

JOHNSON SKATEPARK & BIKE TRACK COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
MASONIC TEMPLE, PEARL ST., JOHNSON/REMOTE ATTENDANCE BY ZOOM  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024

**Present:**

Committee Members: Casey Romero, Howard Romero, Alexis Daniels, Greg Fatigate

Others: Tom Galinat (remote), Ron Rodjenski (remote)

**Absent:** Rick Aupperlee, George Swanson, James Whitehill

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

**1. Call to Order**

Casey called the meeting to order at 5:37.

**2. Draft Minutes of May 8, 2024**

**Howard moved to approve the minutes of May 8, 2024, Greg seconded and the motion was passed.**

**3. FEMA Updates: Rebuilding, Mitigation, Inspection, Other**

Ron said we have been talking regularly with FEMA officials. We have been advised by the state to complete the Public Assistance FEMA process first, then move on to mitigation, then move on to alternative projects. We are trying to finish the Public Assistance step. Within the last week or two a new project was created for the skatepark related to the bike skills section. The ramp section was already approved last year for \$91K worth of damage. The bike skills section was missed or skipped and was recently added back into the damage inventory at \$57K.

There is a mitigation FEMA official named Willie. We have been advised to work with Willie on all the work Casey has been presenting on possible mitigation – downsizing the bike skills area to more of a pump track, converting the wooden ramps to concrete, etc. He is not sure what FEMA is going to do. They can combine projects into one or keep them separate projects. They can deny mitigation or allow it. All the decision making is based on real estimated cost numbers. Now we are in the phase of presentation of concepts for the skatepark area and the bike pump track. He doesn't think there will be any new projects added. What they haven't started yet is the mitigation concepts. There is more discussion that needs to be had about permitting, floodplain issues, etc. He is sure the state will be involved. Act 250 is involved. We need to get approval of the mitigation concepts.

Tom asked when the \$57K was added. Ron said he didn't check last week and saw it this week. It might have been in the last week or two. Tom said the state has been approaching an amount of damage that would shift FEMA reimbursement from 75% to 90%. Earlier today he was at a symposium where he heard we were \$40K short of that point. He heard that same number back in April so he is wondering if this \$57K has pushed the state to the 90% reimbursement level. That would mean we would only be responsible for 2.5% of costs.

Howard asked how firm the numbers are. Ron said the \$91K and \$57K are placeholders. Those are the current best approximate damage costs. When we get into the project that number is movable. If the town starts to make repairs and finds out the damage cost is \$100K rather than \$91K, FEMA will reimburse based on actual costs they deem reasonable. For mitigation, we can get an amount equal to the amount of damage, making our total \$182K. FEMA will pay 75% of that. If all the ramps can't be replaced for that amount of money, the committee needs to decide what approach to take. It could be finding other resources to combine with FEMA funds to build out the whole park now, or building the park back in phases.

Tom suggested the committee should figure out what can be done with the first \$91K that will give us a functioning skatepark during the mitigation process. Ron said one caveat is that if we are going to pursue mitigation we cannot make any permanent improvements to the facility that will need to be removed. We need to be careful about what we put there that is not deemed to be replacement or permanent repairs because FEMA will deduct those costs from our \$91K. Tom suggested maybe the committee should make plans to sell any DIY ramps and get agreements to buy them back or otherwise document that we are not going to use them permanently. He thinks it is important to have in meeting minutes that the DIY structures are temporary and maybe that the committee has plans to sell them.

Casey said the minutes of the last meeting show that. The DIY structures that are there now are things that the committee did not ask for, pay for or build. In the prior meeting we made it clear that we wanted people who wanted to put something there temporarily to get approval from us and that the items are temporary and will go away when we say so. However, things keep appearing without anyone talking to us.

Ron said FEMA will not pay for work that is going to be replaced. If it is all donated, it is not a town expense that precludes mitigation. He can't prevent FEMA inspectors from wondering what is going on because it is supposed to be a clean site. But he is trying to work with them to get digital visits instead of having them visit in person. As far as he knows they don't currently have a site visit scheduled for the skatepark. He and Tom can ask Vermont Emergency Management about whether we need to be concerned about the DIY structures and then report back to the committee.

Casey asked about something discussed at the last selectboard meeting that was unclear to her. It seemed like the selectboard approved something that had to do with hazard mitigation money or planning.

Tom said \$90 million is coming to the state for hazard mitigation. The Regional Planning Commission created a group to identify specific needs of Johnson, such as overflow culverts or floodplain restoration. What the selectboard approved was for the town administrator to approach landowners with property deemed critical for townwide mitigation efforts to let them know we are talking about their land.

Casey asked if Ron is working with landowners in the category Tom just mentioned. Tom said Ron has not been asked to work with any buyout process through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

Casey said the electric system at the skatepark seems to be a missing piece. She knows it was part of the uninspected damage claims. We have been advised not to fix it since they had not recognized it, but at some point we do need to restore electricity.

