

JOHNSON SKATEPARK & BIKE TRACK COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING/REMOTE ATTENDANCE BY ZOOM  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

**Present:**

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

Others: Jimmy Yousey, Aryk Tomlinson, Greg Hill, Sheila White, Alexis Daniels

**Absent:** Rick Aupperlee

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

Howard nominated Casey as chair for FY2024. Greg seconded. **Casey was elected chair.**

**1. Call to Order**

Casey called the meeting to order at 5:38.

**2. Draft Minutes of June 14, 2023; Notes of August 9, 2023**

Sheila White said the notes from the August 9 meeting said some picnic tables and a portalet were on her property but that should be corrected to say that they are on town property near her property. She also said there was nothing in the notes about the short Act 250 discussion when Jeannie Osgood asked if an Act 250 permit was required and the answer was yes.

Casey clarified that a separate Act 250 permit was not required. Everything in the park was grandfathered under Act 250 and then when the bike skills track in the meadow was added, that required a minor amendment.

Sheila asked where people can find that information. Casey said there may be something in the minutes of a selectboard meeting. She assumes there are records in the town offices about Act 250 permits on town property.

Sheila said she knows generally when there is an Act 250 permit application adjoining property owners are made aware and she was never aware of an Act 250 application. Casey explained the history. When the park was created, it was agreed that there would be only recreational development there. The committee assumed that when the property transfer happened Act 250 had been involved and had approved recreational structures. That turned out not to be true. There was no Act 250 permit. The committee discovered that when they asked about putting in the bike skills track in the meadow. The Agency of Natural Resources knew what was in park and what was there before so, as she recalls, they said the park was being given an Act 250 permit. An amendment to it was required for the skills park. We had to do an archaeological survey as part of getting that.

Greg Hill said adjoining residents should have been notified. Howard said he used to be flood zone administrator for the town. Any project near the river corridor was supposed to come through him to ensure compliance with floodplain regulations, but until about 2 years ago he never got anything. He asked District 5 why he was not being notified and that changed. District 5 has been loose about notifying adjoining landowners or the flood zone administrator.

Sheila asked who District 5 is. Howard said it is the Agency of Natural Resources district that covers our area.

Casey said a Lamoille County Planning Commission representative said it is known that the kinds of things being built at the skatepark are seen as helpful in a flood zone because they buffer the impact of the water. Sheila said she could see that being true unless material is brought in. Howard said two dump loads of gravel would not have much effect. Sheila said more material than that has been brought in. Greg Hill said if the material adds an inch, that could have a significant effect.

Casey said when the committee thought about extending the concrete structure she got in touch with Act 250 and described to them what we were doing. She showed them a sketch. They saw there was going to be a berm of dirt around the half pipe and they said it would be fine and a further amendment to the Act 250 permit was not needed.

Sheila said she wants to know who is keeping track of that stuff. Greg Hill said the skatepark committee should be getting something in writing when talking to these people. Casey said she knows there was paperwork for the amendment we got. Greg Hill asked if the committee got anything in writing saying the proposed new concrete piece was fine. Casey said that was in an email exchange. She could try to find the emails. Howard said the town clerk should have a record of all Act 250 permits and amendments.

Jimmy Yousey asked what Act 250 is. Howard said it is Vermont's major law regarding land development. There are 10 or 11 criteria that have to be met for development to be allowed.

**Howard moved to approve the minutes of June 14, 2023 and the notes of August 9, 2023 with the correction discussed, Greg seconded and the motion was passed.**

**3. *Accept Directors' Orders and Other Written Reports***

Casey said in the past month we have spent \$135 for note taking and some flood-related expenses. We have not yet paid for payroll work; still waiting for timesheets.

**Greg moved to accept the written report from Casey and the motion was seconded and passed.**

**4. *Fundraiser Proposal***

Casey introduced Aryk Tomlinson, who has offered to do graphic design for the committee, probably on stickers, as a future fundraiser. We would pay for production. She asked how we would price and sell stickers and what the profit margin is.

