

JOHNSON SKATEPARK & BIKE TRACK COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

Present:

Committee Members: Casey Romero, Howard Romero, James Whitehill, George Swanson (via Zoom),

Others: Ethan Whaley, Ian Hutchings, Joey Handy, Kayla Handy, Rafael Soto (via phone)

Absent: Greg Fatigate, Rick Aupperlee

1. Call to Order

Casey called the meeting to order at 5:36.

2. Discussion Notes August 10, 2022 Meeting

Casey said the informal notes from the August 10 meeting, when there was no quorum, do not need to be approved. No one had comments on the notes.

3. Financials: Current Expenses

Casey said the only recent expenses have been regular minor expenses. The second half of the payment on the asphalt paving contract was due, but the company needs to come back and do a bit more work to fill some places where the material sank and cracked. They have said they will come back. She told them we can't pay until that is done.

4. Personnel Update

Casey said Ian currently has fewer hours to give us. She spoke to Ashton Schriber about doing some maintenance work and he is fine with that.

David Ellerbee has resigned. The selectboard will follow up on that, starting tomorrow night. Lisa Crews is filling in for soccer in the meantime. David did connect Casey with Gabby Wardwell, who is very interested in NVU/park connections and happy to help us. She can work on a contract basis for the rest of the season. She will take care of trash and help with painting.

Casey asked Ian what hours he can provide. Ian said a lot of fall projects have just popped up in his personal business. He can't really say but he hopes he can work 5-10 hours a week during October.

5. 'Crete Project: Update

Casey said the application for the big grant (a little over \$15K) has been submitted. She not heard about the \$5K grant application that went in earlier. She has information about applying for funds from Concept2. That is on her agenda. The Vermont Community Fund also has grants that can help cover personnel hours and programs. It seems like the GoFundMe is stalled or maxed out. She is not sure how to promote it other than to add information. Joey has an idea for a smaller informal music-oriented event.

6. Recreation Coordinator Report

Since there is currently no recreation coordinator, Casey asked if Ian wanted to make any observations about the park. Ian said it has been business as usual at the park. Nothing appears to have been vandalized. Casey said no committee members have noticed any tailgating parties, etc.

7. Laraway Report

George said Laraway is going to be celebrating its 50th anniversary on September 22 from 12:30 to 5:30. Everyone is invited. They will be showing what they have been doing with students. School is going extremely well. They have some new teaching staff, including Ethan Whaley. Staffing has been challenging but they are doing a great job so far.

8. Site Work: Asphalt Crack Repair, Sign, Fenceline & Trees, Other

Casey said the sign is going to go up next week. Laraway has a new logo and they wanted to unveil it next week so we held up on installing the sign.

We tried to have some tree trimming done, but the way the spruce trees are pushing on the fence it was beyond what Caleb was able to do. Some sumacs are growing up too. One of the Tree Board members, Rob Maynard, came and took a look and said we could lop the branches off at the trunk or we could consider making the row of trees like a hedge, which would involve maintenance. She leans toward no maintenance. She is talking about a very healthy, thick row of spruce on the neighbor's side of the fence. The owner of the park has said we can do whatever trimming work we want.

George said if we try to make a hedge out of spruce it probably will be a little spotty. The committee agreed to lop the limbs back to the trunk.

James said he has seen a bit of negative feedback on Instagram about the asphalt repair. A couple of people commented that it was a waste of money. He thinks some people misunderstood what was being done and thought we were repaving the whole park.

Casey said the bottle return facility in Morrisville now can't take combined glass and plastic because they now go into separate machines. It isn't practical for us to separate materials. She can take the returnable bottles somewhere else. (*Joey and Kayla Handy arrived at 5:57.*) One of the tubs for collecting bottles is broken. We have some nice bins we are going to use but they have to be attached so they don't get stolen. In the meantime, it would be good to find something else we can use as a bottle bin. Joey and Kayla said they have something they can probably bring this weekend.

