

**Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Working Group
Town of Johnson
4/19/2023**

Present:

*Jan Gearhart
Douglas Molde
Adrienne Stevson
Peggy Williams
Casey Romero
Kyle Nuse
BJ Putvain
Yva Rose
Allie Kratzat*

Non-committee

Beth Foy

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to all order by Beth Foy @ 5:01

2. Volunteer for minutes

Allie Kratzat volunteered to take notes.

3. Intros

Beth Foy: Selectboard member, interested because selectboard is very busy and wants the rail trail to be highlighted. Sorting out what's important and what isn't is key. Experience as Town board member and basketball volunteer.

Allie Kratzat: Moved with husband to Johnson last fall, background in outdoor rec and currently working in environmental permitting and engineering. Interested in long-term growth of Johnson as rail trail destination and family friendly village.

Yva Rose: Lamoille County Bike Tours, 3 different towns. Brick and mortar in Johnson. First year with full 93 miles open. Daily communications with potential recreators are already spiking.

BJ Putvain: Owns business on Railroad Street, vice-chair village trustees. Applying for capital grant covering general maintenance/site improvements related to rail trail use for home-based business.

Kyle Nuse: From Johnson, she and partner own Minema Gallery. Chairs beautification committee. Rides to and from job 20 miles round trip 3 seasons a year. Works as a grant writer so can bring that experience.

Casey Romero: Lives in Johnson, worked on Skate Park/Biking committee for 20+ years. Interest in mapping and trails, Johnson is a crossroads where the trails come together. Been attending LCPC meetings for around 4 months. Sees this as a transitional role, as skate season starts up and commitments start. Not enough money and too many conflicted interests, hoping we can find clarity and direction.

Peggy Williams: Living in Johnson since 1972, returned in 2009. 10,000+ miles in cycling, using rail trail since inception. Average cyclist does around 45 miles a day, so Johnson being at the center of the 90 miles is ideal. Hopes to bring experience as cyclist to committee. People are already showing great interest on social media for this season.

Adrienne Steveson: On planning commission and beautification committee, moved here last year with partner. Cares about success of rail trail when it comes to how people experience Johnson as visitors.

Jan Gearheart: Lots of experience as cyclist on rail trails. On original committee 10 years ago, still has access to those materials as well as personal library. Trail conditions are still iffy, as of Sunday.

Douglas Molde: Lives out in Coddington Hollow, helped found the Lamoille River Paddler's Trail. Worked with LCDC previously, worked for two decades with planning commission and 12 years on select board. We want to be able to provide both information and needed services to visitors, and it will be necessary to coordinate with the various levels of government and organizations involved with rail trail. We want Johnson to face forward.

Establish Officers

Beth: Can chair tonight, but cannot commit going forward.

Casey and Peggy: Raised the point that we shouldn't establish chair/co-chair until we know each other better through committee work.

Beth: As long as agenda is set and someone runs the meeting, this is okay for the time being. Minutes will still need to be published within 7 days of meeting. Make sure that we take roll for potential voting purposes.

Peggy: Who are contacts for questions forwarded by the board?

Beth: Regional trail is best contact for questions regarding trail themselves. E-mail Lydia and copy Brian for Town policy related questions.

Doug: can we have a liaison with Selectboard?

Beth: Selectboard members are currently stretched very thin, but it's something to bring to the boards attention.

Kyle: Liaisons were very helpful with previous experience.

Casey: The Selectboard asked for volunteers for this board; given that this is atypical for working group formation, we should have more support.

Beth: Understands what committee members are saying.

Peggy: Forwards that we avoid discussing committee business outside of the group unnecessarily, especially when a member is disappointed in group outcomes.

Casey and Douglas support. Beth moves to vote.

All members agree to Peggy's motion.

Beth: Officers will be pushed to next meeting.

LCLVRTC Rep and Alts

There are three sections of trail, each region has own planning commission. Volunteer needed for Lamoille County commission, if we select they will start appointment process. Public applicants will also be accepted.

Casey: has been volunteering, but will not be able to commit moving forward.

Beth: State is asking County planning commission to have designated representatives from each Town.

Kyle and Eva Rose are both too busy, Casey recommends Doug.

Doug: Happy to accept, will volunteer.

BJ moves that Doug becomes LCLVRTC volunteer, all committee members in favor.

Doug accepts.

Beth: will bring Doug's appointment to Selectboard, asked Casey to send out information about next meeting.

Peggy moves that Kyle be forwards as alternate for the LCLVRTC committee, all in favor.

Purpose Statement

Peggy: The working group was created for a reason -- do we have specific objectives, or are we being given a blank slate?

Beth: Will hold until next agenda item.

Kyle: Question about process. When we make these recommendations, how should they be presented to the Selectboard? What can we expect back from the Selectboard in support?

Beth: Realistically, some of the support for recommendations will be based on available selectboard support. This is high on the priority list, however, and Beth will take it to the board to clarify. For larger asks, a presentation to the board should be prepared. For smaller items, a questionnaire or other less formal approach should be sufficient.

It's not clear at this point how the Town and regional committees and recommendations will interact.

Doug: We should be able to execute certain actions without oversight; given that it can take the Selectboard a long time to work through suggestions time can be of the essence. Information access for local businesses and visitors should be at the forefront of committee action.

Beth: Questions can be put to the board regarding this.

Casey: What's the ROW for State from middle of rail trail? We need to understand how this works with display advertising and signage when attracting visitors.

Eva Rose: State can be tough on signage around the rail trail, but trailheads tend to have more leeway when it comes to display advertising.

Casey: Concerned about vagueness of statement; doesn't make it clear what we are authorized to do or what our focuses should be. Suggests we go through statement line by line next meeting.

Beth: Another approach would be to accept the statement now, and amend as needed in the future. Statement language allows for this.

BJ: Main goal is to attract visitors into Johnson, correct?

Peggy: It's also about business/private sector development. I.e., setting up a campground.

Kyle: we don't have a committee budget, what's the expectation when it comes to initiatives that require funds?

Casey: For FY24, would there be access to funds from the Town?

Beth: Funds aren't available, they're for grant matching.

Beth: Is this group focusing on bringing ideas forward to the selectboard, or bringing projects to fruition itself?

Beth: Suggests adding language that committee can ask to act, when so compelled. (See/insert notes)

Kyle: How will our committee be able to interact with other Town committees when interests intersect?

Casey: There's a lot of interplay between committees already, and minutes are publicly available. Informal networking will happen naturally.

Beth: There can be a disconnect between the selectboard and committees, due to the former's schedule, so some committee cooperation could be beneficial.

Mission & Objectives

Adrienne: Are there any dates we should be aware of, for immediate future planning?

Yva Rose: There is a grand opening for the completed trail in May. Bike Tours is working with VTrans on a website and guide book, and also has a local ride guide available at the tour hub and shop.

Beth: Objectives will be tabled until next meeting, when people have been able to think them over.

Next Meeting/Agenda

Next meeting set for May 3 at 5:00pm. BJ will check on Zoom availability and will chair.

Agenda:

Updates from Selectboard

Objectives

Rail Trail Opening Party?

LCPC Committee Update/Information Share

Officers

Decide on purpose statement revisions

Meeting called to close at 6:40 pm by Beth.