Aryk said they are for a good cause so we can price accordingly. He thinks we would want to make at least \$2 per sticker. He suggested we might also want to consider a hoodie design. Winter is approaching and parents might want to buy hoodies for their kids. A hoodie would make more money than a sticker. His idea is to devote the front page of his website to this for a week or two.

Casey said James and his wife have graphic design backgrounds. She asked James for his input. James said he thinks \$2 a sticker seems reasonable. There are 6 stickers on a sheet and it costs \$4.35 per sheet so we would be making \$7.65 on each sheet of stickers. It seems like an awesome idea.

Aryk suggested we could let people choose how much to pay for a sticker pack based on how much they want to donate. Some might pay \$10 or \$20. Jimmy asked if there would be a minimum price. Aryk said he thinks so. Greg Fatigate said he would want to make sure there is a minimum. He asked if people would order online. Aryk said yes. He can help with mailing them to customers.

It was agreed that Casey and James should work further with Aryk and come back with a specific proposal and costs.

**Greg moved to accept the concept of a fundraiser featuring art by Aryk Tomlinson, Howard seconded and the motion was passed.**

**5. *Laraway Report***

George said things are going well at Laraway. Classes are going well. Students will be taken on a trip to the Shelburne Museum tomorrow. The garden was pretty much destroyed this year. They are looking forward to doing cidering with students.

Casey explained that Laraway is an official partner with the town to help promote, sustain and develop the skatepark.

George said Laraway staff found one of the skatepark tables by the river. They retrieved and cleaned it and as soon as it dries enough they will give it a coat of paint and return it to the park.

**6. *Flood Information (Town & Park), Other Town Info***

Casey said she got information from town recreation coordinator Dean Locke this morning. We now have a permanent town administrator again. He started Monday. His name is Thomas Galinat. Beth Foy put information on him on Front Porch Forum. Carl Rogers is going to continue to work 2 days a week for a little while to support the new town administrator. At some point he will come to a skatepark meeting.

**7. *Update on Park Re-Opening, Half-Pipe RFP, Long-Term Planning***

Casey said the draft request for proposals for the half-pipe extension has not yet been approved by the town administrator but Dean said she could send a draft to two contractors she knows of. She did that today. If the projected construction time is 3 weeks it is possible that the work could be done this fall but that is probably not realistic. The next step will be having the RFP officially published.

We are still waiting for the last FEMA inspection before the park can reopen. They have done a first inspection but apparently we need another.

Greg Hill said the park is technically closed but it is being used on a daily basis. Casey said she has heard that.

Casey said the committee doesn't want to do any work at the park until the last inspection happens. Then it depends on when the town highway department can schedule the work. Demolition will take 2 to 3 days.

Jimmy asked if the concrete bowl will be demolished. Committee members said no; it was not damaged. Jimmy asked, most of the wood ramps are going to be gone, right? Committee members said yes. Jimmy asked if any of the straight pipes will be salvaged. Committee members said they think some can be salvaged. Jimmy said he thinks the metal on top of the ramps could be salvaged. Greg Fatigate said that was discussed but it wouldn't make sense to spend the amount of time that would take given the value of the material. But some of the straight pipes can be saved because they were not damaged. It will take some effort when the demolition goes on to make sure they are not taken. Jimmy asked if all the rails and concrete will be saved. Casey said metal or concrete can be saved, but she doesn't know about the A-frame. Jimmy asked about a piece that is like a rail with metal and wood. Greg said that is somewhat damaged.

Aryk asked if there will be more emphasis on concrete. Committee members said yes. Howard said our goal is an all concrete park. Casey said the amount of money we get is determined by the cost of rebuilding the wood structures exactly as they were but it is agreed that we will not replace them as they were. We will go more for concrete.

