

Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes: December 7, 2021

Members Present: Kate Anderson, Sheri Lynn, Stefani Hartsfield, Kate Kreider, Chrissy Keating, Mark Fausel

Call to Order: 7:08 pm

Public Comment:

Lisa Miller, Planning Commission coming to share about town plan. Volunteered to be on a group formed to make sure that all town committees are appreciated, heard, and facilitated. Role is to be a go-between to support Rec committee with getting answers to questions, provide support with any challenges. Planning Commission will share anything they learn while working closely with Town Plan.

Sheri- Great to hear we have a liaison.

Kate A- Motion to approve October 5th minutes, seconded by Mark. None opposed or abstained; motion passes with 6 yes votes.

Sheri- Shared out that committee agreed we should have a minimum of 5 members and this was approved by the Selectboard. Currently have 7 members. Stipulated that at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of the members must be Richmond residents. Now we only need 4 of 7 to conduct business with a quorum.

Ravi- We requested a match of \$30,000 for a total grant amount of \$150,000 for Volunteers' Green improvements grant. This was submitted last week and we will wait to hear back.

Stefani- What kind of public comment was provided?

Ravi- We met with stakeholders while initially writing the grant, including Stones Throw Pizza, Pete, John, Ari from the Farmer's Market, and others.

Justin- There will be additional opportunities to receive community feedback in the future.

Stefani- Thank you all for your work on this.

Chrissy- When will we hear back about the grant?

Justin- The week of January 10 is stated online as the time to hear back from VOREC.

Mark- How far along are we in this process? What is the fundraising plan? If we have \$15,000 from the town, is our goal to raise \$15,000?

Ravi- Our initial plan is to have \$15,000 from the town General Fund and \$15,000 from the Conservation Reserve fund. However, in discussions with Judy at the Conservation Commission, they are open to offering the full \$30,000 from the reserve fund.

Mark- That is surprising to hear since you would expect issues more relevant to conservation to be prepared on their list rather than a focus on Volunteers' Green.

Sheri- My impression from the meeting was that there was a lot of positive feeling from the public and the commissions to support these improvements widely. There is also a process they use to look at criteria when applicants ask for funds, and must align with mission and vision of funds.

Mark- Has there been estimates for what we would spend the \$150,000 on?

Ravi- Yes, we put together a table with the grant application. Kirsten and Justin have reached out to many different vendors to get a sense of costs for the new playground, picnic tables, bandshell updates.

Justin- Since Kirsten's professional role is in Essex Parks because they recently redid a park, so she had a lot of perspective about this.

Mark- I'd like to request a copy of the application with the table to the full committee so we can understand expected costs of the project.

Stefani- Presented to the Planning Commission a few years ago about looking at wellness in Town Plan. Our towns have been identified as a gap area by United Way for mental health and substance abuse prevention, and received a small grant used for strategic planning. Selectboard had specific questions about becoming part of, or being a "backbone", of a collaborative in the future. Selectboard will consider this possibility. Most of this would come through grant funding, but there was a request for \$5,000 from Richmond, \$1,000 from Huntington, and \$500 from Bolton to support this initiative. Next meeting is in 2 weeks to make a decision on this funding. This is a collective of several organizations that work to reduce suicidal ideation and death by suicide among youth and young adults among the three towns, improve positive opportunities out of school time for youth. Includes Howard Center, United Way, Department of Health, etc. Police Chief Kapitanski was supportive and community support at SB meeting, but no decisions made yet.

Chrissy- Confirmed this was a great synopsis. We have a lot of support from the community and from these partnerships and organizations, we just need to take the next step to move forward. Hopefully at the budget meeting a decision can be made. Positive support behind this work.

Sheri- Question from the meeting, as there was discussion about supervision of an individual to work on moving this forward. Reference to Richmond since it's a bigger town, but concern raised about supervision. Wondering if the school board had an opportunity to hear about this,

since we are discussing youth and young adults. Could a position like that be part of the school district? Perhaps instead of the municipality the school could be part of it.

Stefani- There have been great partners through the school who have been part of the work. However, there is so much going on in schools right now and they are really maxed out, so it would be challenging to add more when they are trying to make the school day function. Talking to June Heston from the school board who had suggested other ways of doing this– challenging because many people work on this type of work, but there isn't yet collective will to take the lead and be the organizer/driver.