9. Other Business

Joey said Raf Soto, who was the MC at the 'Crete Jam, is in a band and has a lot of friends in bands. He wanted to do a benefit at the skate park at the end of the season with a variety of bands. We could try to include a raffle. Raf suggested having the event on October 8, starting at noon.

Casey said the event will need to stop before it is too dark to skate. She would get a noise ordinance waiver until 6:00 pm, but it may be too dark before 6:00.

Casey asked how we know the lyrics will all be clean. Joey said he can put a request in to Raf. He plays a lot of all ages shows.

Ethan said the name of Raf's band is Lungbuster. That is a huge concern for substance abuse issues around the park. Another one of the bands is called Cooked. Joey suggested the bands could change their names for the night. He doesn't know the content of the lyrics but he knows Raf has a big following in Burlington and has played with some bigger name bands. His heart is in the right place.

Joey called Raf so the committee could talk to him. Casey explained to Raf that the committee doesn't want any lyrics that are sexual or offensive to a family crowd and that band names that include any cannabis references will not work. She asked if he could work with that. Raf said that is reasonable and he can work around it. They will censor anything that needs to be censored.

Casey said she is willing to create a flyer. She will need to have the band information as soon as possible.

Raf asked if there is any financial angle that should be taken into consideration. Joey said yes, we are going to try to collect donations for the skatepark and sell skatepark t-shirts. If Raf wants to sell his own merchandise, he can. Casey added, as long as it is clean.

Casey explained that the event needs to end before it is dark because there are no lights at the park.

Howard said we have access to at least two 10 ft. x 10 ft. tents that can be used. Raf said he would love to use two.

It was agreed to have a rain date of October 9.

Casey said before committing to this event she needs to make sure we will have enough people to work on it. She will try to confirm that this week and make the plans firm by the end of the day on Friday. (*Raf left the meeting at 6:15.*)

Casey said she and Howard will be away on the date of the next meeting. It could be done by Zoom, but she would have to figure out how. James said he should be able to host the meeting using his work Zoom account, which has no time limitations.

Joey asked if the committee wants to try to do a fundraiser dinner. James said he feels like that would be a good event to keep people's mind on the skatepark in winter. Casey said she knows Tom Moog is still interested in having a fundraiser at his restaurant.

Joey suggested we might be able to do another fundraising event in the spring.

Ethan Whaley said he came to this meeting hoping to act as a liaison. He is a user of the skatepark and he lives and works in the community. He works at Laraway. There seems to be a bit of disconnect between users at the skatepark and what is happening there. A lot of users have questions about how decisions are being made. He wanted to ask some general questions about what is happening and maybe get some updates. Who did the paving? Are these jobs being bid? Are they voted on by this committee?

Casey said we got a recommendation from the town highway foreman. We researched the company he recommended and also asked another asphalt company about using a sports surface product. None of the other companies would use that product, so we went with the company recommended by the highway foreman, who knew about this product.

Ethan asked if the cost is part of the budget or if the committee has grants. He is curious about how the money is being raised. Casey said she can send him some background information. James said this is a town committee with 6 people on it. We have meetings and we get a budget from the town and we vote on expenditures. It was recommended to us that we do crack filling because cracks were starting to form and if we did preventive maintenance we could avoid having to repave the whole surface. Repaving is not possible with the current layout of features adjoining the asphalt.

Ethan said he knows Pierre is recommending expanding the concrete and eventually getting rid of all the asphalt. Joey said we are going to eventually expand the concrete section. James said a concrete half pipe is the next phase. That is what we are fundraising for now.

