

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MASONIC TEMPLE, JOHNSON PUBLIC LIBRARY
22 PEARL STREET, JOHNSON, VT
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024

Present:

Committee Members: BJ Putvain (remote), Kyle Nuse (remote), Kim Dunkley, Doug Molde, Adrienne Stevson, Mary Lou Kopas

Absent: Jan Gearhart, Peggy Williams

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Doug called the meeting to order at 5:38.

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. Approval of Minutes

Kim moved to approve the minutes of February 21, 2024, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

4. Next Step to Implement VOREC Grant

Doug said we got the VOREC grant. Randall Szott told him that the next step would be a Request for Proposals (RFP.) Doug thinks we would ask Tom Galinat to put that out. He would be happy to do that.

5. Subcommittee Report on the AARP Liveable Communities Grant Application

Kyle said the grant application was submitted on time. Randall ended up submitting it for \$17,500. That would cover what the subcommittee considered to be the bare minimum of what they wanted – benches, bike racks, supplies to repair and refurbish existing bike racks, and picnic tables. She thinks it will take 6-8 weeks from when the application was submitted in early March to find out if we got the grant.

6. Grant Application Schedule Discussion

BJ said Randall felt it would be really hard to set up a grant application schedule because the public as well as town groups may apply for grants and we can't really ask members of the public to check with him about grants they are applying for.

Doug said he thinks we should have our own schedule. BJ agreed. It would have been nice if there was also a community schedule so Randall would know if anyone else was looking into the same grants. But we can keep track of our own grants. Doug said we could at least tell Randall what grants we are looking into.

BJ said he suggested to Randall that the schedule could just be for town groups and Randall said that would have to go through Tom and the selectboard. Kim said she would be happy to go to the selectboard about it.

Doug suggested starting by asking Randall for a list of grants that would provide opportunities for us and their timelines. Adrienne suggested inviting him to a meeting in person. BJ said he will bring up with Randall again getting something together for our group. Kim suggested also asking about available grants if he has time to look into it.

7. *Vermont Community Foundation Community Challenge Grant Opportunity*

Kyle said she and Doug had a conversation with Holly Morehouse of the Vermont Community Foundation. She wanted to know our needs as a community. They told her we are going for an AARP grant and may not get it all or may need more and she seemed amenable to either giving us funds to bridge the gap so we could get everything we want on Main St. and/or paying for the electric bike charging station. She didn't commit to anything specific but it seemed really promising that funds will come our way and it will probably be pretty flexible how we can use them.

Kyle said Holly also had a similar conversation with Diane Lehouiller and others who are interested in getting a small storage structure on Legion Field for Tuesday Night Live, the ice rink and the bread oven. The structure could also provide a warming shelter and bathroom. They are looking for support and funding. Diane thinks they will also get funds from the Vermont Community Foundation.

Doug said Randall sent out an email tonight saying Vermont Community Foundation funds will be deposited in the near future. Use of funds will be subject to selectboard approval.

8. *Update on Town Branding and Website Plan*

Adrienne said several months ago she showed logo sketches to the selectboard and they chose 3 different options. She hasn't had time to work on the logo. She will make it a priority. Her goal is to finish the logo options before the next meeting and reach out to Tom about presenting them to the selectboard. After rebranding with the new logo we would look at the website. Beth wanted to reorganize it but Adrienne thinks it should be completely redesigned.

9. *How to Secure Funds to Put Information for Riders at Johnson Trailhead*

Doug said Jeffersonville has a good example of a board showing what is available in town. Kim said she thinks we could find space to put a board at the welcome center. We just need a new board.

Adrienne said the beautification committee is giving out beautification grants again. Howard Romero applied for \$500 for a new door and siding repair at the welcome center. Maybe something could be done with an information board at the same time as that work.

Doug said he thinks we should ask Randall and LCPC what money is available for advertising and kiosks. We ought to talk to the recreation and beautification committees. Adrienne said she wonders if VTrans is giving out funds for this. Kim suggested we could have information about businesses in town and also information VTrans wants to show such as a map of the Johnson section of the trail. Doug asked if Kim would look into funding possibilities.

10. *Potential Use of Holmes Meadow for Rail Trail User Camping and Action Plan*

Doug showed on a map the Holmes Meadow area that David Butler sold to the town. The town bought it with funding intended for flood relief. There are restrictions on structures there. David conveyed a fishing access to the Vermont River Conservancy. Camping is specifically mentioned in the deed. Doug thinks we should start researching how camping facilities are used with rail trails and what we would need to use the land for camping. Kim said Lea Kilvadyova wanted a path through Holmes Meadow and a bridge across the river. Soil is going to be removed from the Holmes Meadow parcel to lower it. Doug said he thinks we should be talking to the selectboard. They are in charge of the property. We should find out how camping would work with the flood mitigation work. Adrienne asked how much land there is. Doug said he thinks it is about 4.5 acres. He thinks the fill will be removed from the steep section bordering the river.

Kim said she has concerns about whether a campground might become a place where homeless people take shelter or a place where people litter. Adrienne asked if there would be signed spots that people would reserve and pay for. Doug said that is to be determined. He thinks we need to look into what we can do. Mary Lou offered to do research on camping and bike trails. Kim said the Route Verte in Canada goes through areas where there is camping.

Kyle moved that Doug and Mary Lou go to the selectboard to talk about the possibility of camping at Holmes Meadow, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Appointment of Subcommittee to Study Implementation of Secure Parking for Rail Trail Visitors

It was agreed to postpone this until the next meeting.

12. Google Drive File Management Presentation

Adrienne described how to access Google Drive. She has created different folders on Google Drive for committee information. She showed how to upload files and create new folders.

13. How to Secure Funds to Put Information for Riders at Johnson Trailhead (continued)

Kyle said she has a funding source idea. If we need \$1000 or less, Vermont Electric Coop has a community grant they offer several times a year. She thinks this would be a perfect match for it. She would be happy to apply for it. Doug said we also need to work with other committees on a design for the kiosk that would work for everyone and on what to post. Kyle said VEC has several grant deadlines a year. The next one is March 31.

14. Set Next Meeting Date, Time, Place and Agenda

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 17 at the library space in the Masonic Temple at 5:30.

15. Adjourn

Doug moved to adjourn at 6:41, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths