

JOHNSON SKATEPARK & BIKE TRACK COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2022

Present:

Committee Members: Casey Romero, Howard Romero, Rick Aupperlee (via Zoom), George Swanson (via Zoom), James Whitehill, Greg Fatigate

Others: Lisa Crews, Pierre Hall, Nicholas Phelan, Ian Hutchings, Kayla Handy

1. Call to Order

Casey called the meeting to order at 5:33.

2. Draft Minutes of May 11, 2022 Meeting

Greg moved and Howard seconded to approve the minutes of May 11, 2022. The minutes were approved by consensus.

3. Proposed Concrete Improvement: Designer and Contractor Pierre Hall

Pierre Hall described how the new concrete feature could be constructed with an earth berm. If the berm is 4 ft. high it needs to go out 12 ft. because a 1:3 ratio is standard practice. (*Lisa arrived at 5:36.*) Greg agreed that Pierre's suggested design is a good one because we won't need a fence or a handrail. Howard asked if we should put layers of cloth over the soil before we lay the concrete. Pierre said that is not needed.

Pierre introduced himself to the group. He is with a non-profit group, the Vermont Skatepark Advocate Corporation. He is hoping to see more parks rehabbed with concrete as a permanent solution. His pet project has been building up the skatepark in Warren over the last 18 years.

Casey brought up the question of whether to remove the mini ramp altogether or replace it with another mini ramp. Greg said he thinks if we want a mini ramp we should put in a concrete one. The future of this park starts with the concrete features and builds off of them. If we want to have a concrete mini ramp he thinks it has to be put in a place where it will build and flow with the other concrete features.

Lisa asked if Pierre and Nicholas Phelan could give the committee a dream plan for the future. Pierre said he thinks it would be great to get public input and come up with a long-term plan. He likes to meet with local skaters and find out what they want.

Nicholas said it can be an issue for people who use a skatepark if a feature is taken out and it is a while before it is replaced. If we take something away from the Johnson skatepark there are not many other places nearby for people to go to.

Casey asked if the work of talking to users of the skatepark is something Pierre and Nicholas could do soon and whether it would cost the committee money. Pierre said he can look at his calendar. He has some openings over the next couple of months.

Casey said we have presented this so far as a \$35,000 project. She knows Pierre's quote was \$30,000 but that was from last year and there is other work to be done there. If we learned pretty soon that we could also do something in place of the existing mini ramp maybe we could work that into the plan.

James said he knows there is a feeling that we should not get rid of the mini ramp. There will be a section of the concrete bowl that functions as a mini ramp. He understands that concrete will last

longer and require less maintenance and probably lead to less liability but he does not think it would be wise not to have a mini ramp somewhere. Can we fundraise and afford a concrete mini ramp along with the feature we already have planned?

Lisa asked if it is possible for Pierre's group of professionals who work on skateparks to give us a "pie in the sky" master plan with current prices. Then the committee could decide each year to fundraise and add a specific piece. She thinks before Casey and Howard and Greg move on from this committee we should have a solid plan. Otherwise she thinks there is too much chance the skatepark will be lost. Pierre said his nonprofit could do that. Then the committee would need to look at companies to do the building. His group does some building but they can't build everything. He feels we could definitely start working on a master plan.

Casey said that doesn't address the question of possibly losing the mini ramp. Pierre said he thinks the new concrete feature is a suitable replacement for the existing mini ramp. Nicholas asked how long there will be no mini ramp at this park. Lisa asked if we are taking down the existing ramp before we put in the new feature. Casey said no. So users will not be without a mini ramp. Lisa said a representative from our insurer walked the park and was only concerned about the teeter totter where it was possible for fingers to be pinched (an issue that has been fixed) and the picnic tables. He said there is inherent risk at a skatepark. People know they could fall.

Committee members talked about some possible layout ideas for the park. James said he thought it would be a good idea for the pump track to be concrete. People could skate it too. (*Pierre and Nicholas left.*)

4. *Park Use Expectations 2022: Rules, Issues and Plans*

Casey said we can get a \$1500 mini grant from Healthy Lamoille Valley to cover activities and improvements at the skatepark that are in sync with the way Tobacco Task Force money is used to support substance-free recreation, with a bit of a focus on tobacco and other substances in our park. Lisa and Casey heard about this opportunity and discussed with Alison Link and Jessica Bickford at Healthy Lamoille Valley how tobacco grant funds could be used at the park. (*Ian Hutchings arrived at 6:04.*) They came up with a fairly finished but still malleable proposal for using the \$1500. The proposal includes using it to pay for event food and supplies, building a low cable and wood post fence to separate the parking area from the rest of the park, and building another trash hut. Other proposed ideas that we could discuss are a graffiti art project that could tie into substance-free recreation a bit and a new picnic table. If we felt we needed two new picnic tables immediately we could use the grant to buy two picnic tables and find other funds for the fence. All purchases have to be made before June 30 but execution can go into July.

James said he doesn't think we need more picnic tables now. Casey said some of them need substantial work. Lisa said all but one of the tables that were there two weeks ago when the insurance company representative looked at the park should be thrown away. She asked, we are purchasing two new ones, right? Casey asked if James is saying that some of the existing tables could be rebuilt to be safe. James said he thinks we should get rid of the ones that are in bad shape. If two are left that are in good shape he thinks that is enough.