Jimmy asked about the bike trail. Casey said Greg Fatigate will have to redo the skills park in spring. It is currently all filled in and useless. Jimmy said it seemed that no one really used the track closer to the road because they got bored with it. Greg asked if there were changes he would suggest to it. Jimmy suggested having a few more jumps, but not huge ones, and making it so there is grass around it but it is still a trail. Greg said he thinks the trail getting overgrown was part of the problem. Jimmy said he used it a couple of times at first and it was really fun but then it got overgrown and flattened out. Greg said the idea for redoing it would be to put down crushed stone and gravel so it doesn't grow up with grass and has better rolling resistance and is easier to maintain. He is thinking of making a more simplified oval. Jimmy said he thinks the only part people use is the part closest to the skatepark with the jumps. The steeper jumps are starting to get overgrown. Greg said the original idea for the skills track was to offer an alternative for people who were just riding their bikes in the skatepark and were not riding the jumps because they were too big. Jimmy said when the obstacle course area was first put in people were using it more than the skatepark but after a week or so people got bored of it and stopped using it and it got overgrown.

Casey said the skatepark can be reopened after the highway department does the demolition work. We have a good plan for the skills park but the skate terrain will take a lot of input from riders. Greg Fatigate said it will also take patience. Casey said she is not sure when we will find out how much money we will get from FEMA. The town has to send a single request covering all town damages and documenting some other damage will take longer. It will be next year before we know what we can build.

Jimmy said he feels like if the committee gets the half-pipe constructed it will make people pretty content for a while. He suggested making any future boxes out of concrete so they don't keep breaking. Greg Fatigate agreed that would be preferable. Jimmy said one box there now that is made of concrete has been there so long that the concrete on the sides is ungrindable. Boxes made of concrete need coping or angle bars to keep them usable.

Casey said as soon as we get the word we can reopen we will work quickly to get the park set up.

#### **8. Citizen Input**

Sheila asked if the committee knows when the portalet company will come and get the portalet near her property. Casey said she thought it had been picked up by the town already. It is on their list to pick up. The portalet company has said they are not able to retrieve it.

Greg Hill asked if there is any reason the committee can't put up a sign at the end of the skateboard park to keep people from skating on the road. Skateboarders are on the road all the time throughout summer. Residents have been told to call the sheriff's department but it gets monotonous that it is his responsibility to do that when people are not following the rules.

Casey said the police have told her that people have the right to ride the road on a skateboard. Jimmy said he rides the road all the time. He is very aware of the cars. He is always looking around and if a car is behind him he signals which way he is going. Greg Hill said not everyone does that.

Greg Hill said he never had an issue until the skateboard park went in. All he asks is for a sign to be put up at the end of the skatepark.

Casey said she doesn't know that we can restrict what people do outside the skatepark on a town road. It would have to be a request asking people please not to skate on the road. She doesn't know what language can be put on a public road sign. Howard suggested looking into that.

Jimmy asked if Greg's neighbors are also mad about skateboarders on the road. Greg said yes – not mad, but frustrated. Sheila said she thinks all residents in that area probably feel the same way. It is scary when a skateboarder is coming down the hill fast and a driver is coming up. There are blind spots due to tree limbs where a driver can't see well uphill. People are fearful that they are going to hit someone. Greg Hill said there could be a rock in the road that would make a skateboarder lose control. Residents have called the sheriff's department and they have spoken to kids about not skating that road. He suggested the town could create an ordinance.

Greg Fatigate said maybe we can look at signage. Casey said she thinks the committee is agreed that we will follow up on this, balancing road rights and safety concerns. James said he thinks maybe signage would be the first step. It is a slow speed road in a residential neighborhood and we want people to be driving slowly. It is the responsibility of drivers to drive a reasonable speed if there is a blind corner or blind hill, but signage is a fine place to start.

Greg Fatigate said the last few meetings with members of the public attending have been the most productive he can remember. He appreciates the input. He didn't realize until today that people skating up and down the road was such a concern.

#### **9. Other Business**

Casey said the whole section of the rail trail between Cambridge and Wolcott is being reopened on Saturday. The rail trail is one of 12 finalists in a national transportation award contest that is online. People can vote once a day. There is a cash award.

#### **10. Adjourn**

**James moved to adjourn, Howard seconded, the motion was passed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:47.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*