member Bright prepared at the last meeting (04/22/24) a trail system map indicating the number of different types of signage to be included in the RFP and where they would be ultimately located along the trail system. That map will now be displayed on the meeting screen and hard copies are also available. Committee member Bright also has prepared a draft RFP for the Phase 1 signage purchases. Committee member Petty noted this project now has an additional \$25,000 in funding as the Select Board members recently (04/23/24) awarded this amount in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for this purpose. She felt the committee now had a comfortable amount for this project.

Committee member Endres arrived at this time.

Committee member Petty said the final locations for the signage can be adjusted at a later time but we need to determine the correct number of each signage type to include in the RFP. Committee member Bright thought it might be possible to alter the definition of "kiosk" by including some trail information on some of the smaller, less expensive signs. Committee member Petty said these could be considered "mini kiosks." The grant did specify the number of kiosks to be purchased and this redefinition should be sufficient to meet this requirement. Committee member Currier noted there didn't seem to be a strict definition in the grant agreement about how the kiosks should appear. She then suggested that an additional Intersectional Trail Sign (Type G) be added where a number of trails intersect east of Cheney Field. There was no objection. Committee member Padilla would like an additional Basic Trail Sign with Map (Type F) added to the RFP that would be sited on Norwich University (NU) property. NU would reimburse the cost of this sign after it has been installed. Committee member Currier felt some of the map trails near the Cheney Field seemed a little out of place. Committee member Bright believes the shaded area that indicates the location of Cheney Field has been shrunken a little bit in the latest map versions. He felt that could be fixed relatively easily either internally or by project consultant DuBois & King. Committee Chair Zuaro suggested that should there be any additional funds available in the signage budget when the grant is closed, perhaps some could be used to purchase water-proof maps, etc. that could be attached to the new signage.

Committee member Bright said that the suggested signage sizes, dimensions, etc. in the RFP would be based on the recommendations provided by DuBois & King. He added that installation costs also needed to be included in the RFP. It will be necessary to indicate which signage installation locations are accessible by motorized vehicles and which are not.

Committee Chair Zuaro asked if a motion would be needed to specify the information to be included in the RFP. Committee member Petty felt that committee consensus probably would be sufficient as no funds are actually being expended at this time. After a little more discussion, the consensus was to receive quotes for the purchase of twenty (20) signs, which would be broken down into: one (1) Information Display Sign (Type A), one (1) Trail Kiosk (Type B), two (2) Basic Trail Signs (Type E), seven (7) Basic Trail Signs with Maps (Type F), and nine (9) Intersection Trail Signs (Type G).

Committee member Petty thought that there will be a future need to order some basic green directional signs that would be installed on existing street signs. Those should not be too expensive. There also may be the need to purchase signs indicating where trail access parking is and is not allowed. Committee Chair Zuaro said a final discussion about any additional signage to be purchased will be held at a future meeting. Committee member Petty said some smaller signs also will be needed to indicate that motorize vehicles are not allowed on the trail system. Committee member Padilla said he will be putting some new signs up on NU property that list a number of prohibited activities, including hunting, trapping, motorized vehicles, unleashed dogs, etc.

- b. Programming Proposals.** Committee Chair Zuaro said the remaining grant budget for programming is \$4,870.01. If all the current requests for these grant funds are approved, that amount would be \$4,724.76. For discussion purposes, Committee member Bright made a motion to approve all the programming fund requests. Committee member Petty seconded this motion. Committee member Petty said the programming requests all seem reasonable so her only concern is that the dollar amounts attached to the requests were estimates only so the actual costs might be higher. If all are approved as is, there would not be much wiggle room in this budget. Committee Chair Zuaro noted that some of the original programming requests, such as the Caterpillar Lab, have been omitted due to cost and other concerns. In addition, the numbers of some of the outdoor recreation equipment to be purchased has been reduced for similar reasons. Committee member Petty suggested reducing the number of "Yoga Hikes in Town Forest" be reduced from five (5) to four (4), which would lower the cost by \$300. The previous motion was then withdrawn so that it can be specified how much the requesting groups would actually receive for their programming requests.

