

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024

Present:

Committee Members: Doug Molde, Kyle Nuse, Adrienne Parker, Kim Dunkley, Jan Gearhart, BJ Putvain

Others: Catrina McKnight, Mark Woodward

Absent: Peggy Williams, Mary Lou Kopas

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Doug called the meeting to order at 6:02.

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

Doug added Kyle's resignation.

3. Consider Approving Minutes of October 16, 2024

Adrienne moved to approve the minutes of October 16, 2024, Jan seconded and the motion was passed.

4. Status of Proposed LCPC Joint Application for LVRT Community Fund Grant for Maps

Doug said it turns out that the consortium of towns would not qualify for a grant for the maps because the minimum grant amount is \$5K and the cost of the maps is less than that. LCPC is going to produce the maps in-house at a much lower cost. They will work with individual communities. We will be able to get a lot of what we want on the map. It has to follow the state trailside facility guidelines. Jackie Cassino will come to the next LCPC rail trail committee meeting and Doug invited Adrienne to come as well.

5. Report on Appearance on November 4, 2024 before the Johnson Selectboard

Doug said at the November 4 meeting the selectboard approved applying for an LVRT Community Fund Grant as determined by the committee tonight. (*Kim Dunkley arrived at 6:07.*) They authorized Randall to assist us. They also approved the requested expenditures for Cold Spring bike racks and work on the trailhead building. He went over the rail trail wayfinding guidance with them.

6. Catrina McKnight: The LVRT and Places to Stay

Catrina McKnight said she and her husband own a construction company and a sugar house. They recently leased about 100 acres off Lendway Lane for 13 years. There are flat spots there that could work for camping. A couple of months ago she heard that the rail trail committee was interested in having spots for people to camp. She runs a glamping site on the land where she and her husband have their sugar house. What accommodations does the rail trail committee have in mind that would meet the needs of rail trail users? She has concerns about misuse and people not being respectful. How would she monitor the sites? She wanted to hear what the committee vision is.

Jan asked if there is any water. Catrina said no. At the trailhead there is a water fountain and a portalet people could use. They could park at the trailhead or Old Mill Park and then ride their bikes to the campsites. Kim asked if Catrina would go as far as stashing water at the sites and providing a portalet if that made the difference in being able to provide camping. Catrina said she would have to think about a portalet. Others would use it. Catrina described where the leased property is. Mark Woodward asked if it borders the town/village property. Doug located it on a map and said it does. Doug said there is a person who lives in town who spent 30 years running parks in Connecticut. Catrina might want to talk to him. Kim said she thinks having a structure that could be locked would be a good idea.

Catrina said she isn't a biker. She doesn't know what they are looking for. Are they carrying their own tents? Kyle said some carry tents and lightweight sleeping bags. Kim said she would guess there are less of those than on other trails. It is more likely that LVRT users are not carrying much and need more from their accommodations.

Catrina said she has considered doing a market analysis – building an enclosed structure, a 3-sided shelter and a platform and seeing what usage is like. Anything with a locked door and beds she will have to turn over and clean. Insurance is another consideration.

Jan asked if any building, even a shed, is being put on the leased land. Katrina said just a Conex box. Kim suggested maybe someone trying to market tiny houses would provide some. Katrina said for about \$8K she can get a 10x12 building that is not insulated. Whatever she puts there would probably need to be put in with a tractor. There are potentially 4 spots that are spread out and visible from the trail. Another concern she has is fire. She does not necessarily want people making fires.

Adrienne asked if Katrina is still deciding whether to do anything or if she has decided to do something and is just wondering what it should be. Katrina said in her mind she is already doing something. Adrienne asked if she thinks people would pay through Hipcamp. Katrina said that would be easiest but people riding by need to be able to check availability. Adrienne suggested a QR code. Adrienne suggested maybe just starting with platforms and seeing how that works. Doug said he can connect Katrina with Philip Yuris, who has dealt with camping spots and could answer questions like how far people will go for water. He thinks she should probably start with something simple. The town owns land next to the Old Mill Park that is being excavated for floodplain storage and the committee is looking at putting camping there.

Mark said he has never seen anyone pedaling the trail with camping gear. Jan and Kyle said they have. Kyle said we have heard that people tend to break the trail up into thirds and we are at the midpoint. We think there would be more people staying overnight in Johnson if there were more options. Katrina said she envisions having a resource for campers to let them know where they can go for food, etc. Doug said Katrina could sign up for the Trail Friendly Business program. Katrina said she has to think about pricing and how to hold users accountable for paying. Jan said she thinks bikers want to know ahead of time where they will sleep. They will want to plan ahead and will not just be riding by and decide to stay.

7. *Building Communities Grant, LVRT Community Grant Availability, Potential Projects, Re-examination of Project Expenditures*

Doug said we got a Building Communities Grant. Randall has been approved to help us apply for a LVRT Community Fund Grant. We have \$24,100 in the bank. We have plans to spend \$715 for bike racks and \$6425 for welcome center work. The map will cost about \$500. We have about \$5400 for public art.

The committee discussed potential uses for the LVRT Community Fund Grant. **Kim moved to put forward two possible projects: steps by the welcome center and a charging station, and to authorize Kyle to determine in consultation with Randall which to apply for, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

8. *Gravel Road Routes*

Jan said she didn't get a clear message about what we want to do with the gravel road information – where we want to present it and to whom. It was suggested that a map with the gravel routes could be in the same place as the rail trail map at the trailhead or in the same kiosk as the maps from LCPC.

Adrienne suggested maybe the skate park could be a location for information. They are putting in a pump track. Others said there is a need for a kiosk downtown. BJ said digital maps can be on the rail trail committee part of the website, with QR codes to take people to each one. Mark said he thinks it would be important to tell people how long each of the rides is.

9. Update on Finalization of Trailhead Map

Adrienne said she got a quote from Great Big Graphics for a map that would be like a big vinyl sticker. It would go over the existing map and could be removed easily. The cost is \$342 with a 10% discount. We also need plexiglass, a lock and pins. The total cost would be around \$390. The map would need to be installed in the spring. The vinyl can't be installed until the temperature is 50 or higher.

10. Properties on List to Potentially be Bought Out by FEMA

Doug said Adrienne told him she could put the buyout properties on a map for us. BJ asked if any are in spots that would be good for anything we are talking about. Kim said she thinks people are petitioning for different projects. The town is considering removing soil to make more space for the river to flood and they are also considering river access. Doug said Greg Tatro owns property on the east side of the Gihon that abuts the river and might be a location for a bike path. Adrienne said the task force she is on wants to find out what the limitations are for the buyout properties – for instance, can we put in lights?

11. Status of Contract with VHB for Project Funded by VOREC Grant

Doug said VHB sent a contract for the wrong amount and then another contract that also had issues. We don't have a good contract yet. He thinks VHB will communicate directly with Randall on this.

12. Kyle's Resignation

Doug thanked Kyle for all she has done on the rail trail committee. He will pass her resignation letter on to the selectboard. Kyle said she already copied them.

13. Other Business

Doug passed out the list of Trail Friendly Businesses. LCPC is planning to notify all the businesses that they will be included unless they say they don't want to be.

Doug said he will ask the selectboard to advertise for 2 people. We have 2 vacancies. This could be a 9 person committee.

14. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be December 18 at 6:00.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15.