Ron said if we are not going to seek mitigation FEMA's recommendation is to repair, document, and invoice very clearly and get it working again as quickly as possible. He thinks they are going to be willing to use prior documentation rather than inspection of the shed. He thinks the committee should document the repairs and pay the bill and we should be reimbursed. They have said that if a project includes the shed they will more than likely reimburse us, but they haven't guaranteed it.

Casey said that is different from prior advice. Ron said that changed when they said they weren't going to do a site visit.

Casey said uninspected damages included the electric system and a handful of smaller ramps as well as the bike track but it seems like those may be slipping under the water. Ron said he has not had time to look at the \$57K number but if Casey knows that amount included all the items she is mentioning, that means they are included. *(Tom and Ron left.)*

**4. Concrete Proposal: Rider Input**

Alexis said someone she talked to said they don't think the quarter pipes need to be as tall as what is shown in the plans. They also suggested moving the rail to the middle of the A-frame to make it like the A-frame was before. Alexis said she was wondering about the flow of the A-frame. The committee talked about possible rearrangements for better flow.

Casey said work on the half pipe starts June 17.

**5. Directors' Orders**

Casey said she spent \$1,450 on items such as mowing, tree trimming and the portalet.

**6. Committee Work Update: Rec Coordinator Resignation**

Casey said Dean Locke resigned as rec coordinator. The town approved having him finish up work on programs that are currently running and the new grant-funded playground being put on Legion Field. They recognize the rec coordinator job is undoable as currently described but she did not hear any discussion about increasing the hours. They want to have more discussion and pull more people in to work on the job description. Dean and Jason suggested separating the physical work (like taking care of fields) from the program work.

**7. Laraway Report**

Rick told Casey that it looks hopefully feasible for Laraway to provide storm shelter space for the Sk8 the Arts camp but it is not official yet.

**8. Site: DIY Ramps, Community Service Work, Half Pipe Construction**

Casey said a whole new quarter pipe has been brought in. Alexis said someone bought it on Facebook Marketplace. It is moveable. Casey said things that can float are an issue. That is one reason we want people to talk to us before bringing things in.

Greg said he saw some things at the park that are materials owned by us, like a piece of sheet metal in the middle of the park. He feels that has to go away. It is too dangerous. He thinks we have to agree on a date to anchor to ground the structures that are going to stay. He thinks there should be a posted notice saying that anything people bring in can be removed at any time and will be anchored to the ground. We can give the date we are going to do the anchoring. Casey said after the half pipe is put in people may want to move things around, so the anchoring should happen after that. Greg agreed. He said he doesn't want to spend more than an hour or so anchoring things. If more things keep appearing he would be inclined to remove a lot of them.

Casey said with the Sk8 the Arts camp coming on August 12 things have to be safe. Greg agreed.

Casey brought up the portion of the granite structure that is sticking out and could be unsafe. Greg said we need a diamond blade cut-off saw. He would have to get one and then he could cut it off. Casey said he can bill the committee for his time doing that.

Casey brought up the idea that the back stretch of loop road that provides access for the electric utility does not necessarily need to be paved. Greg suggested it could be milled down so it would not be

rollable. Casey said that would prevent people from bringing DIY items into that area. Casey said with all the talk about removing material and flood concerns, perhaps it would make sense to remove the asphalt. When she described the idea to Ashton he said that is where parents bring kids to learn to ride bikes. Greg said it would still be bikeable if it was milled. We could also remove the asphalt, but that costs more. Casey asked what committee members think about the recreational value of the back road. Greg said it is one of the best places to learn skateboarding. It is a slight downhill with good asphalt. If only people would not bring in things and leave them there. He has taught many people to skate on that strip. Alexis said she doesn't know if we need to talk about removing that now. Casey said it would be a question for the town to consider if they are looking for places where they can take away material and add more surface absorption. What she is hearing is that it would be a loss of a nice sloped surface if it were not paved, but it is an issue when it is littered with stuff. Greg said if the town feels it is worth it to remove the asphalt they should probably do it.

Casey said she will work on a sign about DIY structures.

Casey said the community service work has been done by the youth who watched while his friend broke the rail. It worked out well.

Casey said Hillside has retired so we need to get a dumpster from someone else. Myers is less expensive than Casella but more expensive than what we had been paying. Weekly or bi-weekly pickup is mandatory. For a 2-yard dumpster with bi-weekly pickup and a roller bar so they can lift it from a truck the cost is \$140/month. We used to pay \$70-80 two or three times a year. We were able to call to have the dumpster emptied on demand. Alexis asked if we stop dumpster service in winter. Casey said yes, we can do that.

**9. Public Input**

No members of the public were present.

**10. Adjourn**

**Howard moved to adjourn at 6:41, Alexis seconded and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*