Sheri- Shared that she has added the mission statement and vision statement and goals on the agenda for our reference and to continue to inform our work. Is there a next step for Huntington for this collaborative?

Stefani- Question for the group regarding whether work is housed in this committee and whether there was realignment of priorities and plans. I believe it belongs here but not sure if any discussion was had in the past when I was not able to make a meeting in November.

Sheri- Plan to continue discussing this in this meeting and in our January meeting to discuss our plans and priorities.

Sheri- Next agenda item is to discuss goals and objectives we began in August and September. One thing I'd like to propose is to look at the working groups and rather than having time to work outside of the meetings, we should look at some of the objectives and do working time during the monthly meeting. This would reduce the need for subcommittees. We would determine as a full committee what we believe we should prioritize and can accomplish in the next 6-12 months, and spend time focusing on that. Grant writing would remain separate as it's a very different type of work. Let's try with these two areas (snowshoes and Volunteer's Green events) and work on them as a full group. This may require longer meetings in the future. This week we are 70 minutes long, but in the future it may be 75 or 90 minute sessions for Tuesday meetings.

Stefani- Thumbs up feedback.

Kate K- Would prefer longer meetings than subcommittees.

Sheri- We could also run the bulk of the meeting when we have everyone available to vote, but then have continued work and discussion at the end if people need to leave.

Stefani- This is especially helpful given the structure of public meeting laws, because emailing and subcommittees could end up having quorum.

Kate A- Agreed and noted we have a smaller committee overall now.

Sheri- We could also change the time of the meeting overall if needed. Asked for feedback from Chrissy and Mark.

Chrissy- I like the idea of a larger group.

Mark- As topics come up, it might end up being valuable in the future to have subcommittees. It would be great for us to see movement on topics we've been working on over time, and with only 1 meeting a month, we may not end up moving very quickly.

Sheri- It's a good point to note. On some topics, we may do better by having a subcommittee, while with others, maybe we would move more quickly in the monthly meeting. Generally, in my experience, you come up with decisions and strategies and then ask for volunteers to take action. That way you don't need to meet as a subcommittee to take next steps. This could mean that things move along at a good pace because individual committee members are ready to focus on work outside of meeting time, without a subcommittee.

Sheri- Trying out the new strategy with the snowshoe promotion objective. Working with Kirsten and Kate A, we drafted an article for the Times Ink to promote this. Library has catalogued them like the books and people can take them for 1 week at a time (or less) and return them like a book. They can be picked up at circulation desk. They may be able to reserve them and call ahead, but it's first come, first served. Rebecca at the library can let people know if they call to see if available. We could take the basic info in the article and determine other ways to promote. Poster for schools? Social media? Parent newsletter? Happy with FPF as one option. Hoping that Times Ink is willing to put the article in January issue, but may be February.

Kate K- I think FPF and getting to schools is a good idea. I am involved in Richmond schools and can try to make a flier. Does anyone have contacts to other schools?

Sheri- I can contact someone at Brewster Pierce in Huntington. Also happy to help with graphics to make flier/poster.

Stefani- Can do the high school and help with FPF posting to divide up the labor.

Chrissy- Can help with Smiley Elementary. I can also get the article into the Bolton Gazette.

Stefani- There is a "District Happenings" newsletter for all, although I guess perhaps we should not do that since Jericho and Underhill are in district but can't rent snowshoes from library. Will speak to John Alberghini to determine what they want to do with the info.

Sheri- I know that Brewster-Pierce gives packets to the students to take home regularly as fliers. Should we send it home for December break or wait to give them for January? Sheri will do FPF in December, Stefani in January, Kate K in February. Could we also do this for each of the town websites?

Ravi- Offered to do so for the Richmond website.

Stefani- Question for Justin, do the libraries still have the passes for Catamount (for example), from Rise VT?

Justin- They did not get a lot of use and they were seasonal, so they decided not to pursue it for future years.

Sheri- Message of the article is the idea that you don't need to go far to snowshoe, you can do this with your family in your backyard, and also named Preston Pond, Huntington Forest, and some other local areas with trails.

Stefani- If you send me a draft of the flier, there's a joint committee with the parking area, and the trails committee would definitely be interested in this too. I can send draft of the blurb to them, so they can suggest what trails would make the most sense to suggest.

Kate K- I am also part of the trails committee and would be willing to help promote it.

Kate A- Potential for physical fliers at physical locations/businesses in town.

Stefani- Riverview commons has bulletin board by the mailboxes.