Ethan asked if that project will be bid out. Casey said in 2018 when we started talking about extending the concrete we got designs and estimates from 2 contractors. We liked the one from Pierre and his price was lower. James said for large projects, since this is a town committee, we have to go out to

bid. Since 2018, Pierre and others have started a non-profit to support long-term planning for skateparks. They did a site visit to talk about possible future plans. There will be more discussions but there has been no decision to make the park all concrete. When he and Greg Fatigate met with Pierre at the park they were thinking about a long-term master plan. We have a lot of space there. The asphalt will have to be replaced at some point. They discussed keeping the main existing strip but expanding concrete areas off of that.

Ethan said he would recommend a fully concrete park. There is less maintenance.

Joey said we are trying to do a little at a time. He noted that he is not an official member of the committee. Casey said committee members have to be appointed by the selectboard. And when we want to apply for a grant, the selectboard has to approve it. Howard said in this town if a committee wants more members the committee can just suggest adding members and the selectboard will generally approve it.

Ethan said he saw a disconnect and he thinks there is an opportunity to close it by including people who use the park in decisions. He doesn't know how to do that, but he recommends it. Joey said he has invited park users to meetings. Ethan said he thinks including local users in social media is important. He asked how skateboarders can provide input. Committee members said people are always welcome at committee meetings. James said we have talked about having committee meetings at the park on a nice day. He agrees about social media. He has asked people to send clips from the park to post on social media, but he hasn't gotten them. Park users want to be involved and he wants them to be involved, but the involvement isn't happening. Casey said it is a little difficult to have official committee meetings at the park because we have to have them on the town Zoom system so anyone can join and have the discussions recorded, but possibly we could have one or two informal discussion meetings there each season.

Ethan said one thing that has helped in skateboard communities he has been involved with is having things to skate that skaters created themselves. He suggested more DIY grassroots efforts for cleaning and maintenance and also inviting skateboarders to come and help when construction is being done. James said it has been hard to get people from the bike community to get together to do DIY work. Maybe it would be different with skateboarders. But we can't have people down there building things on their own. There has to be oversight.

Kayla suggested we could get Laraway kids involved with designing things. We could invite kids to the park on weekends and have them brainstorm. Joey said if anyone wants to build a DIY feature they should come to the committee and propose it and maybe the committee could help with materials.

Ethan asked about the transition that was poured up to the jersey barrier. Ian said a skater did it without telling us. It just appeared one day.

Casey said the bottom line is liability. The park is town property and if anything happens it is the town's insurance that is responsible. It needs to be communicated that anything built has to come through the committee.

Ethan asked, people would come to the committee and propose a project and then it would go to the insurance company? Casey said it doesn't need to go to the insurance company. There is enough expertise on the committee to know whether something will be safe and will work for all ages.

Ian said he has heard people asking how they can get more things built. He has encouraged everyone who asked to come to a meeting. We need to know what people want to do. People could even email ideas. But they should not just show up and put something in the park without talking to the committee.

Ian said people have come to him about the transition to the jersey barrier, saying people shouldn't just show up and do something like that. It needs to come through the skatepark committee. There were problems with what was done and the person who started the work never finished it. Now we are stuck with a bad transition. We will have to break it up with a jackhammer and lay new concrete. James said we don't want to discourage people from getting involved. It just needs to go through the right channels so it doesn't end up like this situation where we have to spend money to fix something that was done poorly.

Ethan said he can try to relay some information to the skateboarders. Committee members encouraged him to do so.

Ethan asked what price Pierre and Nick quoted for the half pipe extension. Casey said a little over \$28K for the concrete work and a little over \$10K for the berm and surrounding site work. The town is going to contribute the fill for the berms and do the hydroseeding. Pierre doesn't want to change his estimate but because it will be spring before this gets started, he wants his estimate numbers to have some wiggle room.

Ethan asked if the mini ramp is going to be torn down. James said it is on its last legs. A lot of people use it but it is in poor shape. A section of the new bowl will be a similar feature, but taking out the mini ramp would still leave a hole. We will hold onto the wooden mini ramp as long as it is safe.

10. Adjourn

James moved to adjourn at 6:53, Howard seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths