

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2024

Present:

Committee Members: Doug Molde, Peggy Williams, Adrienne Stevson, BJ Putvain, Kim Dunkley, Jan Gearhart

Absent: Kyle Nuse, Mary Lou Kopas

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Doug called the meeting to order at 6:01.

2. Consider Approving Minutes of July 17, 2024

Adrienne moved to approve the minutes of July 17, 2024, Peggy seconded and the motion was passed.

3. Trail Conditions

Doug said problems still exist, mainly in the east of Hardwick area. As of earlier this week, before the rain, they were going to be done in Lamoille County. Kim said the material they put down is cagey for bikes. Kyle told her they were not done and were going to put a layer over it, but it's already level with the other path. She is wondering if it is done. Peggy said we should keep reporting poor conditions to VTrans. There is a section where there is way too much gravel and another area with washboards. Someone was in a bad accident and broke their collarbone because they didn't see the washboards.

Kim said she feels to succeed they need local groups willing to go out and do patch work as needed. Jan asked if our committee can do that. Doug said he thinks VTrans feels the same way about the rail trail as they do about roads; they would not want us patching it. Kim said they might be open due to their limited resources. She will try to talk to someone at VTrans and ask about their position on people who want to take action to fix problems.

Doug asked if there is regular discussion on trail conditions on the Facebook page. Peggy said there are many posts there every day. There has been a lot of discussion about the area east of Hardwick. The page manager encourages everyone to refer people back to VTrans because not everyone posting on the page has up to date info. There is not much criticism of trail conditions. It is more people asking for advice or giving cautions about areas where people should be careful.

4. Thoughts on Re-Imagining Johnson Meeting

Doug suggested that as many people as possible attend the next Re-Imagining Johnson meeting. He is hoping they will make rail trail recreation a strong priority. He noted that the selectboard has adopted a town logo designed by Adrienne.

Kim said at a recent village trustee board meeting it was stated that bicyclists don't bring in money. She wrote to board members to say there is evidence that they do.

Adrienne said she thought the Re-Imagining Johnson meeting went well. She and Peggy brought up our committee. Peggy said she talked about the grant. Adrienne said she brought up how many people use trails in Quebec.

BJ asked if we could put notices of our meetings with Zoom links on Front Porch Forum so people can join, so more people can get the information we have. Kim suggested maybe we could also post highlights of what we have been working on Front Porch Forum. Doug said he doesn't have time to do PR blurbs. Adrienne suggested we could have our own Facebook account. BJ said he will try to remember to post our agenda on Facebook. Doug asked if there is someone who could put a committee page on Facebook. Adrienne said she could try. Peggy said she can post things on Facebook if there are messages we want to put out.

BJ asked, why not create a rail trail logo for our area? It could be at the trailhead or on paperwork. Adrienne said she created a town logo and she was going to create brand guidelines for the town, including sister logos for committees that could go on documents, etc. Doug said he is sure VTrans has a LVRT logo. It might be uniformly recognized.

5. LCPC Proposal to Seek Funding for Regional Maps for Lamoille County Rail Trail Towns

Doug said at the last regional Lamoille County Planning Commission Rail Trail Committee meeting there was discussion about maps. LCPC is looking for a grant for regional maps and they asked which towns wanted to participate. Doug said yes for Johnson. Kim said the cost of the regional map is about \$650 even though they are talking about a grant. Doug distributed some thoughts Kyle wrote up since she couldn't be here tonight. Doug said other towns ended up deciding they wanted to do what Johnson is doing with a local map.

Peggy asked, if we wait for a regional map will we wait a long time? Are there any impediments to proceeding on our own? Doug said we can put our local map up. He thinks that one should be on the trailhead building. Adrienne's map also shows the entire trail, but the local area is dominant. The trailhead building is off the trail on town property so the state can't tell us what to put there.

Kim said she thinks we should tell them we are interested in their pamphlets but not the map. Doug said Kyle thought we should participate in the regional map as well and then decide where to put it. Adrienne's map would be front and center at the trailhead and the regional map would be somewhere else. We might pay for the regional map out of a grant. There might be funds we can apply for. He feels it is a small cost.

Peggy said people are starting to walk the whole trail.

Kim said Cambridge was interested in the regional map because they have another information board that already has business info and they felt they needed the map. Doug said later their representative told him they had decided that a local map like Johnson's should be their primary map. He and Kyle think we should go ahead with the regional map but not use it to replace our local map.

BJ moved to participate in the joint Lamoille County Planning Commission grant application for a regional Lamoille County rail trail map and Peggy seconded. It was agreed that the Johnson map should be front and center. **The motion was passed.**

6. Selectboard Decision to Award VOREC Grant Contract to VHB

Doug said the selectboard followed the rail trail committee's recommendation in choosing a contractor to do the work funded by the VOREC grant. He explained to them that the low bidder did not submit a timeline and that VHB had more experience.

7. Discussion and Approval of Projects and Grants

Doug said the deadline for application for the upcoming recreational grant is September 10. The next selectboard meeting is September 9. He told them we have to be on the agenda to request

authorization to apply. He read what Kyle wrote about the grant. There is work Howard wants to do but doesn't have time to do now. She thinks we should add that to the grant application as a backup in case Howard is not able to do it. Doug said Seth Jensen thought the grant could be used for municipal or nonprofit property. Maybe we could put bike racks at the Studio Center.

Kim asked, how about paint for the bike racks? Doug said Ken Tourangeau said the village would not authorize us painting the bike racks any color other than black. The village has a memorandum of understanding with VTrans and the bike racks are solely under village control. They are a village obligation. We can suggest a color but not tell them what it must be. Kim asked, if maintaining them is a village obligation, why is the village not maintaining them? BJ said he thinks the memorandum of understanding was only for a certain amount of time and is no longer in effect. The village crew will paint the bike racks, but it is easier to get black than to figure out what colors match when paint needs to be touched up. Kim said Kyle had said they don't have time to do them now. BJ said as far as he understands, they will touch them up. They just can't follow behind us and do it right after we sand blast them. Kim asked if they can give us paint so we can paint them.

Peggy asked if we can move the bike racks. BJ suggested getting on the village trustee board agenda and asking them. He personally doesn't see why we would be told no as long as we get permission to move them where we want to move them. Jan said she thinks moving them might be difficult. They may be cemented in. BJ said we can paint them, it just has to be black. Doug and Peggy said we need to figure out how they are anchored now and set up a system to anchor them in their new locations.

Kim moved to appoint Kyle Nuse to work with Randall Szott in submitting a recreation grant application for rail trail related projects and improvements wherever allowed by the recreation grant program, Peggy seconded and the motion was passed.

8. *Appointment of Subcommittee to Study and Map Johnson Gravel Road Routes*

Doug suggested that Jan head a subcommittee with no more than 3 people to develop maps of gravel roads in Johnson – roads that are good bike routes or lead to destinations like Journey's End, the Long Trail, the arboretum or the Cold Spring. Peggy suggested maybe we could just use a town map indicating what surface the roads have. Kim suggested we could have an overlay with different routes. Jan said gravel road biking is huge. Doug said besides the map we might have descriptions of routes.

Adrienne said she thinks this is a great idea. The map she creating is just for the trailhead but we can use it on the town website and we can show other trails on the same map. We can have a key showing what surface the roads have and the roads could be clickable with a popup showing more info. If the images are sent to her she can add them to the map. Jan said she can come up with a list of places people might want to go.

Adrienne asked if we want to put other trails on the trailhead map or only on the website. Peggy said she thinks they could be on the trailhead map if that does not make it too complicated. Doug asked if Adrienne can generate a map showing other trails and then the committee can make a decision. Adrienne said yes. Doug said he thinks at some point we should have the Long Trail and the Paddlers' Trail on the map.

Doug asked who else wants to work with Jan. Jan said her husband will help her. She also thought of Duncan Hastings. Kim said she is interested but she is also gone a lot. Jan said if anyone has ideas of where people might want to go they should send them to her to make sure she is covering all the attractions. Kim said for locals knowing how they can use the rail trail as part of a loop is helpful.

Doug said the Conservation Commission hired a forester to look at logging the Gomo property. The forester is on the LCPC Rail Trail Committee. Doug told him the town would like to convert road on the Gomo property to a trail. It seems like the forester would be willing to include in a logging contract that the road has to be upgraded. Doug thinks we ought to work on getting Coddling Hollow Road brought up to mountain biking standards.

9. Other Business

Peggy said she thinks we should give the selectboard information about the number of benches we put in and the gifts we got from individuals and businesses, to show them that we are not just asking for money all the time.

BJ said the town and village decided to keep using Zoom. We can use the town Zoom account as long as they are not using it. For our next meeting we can use the town Zoom account instead of Teams.

10. VTrans Wayfinding Guidance

Doug said the state is thinking of coming up with standards for signs towns could put up on highways for local attractions, with funding available next year. He would like us to come up with a list of attractions to be ready.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be September 18 at 6:00 at the municipal building. Jan and Peggy said they will not be here.

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths