

JOHNSON SKATEPARK & BIKE TRACK COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MASONIC TEMPLE, PEARL ST., JOHNSON/REMOTE ATTENDANCE BY ZOOM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024

Present:

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

Others: Dean Locke, Rod Rodjenski (via Zoom), Sheila White, Ethan Whaley (via Zoom)

Absent: Rick Aupperlee, Greg Fatigate

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Casey called the meeting to order at 5:34.

2. Draft Minutes of March 13, 2024

Howard moved to approve the minutes of March 13, 2024, James seconded and the motion was passed.

3. FEMA and Rebuilding Updates, Including Relevant Town Info

Ron said what we know now is that based on the October 2023 field visit FEMA will reimburse for \$91K in damages. They will cover 75%. Casey has identified an additional \$54K in damages not included in their original estimate – primarily the bike track and smaller items not included in the original inspection. We asked FEMA to reopen the damage claim and add the \$54K. We have been asked for more information to support adding it. He and Casey are working on that. FEMA has asked if we want to move toward something more resilient at that site, such as concrete. We are trying to finish the damage claim. Once that number is firmed up, FEMA will give us twice the damage amount to rebuild with resilient materials. There has been discussion about the master plan for the whole parcel.

Casey said yesterday she showed the FEMA representative our committee's concept sketch with preliminary square footage of the concrete base and explanation that we sketched ramps based on the six ramps FEMA identified in October, and rough volume calculations can be done easily. They want a cost estimate. They understand the sketch is not a final plan. If we want to make changes, that is okay. We will need to get rid of the existing asphalt road, eliminate at least one maple tree and deal with another stump, and move the water line. Casey asked Pierre Hall if he and his brother, who will build the new half pipe, could work on a rough estimate for what we want to do, and he agreed.

Dean asked if they are looking for the estimate of what work we plan to do this calendar year or the whole scope of work for the park. Casey said just the plan for skateboard area mitigation, at this point. Ron said the sooner we get a master plan of the whole parcel, including ideas for conservation and the garden, to the selectboard, the better. They need to be brought into the loop.

Alexis asked when the asphalt would come out. Casey said when the other mitigation work is done.

Ron said \$91K has already been approved. We will get 75% of that. Casey said she thinks the state will kick in some as well. Ron said they may add the \$54K and then they will double whatever the final damage figure is and give us that much to rebuild. The state is under deadlines to spend ARPA money and there may be some available. Casey could propose our project to the state for funding. A master plan will be helpful for getting funds.

Dean asked if the money can be used for grant matches or if it is directly earmarked for building. Ron said it has to be related to the improvements.

Casey asked if we can put out an RFP for fencing.

Ron said FEMA has two different categories – resiliency and replacement. If we are doing replacement we have to follow our local procurement policy. We have the work done to replace the damaged items and FEMA reimburses us. They won't reimburse for replacement of anything not originally identified in the FEMA damage inspection. The committee can add any other work onto the contract but part of it may not be eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

Casey said the fence is on their list, so it seems we could try to get replacement of that scheduled. But maybe we should hold off on replacing the electrical system, which they have not acknowledged because it was not inspectable. The quote we got for the electrical system included one or two improvements for resilience, but we can take them out and they won't make the project cost more. Since the whole system has to be redone from scratch, it won't cost more to have outlets or switches placed higher.

Ron said the electrical system is not currently part of their damage list. If it is repaired now they won't be able to see existing conditions. FEMA reimbursement will be based on putting it back the way it was. We can go ahead but we risk not getting fully reimbursed. Casey said once we have an answer as to whether the electrical system is on their damage list then we will go ahead.

Casey asked, once we know what is approved for replacing the electrical system, if we say we are going to replace in a resilient way that may not cost any more money, do we get a new estimate for doing the work with resiliency? Ron said if the committee wanted to bid out the work today we could ask for quotes to return to pre-flood conditions and alternate bids for resiliency, showing the cost for that, which might be zero.

Casey asked if Dean can help with the process of putting out a fence replacement RFP. He said yes.