Lisa said the key question right now is whether we want to accept the grant. We can discuss later exactly what we will spend the funds on.

Alison Link said Healthy Lamoille Valley thought a culture shift at the park would be in line with what they can do and support. They came up with \$1500 they could give to help maintain the integrity of the park. The specific plan for spending the funds is still malleable. But the timing for spending is becoming short.

Howard moved to sign the letter of agreement with Healthy Lamoille Valley to accept a \$1500 grant, Greg seconded and the motion was passed.

Casey said she feels strongly that we should not be a tool for anyone else's agenda, but there are plenty of ways we can stop short of that pitfall while supporting healthy recreation. She is comfortable with accepting the grant. With regard to tobacco, for example, there is a big difference between something that says "Smoking is bad. Don't ever do it" vs. something for our park that says "Catch more air" and lists the Vermont quit line.

Lisa suggested that each committee member write down ideas for spending the \$1500.

5. *Financial Update & Current Expenses*

Casey said we raised \$1856 at the Jam on Saturday. The tobacco grant can defray some of our expenses for the event. (*Kayla Handy arrived at 6:18.*)

We received an estimate of \$2500 for crack patching work for asphalt at the skatepark. The estimate is not for the traditional "black worms," but for a sand-based product specifically for sports. We asked another contractor for an estimate but that contractor only does the "black worms."

Lisa asked if town recreation facilities money has ever been used for this in the past. Casey said no. Lisa said she can look into whether this could be paid for by town money. Casey said we need to get the work done so we should approve the estimate and get on the contractor's schedule and if we get reimbursed later, that is great.

Howard moved and Greg seconded to accept the \$2500 proposal from All Things Asphalt for crack repair at the skatepark.

James said he has not really noticed cracks in the asphalt. He is not sure it is worth spending \$2500 on this. Ian said he thinks the asphalt is fine. Casey said she has heard from people who feel we need to fix it. Kayla said she thinks a new skateboarder who is learning to push might find it hard with the asphalt as it is now. Those who can push won't have trouble. Greg said if we wait too long to deal with small cracks the asphalt will require much more expensive repairs in the future. We haven't put any maintenance into that strip since he has been involved with the skatepark. It is deteriorating. Lisa said we had the public works department look at it and Jason confirmed that there are cracks big enough for water to get into and expand and start causing damage. If we fix it when it is like this it will be much less expensive than if we wait until the problem is worse.

The motion was passed with James abstaining.

Casey said we need another game camera at the skatepark. She would prefer to get another solar powered one for \$118. That is included in the director's orders.

Casey noted that Greg has had to increase his prices for mowing. Greg said he thinks it would be best to mow three times a year at the park. He doesn't think we need to mow more than that. But he thinks

the skills area definitely needs mowing at least three times a year. James agreed that we do not need to mow more than three times but he thinks we should consider using a vinegar/salt wash on the tread path. Greg noted that on the estimate he provided he included that if he runs into something in the field and punctures a tire or gets other damage the skatepark committee will cover the cost of repair, which could be thousands of dollars. He has seen things like a spike and a bag of concrete in the field.

Casey asked if there are things that can be done in between the three times he mows, like weed whacking. Greg said yes. Kayla said she has a weed whacker and she can use it at the park.

Greg said he agrees that we should get a sprayer and try the vinegar and salt mixture. He also suggested developing a maintenance plan for the tread paths.

Casey said the first of two public meetings in the town about how to spend ARPA funds (COVID money) will be tonight. She will go to the meeting to suggest that the selectboard look at using some of the money to reimburse volunteer committees for extra expenses incurred due to COVID.

6. Recreation Coordinator's Report

Lisa said baseball is ending. Soccer registration is starting. Dance classes are full. Registration for gymnastics starts soon. She has officially given her resignation to the selectboard but she is happy to continue to help with events and fundraising.

7. Laraway Report

George said Laraway is gearing up for graduation. It has been a busy year. They used a \$5000 agriculture grant to increase their orchard and they now have over 30 fruit trees, which can provide quite a bit of food for their students and families. Rick said Lisa Rock from Laraway came in on Saturday to make sandwiches for the event at the skatepark. He expressed appreciation for that, as did the other committee members. He said Laraway has two graduates this year. The summer program will be starting soon.

8. June Jam Outcome; Next Fundraising Plans

Casey said it appears that GoFundMe will be the best platform to use for online fundraising. She asked them if we could be on their non-profit platform, where they keep less money, but they said no. Kayla asked if the committee could use Venmo for donations. What is the advantage of using GoFundMe? Casey said it is synced up with Facebook. Howard and Ian said the ease of access makes it better. James said they charge 2.9% plus 30 cents for each transaction but there are additional bank fees that get tagged on at the end as well. Casey suggested that we give ourselves one more week to see if anyone can come up with better options. If we don't come up with any then she will have the treasurer establish a GoFundMe. The committee agreed.

It was agreed that the committee will pay Greg to mow at the skatepark three times this year.

9. Adjourn

Greg moved to adjourn at 6:43, Howard seconded and the motion was passed.