Motion by Committee member Bright, seconded by Committee member Petty, to authorize an amount not to exceed \$400 for the purchase of four (4) Plein Art Painting kits. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

Motion by Committee member Bright, seconded by Committee member Petty, to authorize an amount not to exceed \$1,200 for four (4) yoga hikes in the Town Forest. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

Motion by Committee member Bright, seconded by Committee member Petty, to authorize an amount not to exceed \$3,000 for three (3) nature programs to be held in the Brown Public Library (BPL), i.e. Bryan Pfeiffer, Field Biologist; Bridget Butler, Bird Diva; and from the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (Owls and their Calls). Also includes in this motion is the purchase of two (2) Kids Adventure Backpacks, a Child Carrier Backpack, conducting three (3) Storywalks, and a Southern Vermont Natural History Museum program to be held in the BPL on Saturday, August 10, 2024. **Motion passed 7-0-0.**

Committee Chair Zuaro said many community members are going to be very pleased about the amount of outdoor recreation programming that will be available in coming months. He will work with Town Manager Jeff Schulz on the dispersal of these funds to the persons and/or groups that will be making the actual purchases, etc. Committee member Bright said there also will need to be some oversight of the timing of the programming and related purchases to make sure they meet the state grant deadlines for expending funds. There also will be the need to create posters and other notices to publicize these events in advance.

Committee member Petty said now that the trail system is reopening, there probably should be some publicization of the new trail maps, etc. Committee Chair Zuaro will draft something that can be published in the *Northfield News*. Committee member Petty said when the schedule of programming events is finalized, those should be posted on Front Porch Forum. Committee Chair Zuaro is uncertain whether the wildflower hike with the state expert on hand would still take place this year. She will reach out to see if that is still possible. In addition, Committee member Barrett has plans to organize some Town Forest group hikes later this summer. He will provide some finalized plans at a future meeting.

V. Other Business

- a. Next Meeting Date.** Committee Chair Zuaro noted that the next regular meeting date (May 27, 2024) falls on Memorial Day. She asked if the committee members wanted to wait until the next regular meeting date (June 10, 2024) to meet or if a special meeting should be held before then to discuss signage RFP submissions. Committee member Bright thought it would be best to wait until June 10, 2024 in order sufficient time for the RFPs to be distributed and returned.
- b. Economic Impact Study.** Committee member Petty said that at the last meeting (04/22/24), those committee members present worked on questions for the survey that the SE Group will be circulating locally to get feedback about outdoor recreation opportunities in Northfield. A kickoff meeting with SE Group representatives was held last Friday (05/10/24) that Committee Chair Zuaro and Committee member Petty attended. They appeared to accept the suggestions provided by the committee members and SE Group representatives would like to attend a future nighttime meeting to introduce themselves to the full committee. In addition, SE Group would like to hold daytime meetings with a smaller group of committee members as the project proceeds. They also would like the trail counters installed by June 1, 2024 so that they can collect sufficient trail use data for their study. It was suggested that SE Group members could attend the June 10, 2024 meeting. The surveys will be distributed to trail users to gauge their views about the Town Forest trail system and to local businesses about the local benefits of the Northfield's outdoor recreation facilities. SE Group will provide periodic updates throughout the summer and produce a draft report to the committee members in August 2024. Committee Chair Zuaro is optimistic that SE Group will produce a final report that will not only meet the grant administrator's criteria but also be a valuable document that will provide real benefits to the community.
- c. Lybrand Trail update.** Committee member Padilla will start blazing the trail system this week and will use that opportunity to check the status of the Lybrand Trail, which was suffered severe storm damage last July. It might be necessary to install some warning signs to inform hikers so they don't injure themselves. He added that he has asked around and no one at NU knows why the university owns that particular property as it is not connected to other NU forested properties. Committee member Petty thought perhaps NU would be willing to transfer the property to the municipality to become public lands so that the trail system there could be repaired using grant funds.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

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