

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MASONIC TEMPLE, JOHNSON PUBLIC LIBRARY
22 PEARL STREET, JOHNSON, VT
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 2024

Present:

Committee Members: Kyle Nuse, Doug Molde, Peggy Williams, Adrienne Stevson, Jan Gearhart, BJ Putvain, Mary Lou Kopas, Kim Dunkley

Absent: Mary Lou Kopas, BJ Putvain

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Doug called the meeting to order at 5:30.

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

Peggy said she wants to add an update on using Zoom. She doesn't think we should pursue that idea. We have gotten used to Teams and we wouldn't be able to use her Zoom account at meetings she can't attend. She thinks we should stick with teams. Adrienne said we are reliant on BJ to run Teams. Kyle said some changes to Open Meeting Law were just passed. We have to have both in-person and hybrid options for our meetings starting July 1. Adrienne said she thinks that means all committees will have to use the town Zoom account. Doug suggested that committee members call the town to let them know of our need to use their Zoom account.

Doug added to the agenda an update on info from the regional rail trail committee meeting.

Adrienne said she thinks the recent email conversation about concerns over the picnic table event should have been held in person rather than over email. Doug said he deliberately did not respond because he didn't think the conversation should be occurring over email.

3. Approval of Minutes

Peggy moved to approve the minutes of May 15, 2024, Kim seconded and the motion was passed with Adrienne abstaining as she was not at that meeting.

4. Information Sharing from Yva Rose

Yva rose was not present so this agenda item was passed over.

5. Father's Day Picnic Table Event Updates and Next Steps

Kyle said the picnic table event was great. We had 18 people come. All committee members except Doug, Peggy and BJ were there. Kim said 7 tables were put together. All of them have been moved now. Two went to Legion Field, one to Beard Park, one to the new quiet path the Vermont Studio Center made, two to the village green and one to Old Mill Park by the playground. Shayne helped Kyle put a press release together with photos and it was sent to the paper. Kyle said the next step is getting plaques made saying who donated for each table. Jan had donated some steel to make the plaques but unfortunately it is too thick and heavy according to the engraver, so we will have to use the engraver's materials. She is getting quotes from Great Big Graphics and Morrisville Engraving. Part of the sponsorship money will pay for the plaques. Adrienne suggested maybe sanding and staining the tables. Kyle said they need a year to cure first. Kyle said the town crew helped move tables today.

6. Bike Rack and Bench Repair Plan

Kyle said she has been talking to Erik Bailey. He has committed the village crew to repairing the benches we have as best they can. The worst bench is at the corner of Pearl and Main. The rest are

usable; they just don't look great. At the April meeting BJ said he would donate his time to powder coat or paint the bike racks and the ends of the park benches. We don't have funding for paint or materials. The Beautification Committee has \$500 in the village's budget that they have not spent yet. They might want to allocate the money for paint. Peggy said if anything is left after the engraving is done we could use that. Kim asked how many benches there are. Kyle said at least 4. Adrienne said the Beautification Committee was talking about power washing and then staining them. Kyle said that might be another volunteer work session. Erik Bailey is fine with us painting the bike racks any color we want. BJ had thought there might be some limitations. She will double check. Kyle said she about \$500 should be enough for materials. We need to talk to BJ to confirm that he can do the work before buying anything. Probably painting cannot begin until August. Kyle said she can continue dialog with Erik. Kim said she can talk to BJ.

7. **Website Updates**

Adrienne said she went to the selectboard meeting Monday. They had the website on their agenda. When the topic was first brought up, Shayne moved to put out an RFP for a website to be redesigned with WordPress. She mentioned that the rail trail committee has done a lot of work on what the town has to offer that could go on the website. (*Jan arrived at 5:49.*) And she said she, Kyle and Beth would like to help with that. She told them she has logos and branding to show them at the next selectboard meeting. After the meeting she reached out to Tom to see if she could be put on the next selectboard agenda but she hasn't heard back yet. Shayne reached out to her after the meeting and said she should go after the RFP.

Kyle said she and Adrienne have been in communication with Beth. Beth is still committed to creating a rail trail page. Kyle made a spreadsheet with businesses, restaurants, lodging, amenities and recreation that people coming off the rail trail or coming to Johnson might be interested in. She is in the process of getting good photos of those. Yva Rose is willing to give us some photos. Beth is working on it this week.

Peggy said today she was talking to the owner of Nye's Green Valley Farm B&B. She is getting very busy with traffic from the rail trail. She has put something near the trail to direct people and she will shuttle people. We don't have a great set of accommodations here. The recommendations generally given out for places to stay are all in Morrisville or Jeffersonville. (*Kim left at 5:53.*) Jan said she doesn't know if many people have thought of the idea that they could provide a place for rail trail users to stay.

Doug said the Council on Rural Development is organizing a meeting in July. We should be there talking about developing usage for the rail trail.

Adrienne asked who updates the town website. Kyle said she thinks Lydia Putvain does most of it. Beth was given selectboard permission to continue working on the rail trail page.

Doug said there was a lot of information discussed at the regional rail trail committee meeting about mapping and the web page. There is quite an impetus to try to improve the AOT information about the rail trail that is online. He thinks we should push ahead but also figure out what they are doing. He suggested maybe Adrienne could call Jackie Cassino. One thing going on now has to do with trail friendly businesses. Another is signage on town highways for attractions. Someone from Morrisville was asking Jackie if their signage package was approved, so it seems there is something we could be doing that we are not doing.