Sheri- Moving on to 4th of July discussion from Linda Parent. They are seeking support with this upcoming year's parade and festivities. In the past, the Rec committee would approve events, but this year it seems they need more help as their planning group has lagged a bit.

Stefani- There is a 4th of July committee, which is not affiliated with the town. There has been a small group of people putting on a very big 4th of July celebration for over 30 years. It is a lot of work and they solicit volunteers; it's a challenging committee to become a part of because they have a lot of pride of ownership. It's really important that Linda is coming to us and talking about this, and I recently checked in with Linda to see if they were open to transitioning to town events, and they are not sure yet. They have amazing systems in place to get this done. This is a great group of people who work hard. It can be really challenging to get volunteers on that day because it is a good day to relax for many! I would advocate that we move forward to support this.

Sheri- Reading aloud Linda's email about it. They have lost about 3 people due to health challenges. Linda would stay on but other committee members may not. Hope to still have the parade and band. They have already paid for this year's fireworks. Hope to still have vendors, including maple creemees. Linda is happy to do paperwork and permitting process. It seems they are at a turning point. Are they asking the committee to take the role of organizing it, or need new volunteers?

Ravi- Unsure if this committee has this aligned with their vision and goals. As a committee, you could partner and support, but would not be fully organizing it.

Sheri- Agree, this is not part of our goals for the committee. We could offer support or info as one of the festivities. It is a very big undertaking but maybe we don't have the capacity to do this at this time.

Stefani- I would recommend at this time that because this is a transitional year, while we consider the role of this committee, we could consider taking on the park activities such as sprinkler tent and games. We would handle the park side of the work but not the parade. It would require a lot of volunteer support. We could put this as a strategic 2-year plan, since most people in town think the town puts it on and doesn't realize that this is all done by volunteers. Now that there is a Rec committee, many people would think that this is the committee's responsibility. It's a very popular event with many people engaged and excited about it.

Sheri- I'd like to have us think about this further even though we don't have the time to make a decision on this now.

Mark- We know Linda is on the 4th of July committee, but how many and who else is on this? When are they next meeting? It makes sense for us to go to them and learn what they need. We need to ask if they want a transition or just need some additional support?

Stefani- Offered to reach out and determine when and where they meet. This is a great idea to reach out to them so they can have the chance to share with us what their needs are.

Sheri- Opportunity for Justin to share out about our RiseVT survey opportunities now.

Justin- Introduced Abbey DeBay, who has been an intern working with him on survey results for now. Also a Richmond resident and has been analyzing survey. Abbey shared out the results [Updated Richmond Rec Write Up \(richmondvt.gov\)](https://www.richmondvt.gov/updates/richmond-rec-write-up) for discussion.

Ravi- It would be valuable to know what the subcommittee meant by hard-surface walking loop.

Justin- This would be not necessarily paved (so it could be gravel, for example), but just ADA compliant.

Stefani- It was interesting to see how popular this was, and people at the Senior Center has often asked for this at Volunteers Green so that those with mobility issues could still walk safely even during bad weather. The pool also came out of the town visioning, as it was the number one priority for many people.

Kate A- Shared out that it was challenging to decide to put pool on the survey list, but since it was a top interest for people in the 2018 Town Plan, we decided it should be there despite the high expenses.

Justin- Thank you to Abbey and wanted to share out about restructuring of Rise VT. As I've shared with some of you, my position at Rise will be ending on December 31st this year, so I will be transitioning to a new role within the UVM medical center. This will be my last committee meeting.

Mark- Just confirming we will get a copy of the presentation.

Justin- Confirmed.

Mark- How did these interests correlate with the VOREC application?

Justin- The VOREC grant was specifically focused on rehabilitating Volunteers Green as it exists today and replacing its existing structures: playground, existing picnic tables, bandshell. We felt this needed to be addressed first before we could consider other structures and new work. The survey was addressing plans for the future.

Sheri- This will be a new discussion– what do we do with this info from survey. Good for future meeting.

Sheri- Can we confirm a 90 minute meeting next month, first Tuesday?

Positive feedback.

Ravi- Want to share a big thank you for the huge amount of work Justin has given to this committee. He has brought in a lot of funding and has spent many hours working to bring these 3 communities together and supporting the efforts of this committee (and before the committee was brought back together.)

Stefani motioned to adjourn, Mark seconded. Motion passes with 6 yes votes. 8:29 pm.