4. *Current Work Proposed: Site Cleanup, Temporary Repair of Fence, Other*

Casey said Kayla Handy, who has done work at the park before, had thought she could work on clearing the spruces last weekend, but the storm interfered. We will only be reimbursed for work in the damaged area but we really want to clear the lower branches along the rest of the line that are crowding the fence. Ron said the work needs to be divided into separate jobs in that case. Casey said some other site prep is required for the damaged area. The fence fabric and posts are all anchored to the ground by vegetation. Howard said the poles are bent but are in the ground. They will be hard to get up. Casey said the one fence bid we got was more than the electric system quote. If anyone knows a fencing company they should contact her.

We will be losing the dumpster that is currently at the park. We will need to get another one. Dean said we will see if we can add the skatepark dumpster onto the town contract.

Casey brought up the question of whether to have a cleanup event at the park for Green Up Day. It was agreed that we should. Alexis said many screws were left around the park after demolition. The Green Up Day cleanup could include trying to pick them up.

Casey asked what Laraway is doing for Green Up Day. George said he can see if the skatepark can be part of what they clean up. They would probably work there on the Friday before Green Up Day.

5. Update: VT Community Fund Grant

Casey said the Vermont Community Fund grant is still in limbo. The skatepark got \$3300 from a larger pot of Community Fund flood recovery money to cover the value of lost contents not paid for by VLCT or FEMA. With the grant deadline next week, an application may not be possible. Casey will follow up.

6. Options for Changing Administrative Work & Committee Structure

Dean said the skatepark has not been completely under the umbrella of town recreation. He and Casey have had conversations about what will happen in the future when Casey and Howard are no longer involved with the skatepark committee. The rec committee has struggled to bring in people since COVID. Feedback he is getting from people in the community is that people are afraid of making a long-term commitment. His plan is to move toward having rec committee meetings with groups of volunteers for each sport rather than a formal committee structure. He and Casey have talked about two possibilities – keeping the skatepark committee as it is or changing to something less formal like what he envisions for recreation. When Casey and Howard step away he will need to take responsibility for the skatepark budget and directors' orders.

Casey said as a citizen she recognizes that committee structure and committees should be streamlined because the resources available to serve committees are overburdened. She is all in favor of more efficiency. Serving the skatepark is in Dean's job description. He will take over doing monthly directors' orders and bill paying. Because of the burden of dealing with FEMA, town staff are maxed out. She doesn't feel comfortable making a commitment to change our committee status, at least for a while. It is too big a change and she has too much else to deal with. One consideration is that as a committee we report to the selectboard. That means we have a direct line to them. If we were a more informal group we would work with Dean and Tom and not necessarily be in a direct reporting line to the selectboard.

Sheila said she feels the skatepark committee should remain a formal committee because there have been issues in the past such as the committee not being told they needed Act 250 permits. James said he thinks too much happens from a budget and regulatory standpoint to make the skatepark committee less formal. He thinks we need the formality for all the things we deal with. Other committee members agreed. (*James and George left at 6:33.*)

7. Public Input

Sheila asked about the picnic table that was cut up. She thought Casey had said it was not cut up because it was tangled with the downed electric line but was vandalized. Casey said that table has been removed. There was some vandalism, but that happened in the park later. There are still two picnic tables out in the wetland. There is a little damage to them. They have settled in and probably will have to be dug out to free the legs. That could be a Green Up Day project for someone.

Sheila said she looked at the information Casey sent out with the agenda and there was discussion of a concrete plaza. What is that? Casey said it is a consolidation of features. FEMA said they don't want anything east of where the asphalt is now. At the February meeting the committee collaboratively sketched ideas for replacing the 6 major ramps and putting them where it makes sense. Sheila asked, they won't be on the paved area they have always been on? Casey said the asphalt will be taken out and replaced with a concrete base and these features will be put in. One will connect to the new half pipe.

Sheila asked if an Act 250 permit is needed for the changes. Casey said that is a good question. It was not needed for the half pipe.

Sheila said Kyley Hill talked to her about how no more asphalt could be put in because it doesn't absorb water. She is wondering about concrete. Casey said we would want the features to incorporate the good aspects of skate parks in flood zones. They can break up the impact of a flood. Dean said anything built there has to meet FEMA and local flood zone construction standards.

Casey said she is guessing that once we have a design, before we go out to bid we will show it to the state and the town. We have to get a permit for anything in the 100 year floodplain but some parts of the park are in the 500 year floodplain. She doesn't know where the new flood maps will show the floodplain is. We, and many others, are waiting for new maps to become available.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:49.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED