

Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes: March 1, 2022

Members Present: Kate Anderson, Sheri Lynn, Kate Kreider, Mark Fausel

Call to Order: 7:06 pm

Ravi Venkataraman is present as the Town Planner. Jack Lazarowski is present representing the Community Senior Center and Fran Thomas is here as a community member who was involved in the Recreation Committee in the past when Volunteers Green was being expanded. Lisa Miller is present representing the Planning Commission.

No public comment items were raised by committee members or members of the public.

Kate K made a motion to approve the previous meeting's minutes; Mark seconded. Motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.

Sheri brought up that some have to reapply for their terms. Stefani has resigned from the committee since the last meeting. There are currently 6 members of the committee. Chrissy has shared that she has decided not to serve another term (Bolton representative) when her term ends June 1. So, we would like to recruit a Bolton member. In the past, Ravi worked with the Bolton Town Clerk as well as posting on FPF.

Ravi also shared that the town is asking people to reapply so that terms on all committees will realign to June 1 terms. Kate A could potentially return at a future time due to the new rules stating we need a minimum number of members (rather than set number) but will not be reapplying for term in June.

Bob Metz joined the meeting to share out from the Williston Recreation Committee. He has been part of the Committee since 2010. Shared that they do have a director who handles a lot of logistical work and so the committee role has been more of a sounding board for ideas. With previous Recreation Director it was much more administrative work and focused on budget and programs. Currently, they are beginning to envision what a Community Center would look like, and began process of needs assessment and exploring further. At this time, the committee meets with the Director once per month and he reports out what they are working on and if there are challenges. For example, they discussed a challenge with many teenagers from other towns joining open gym/basketball in the schools, and the committee offered advice and input. Currently envisioning Allenbrook Community Park and a plan from 2008 to potentially update it or implement it. If a grant is expiring, they may discuss

Mark asked for more details about the history of the position of Rec Director and how business may have been conducted before that. Bob shared that previous Director was there from about 2000-2015 in that role, and was not as focused on programming. Bob noted that it would be really challenging, from his perspective, to provide what a director provides through a committee only.

Sheri asked for more clarity about the advisory model Bob described. Bob said the director is focused on logistical day to day operations. The director largely makes broader decisions and shares out while the committee offers ideas and suggestions. Example: gave feedback on process for people to memorialize someone through a park bench, reviewed documents created by director and approved by town manager. Director has autonomy and is also receptive to their questions and ideas. It is largely the role of the committee to represent the community as the director does not live there, so that is their purpose and driving force behind the advisory model. They provide community input when a community member is not always at the helm. Sheri asked about budget, and Bob shared the director develops and oversees this. Fran Thomas asked how the director's salary is paid in Williston. Do the fees for programs support that? Bob shared they do not; they pay the salaries of camp counselors, equipment, maintenance and repair, etc. It also allows for tiered payment options for families in financial need to get scholarship. That director salary is budgeted into the town's budget. Depending on the offerings, the fees dramatically offset costs associated with running a specific program. Sheri asked about the possibility of an indoor community center. Bob noted that Allenbrook Center could be a potential site, but there is info in master plan that no hard infrastructure could be developed there. When The Edge closed, that was a catalyst to consolidate efforts to move forward, but there is no site earmarked for the center at this time. Bob's input was that not having a new build, but rather to renovate something would be ideal. Pool often comes up as a request from community but it would be very challenging and expensive. Bob shared he would be happy to return to a meeting or talk to us further over email.

Ravi shared that there is a renewed desire to have a parade for the 4th of July. Linda Parent is interested in doing this (especially after the successful parade for Ryan Cochran-Siegle last weekend.) Confidence and momentum to do this exists, so Linda is looking for any support with floats, vendors, and other organizational support. Mark suggested the Farmers Market to discuss possibility of vendors who may want to also join 4th of July. Believes that Planning Commission could also put something together for general public outreach, and would love to make it more accessible for people to learn about committees and municipal services. Lisa shared that she is fully in agreement. Ravi will discuss this further with Linda and share back with committee how we could support.

Annie Lajoie joined the meeting as a community member to discuss the possibility of a place for the community to come together and have more services available to families and residents of all ages. Shared about many members of the community who have been heavily involved for many years and deeply desire to see a center exist in Richmond. Annie would like to put together a committee and determine how much the town is willing to support and if there are grants available (she has grant-writing experience.) Annie is aware this is a large and longer term project, but wants to move forward with beginning to plan this. She wanted to learn how much involvement the Rec committee would be interested in having with this project. Sheri offered to share our survey results from last summer to help inform moving forward. Annie noted that Richmond student hockey players have to use the rink in the early hours of the day in Essex when it is available to them, so an ice rink would be prioritized. Possibly the school district and multiple towns could be involved and served by center.

Ravi shared that nearby communities have put an exploratory study for a community/rec center on the ballot (Charlotte today, South Burlington recently.) Rec Departments can theoretically provide programs and services for multiple towns that handles facility and budget management in the future (according to statutes.) Ravi shared that in Southern VT, there is work across a 5 town group to build a center that serves all of the towns. It could be managed by one individual, department, or committee. In our town, the proposed location is challenging— much of the area around the exit is in the floodplain. Within Richmond, it is not possible to build something new of the appropriate size because of those floodplain regulations. Location alternatives would need to be explored.

Annie requested map or further info of floodplains; Ravi noted that FEMA makes these available online.

Ravi shared that no info is yet available on the VOREC grant; they've delayed the response date further. He discussed the Better Places grant as a separate possibility, which does require a 33% match for the grant. However, there is a non-profit that could help us with a crowdfunding campaign to meet the threshold. Once we got to this level, then the additional funds would be released. This is a small scale grant intended for smaller community revitalization work to spark the movement rather than larger serious improvements. Any project would likely be within the Village Center and focused on some economic development. It may be hard to include Volunteers Green as it may not fall within grant guidelines. Ravi suggested the possibility of a "parklet" or public art/murals, making people more aware of where water goes using art. Street improvements, outside seating, access to local food are all possibilities within grant requirements. If we'd like to pursue this further, then Radiate Art may be potential partners.

Sheri noted that the brochure information that was compiled by our intern last year will be up on the website in about 6 months. There will be an opportunity for Rec committee to preview the web page.

Plan on someone to take notes April 5- Kate K volunteered.

For our next meeting, should we move to virtual meetings only? Concern is regarding all members' ability to attend in person or virtual. Want to make sure access is an option for everyone. Most likely we will move to virtual and plan to do so until January 2023, with potential for some outdoor meetings this summer.

Lisa has more info about Petra Cliffs for 4th of July and noted they do have the ability to do a kids' activity center with about a 12 by 12 ft space. This will be included in planning with Linda for the 4th.

Motion by Kate K to adjourn at 8:36 pm; Mark seconded and motion passed.