Peggy said in Quebec there is a standard sign for businesses to put out welcoming cyclists. They are all the same and really noticeable. Doug said there is a trail friendly business effort going on and we need to get our businesses into that program. He thinks we could also have our own signage welcoming cyclists.

Kyle said when she was creating the spreadsheet a couple of things stood out as lacking. One is information on where people can plug in their bikes outside. We need to do a survey of charging locations. She also does not know all the places that have free wifi.

Kyle said we desperately need to encourage the café to get bike racks. Perhaps we could move the one in front of the former Sterling Market, which doesn't get used. People really want to leave their bikes in front of where they are eating. A bike rack could be placed between the café and the Studio Center Church Studios building.

Doug asked how much a bike rack costs. Kyle said thousands. Doug said Eddie Gale reached out to Kyle to say that there is still some money in Lea Kilvadyova's playground fund and he would love to put some towards something we need.

Peggy asked who would move the one in front of the grocery store building. Kyle said she thinks we would need the town public works crew to do it. It is probably attached to a platform. Doug said we would have to create another platform.

Jan said a bike rack outside the café doesn't have to be big and expensive. Adrienne said if we get a big bike rack we should keep in mind the possibility of adding electricity to it for charging. Jan said a wire could be run from the building.

8. *Trailhead Committee Updates*

Kyle said the state plans to do a map, however it will be a while until it's done. The state's map is going to be general, not town-specific. She thinks we should continue to go ahead with the map Adrienne is making. It is a really nice map that magnifies Johnson and we will link Johnson accommodations and businesses to it. Doug said the state's map was discussed at a regional rail trail committee meeting. Their map will be terrible and not detailed. We need to steer people to Johnson and their map won't do that. There is going to be a grant coming out in the fall that will provide money to steer people here.

Kyle said she and Adrienne are hoping they can continue with Adrienne's map design and their plan for the trailhead, but they need a little money for it. Adrienne is doing the map pro bono and they think the town can print it on their large scale printer. To the side of the map they want to list businesses. They need weatherproofing materials. Adrienne said they want numbered pins and names on the side that can be changed out. They are thinking of having plexiglass on top so people can't move the pins. Kyle said just a few hundred dollars is needed. Vermont Electric Coop's next deadline for Community Fund grants is June 30. The application is easy. Kyle could apply.

Peggy moved to authorize Kyle to apply for a grant from the Vermont Electric Coop Community Fund, Jan seconded and the motion was passed.

Kyle said the Upward Bound program at the college wants to put up an international way finding sign. They made a proposal to the selectboard that was approved right away. She met with Andrew from Upward Bound and they identified a spot for it in the town right of way. It will include some local

directions. Kyle suggested that committee members email her with ideas for the local things that should be included.

9. VOREC Grant Status

Doug said the VOREC grant is for investigating access to the village center along Railroad St. Randall sent him and Kyle a message. VHB, an engineering firm that has been doing a lot of work on the rail trail, wanted to know if we are just after rail trail signage or if there is a problem we want solved. Kyle said we have a problem we want solved. We want safe passage from the rail trail to the village. People don't feel safe with sharrows. VHB will give us a simple alternative and a complex alternative. There is a possible opportunity to wrap the project into redesign of Main St. for flood relief. The cost will be about \$45K. Our grant is for less than \$30K. Jackie Cassino said there is likely more money available to us. Doug was thinking about access along the river behind the buildings. We need to figure out what buildings are being bought out. The town administrator's plan is to lower flooding on Main St. by a foot or so, creating flood storage. Adrienne said she thought it would be nice to have a canal coming off the river. Businesses could be located along it. That would help with flooding. Doug said the amount of our VOREC grant may be boosted by 50%.

10. Grants/Funding Opportunities and Application Schedule

Kyle said there is a grant coming up with applications due in September. She can bring the grant application questions to the July committee meeting and the committee can work on some of them together.

11. Safe/Secure Parking Subcommittee Information and Updates

Doug said today he brought Tom Sexton, regional director for the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, to our trailhead. He and the person with him were impressed. He recommended starting small and not thinking about putting secure parking at the trailhead. Doug thinks we ought to figure out what properties will be abandoned and will become town properties and see if any could be used for parking or river access or somehow connected to rail trail usage.

Peggy said the municipal lot near the Masonic Temple seems safe for overnight parking. There are lights. It is not far from the trailhead. There are always spaces at night. Doug said he thinks the Pomerleau parking lot where Sterling Market used to be is also a possible location. Peggy said she is not sure if it would be a good location once a grocery store is operating there again.

12. Regional Rail Trail Committee Update

Doug said the trail friendly business initiative is moving forward rapidly. People can apply online or on paper. They want business owners to apply. Kyle and Doug agree we need to get the word out. Peggy suggested using Front Porch Forum. Kyle said we should also send direct emails or call businesses. Doug suggested asking Tori from LCPC to draft a Front Porch Forum post for us. He will do that.

13. Other Business

Adrienne said there was a Planning Commission meeting last night. Commissioners talked about FEMA creating a new floodplain map. It will be about a year before it is done.

Doug said he thinks the committee should make a strong presentation at the upcoming Reimagining Johnson meeting.

14. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be July 17.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41.