

Richmond Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes November 7th, 2023

Members in attendance: Sheri Lynn, Kirsten Santor, Kate Kreider, Mark Fausel

Community Members in attendance: Jack Lazarowski (representative from the community Senior Center), Jeanne Agner from the Volunteers Green and Brown Court Committee, Jeff Forward (Selectboard member), Lisa Miller (Selectboard member)

Non agenda items: None

7:05 PM: Discussion with Selectboard members in attendance: Sheri presented tasks/projects that the Rec committee has been working on, our achievements, and our goals (**See Appendix A for details**). Feedback from Jeff: Jeff discussed the process and challenges of the ARPA committee and the public engagement that the ARPA committee conducted. He expressed that he feels that our proposal was not detailed enough regarding exactly what we want and did not include price quotes/bids. He stated that other proposals were more detailed regarding what exactly would be purchased. Jeff stated that other committees did community engagement first and then got an exact price quote from companies for items. He suggested doing community engagement first before asking for funding. He also expressed that he hopes that the Rec committee will work in partnership with the Browns Court and Volunteers Green committee.

Kristen responded that in her professional experience with playgrounds, it makes more sense to get a budget first before exploring playground designs. She stated that there are a huge number of options for playgrounds in terms of design and they are tailored to the available budget. So, in this specific case it makes more sense to figure out our budget before conducting public engagement. No decisions regarding materials or design of a new playground will be made without first having robust public engagement. Rec committee members stated that we feel that our ARPA proposal was very clear and detailed. Rec committee members expressed that the Selectboard's decision to create a new committee for Browns Court and Volunteers Green to decide on how to spend the remaining ARPA money made Rec committee members feel pushed out of the process that the committee had focused on for a long time to raise funds for a new playground. There was no communication with the Rec committee regarding the possible creation of the new committee prior to this decision being made.

Discussed the lack of communication and challenges regarding communication between the Rec committee and the Selectboard. Jeff briefly discussed funding/budgets and that the Selectboard is currently working on the budget for next fiscal year and he welcomes input from committee members.

Kristen and Sheri expressed that during a Selectboard meeting a concern was raised about the Rec Committee having some members from other towns. This appeared to be a driving force in the decision to create the new Browns Court and Volunteers Green committee, which consists

of only Richmond residents. This action caused Rec committee members to feel unwelcome, especially those who live in other towns. Lisa responded that we need a coalition of people who can get this work done and she feels that it is incidental who the people are.

Discussed the Volunteers Green and Browns Court committee's work so far. Jeanne stated that the committee is just getting off the ground and figuring out what they are doing. She and other committee members are reaching out to other committees that have done related work in an effort to be as efficient as possible and to hopefully avoid repeating work that has already been done. Jeanne has been communicating with the Rec committee regarding the work that we have done with the playground. Jeanne reported that a professional from Landshapes came and she and Kristen met with him to discuss the Volunteers playground. According to the Landshapes professional, the original playground was built about 30 years ago, this type of playground usually lasts about 20 years, and none of the original playground could be salvaged and used in a new playground. Jeanne stated that another professional from a different playground company will be coming this Friday to meet with her and Kristen.

Jeff asked how the committees, either the Rec committee and/or the Browns Court and Volunteers Green committee, plan to get public feedback regarding the design of the playground. Sheri discussed having robust public engagement, including multiple public meetings, a survey, and possibly other ways for community members to provide input. Kristen added that every playground is basically custom built based on the budget and what structures/items are desired, so once we have a budget we can reach out to the community to get feedback regarding the various options.

Discussed the possibility of applying to the VOREC grant again, which is due December 15th. Jeanne stated that she is interested in the VOREC grant, but will not have time to write and submit a proposal with such a short timeframe. Sheri discussed the feasibility of the Rec Committee submitting a proposal. We could use the proposal we previously submitted as a template and make appropriate edits, which would save a lot of time. Sheri stated that she will look at the previous proposal and decide if she has the time to prepare and submit a new proposal. Discussed requesting a smaller amount with this VOREC proposal as compared to our previous proposal, which may increase the likelihood of it being funded. Then the remaining costs for replacing the playground could be covered with ARPA funds.

Discussed strategies to improve communication between committees and between committees and the Selectboard. Some suggestions include: having liaisons with other committees that do similar work (such as the Browns Court and Volunteers Green committee), having a committee member attend a Selectboard meeting every 6 months to discuss what their committee is working on, each committee having a designated Selectboard member who they can contact when questions arise, having a special meeting once or twice a year where a member from each of the town committees comes and discusses what their committee has been working on and networks with the other committees and Selectboard. Jeff mentioned that Selectboard members are interested in hearing ideas from committees regarding how to improve communication. He said that Selectboard members are very busy and there are a lot of town

committees, so often the Selectboard has to rely on committees coming to them with information, updates, or questions. Lisa offered to be a contact for the Rec committee for when we have questions or concerns.

8:23 PM: Snowshoeing Event Discussion: Jack discussed our snowshoeing idea to the Senior Center and the members he spoke to were enthusiastic about the idea. Members of the senior center are happy to help support this activity and volunteer. Jack stated that members would like the event to be accessible for grandparents and children. Rec committee members agree that this can definitely be a family friendly event for all ages. Discussed possibly doing the event during February break. Locations could be Volunteers Green, the town forest in Huntington, and the new park in Bolton. Kate offered to check with the library about borrowing the snowshoes to use during the event. Jack stated that the Senior Center is happy to help support doing the event in multiple towns. Kristen suggested playing to the strength of each town, with a different focus and activities at each location. Possibly a naturalist or forester guiding one of the hikes, and/or someone organizing orienteering.

Mark suggested reaching out and networking with other committees, such as the trails committee and gardening committee, to learn more about what they are doing. Sheri agreed that this is a great idea, but we won't have time to discuss this during our December meeting, so we will talk about this in the future. Kirsten mentioned that the ARPA committee wants estimates for playground maintenance and we can get maintenance cost estimates for a new playground from the playground manufacturers.

8:44 PM: Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be December 5th. During our next meeting we need to plan the details regarding the snowshoeing event. We will also invite members of the Browns Court and Volunteers Green committee (also referred to as the 3 Parks committee adding the Round Church) to join our meeting. Mark is planning to attend the next meeting of the Browns Court and Volunteers Green committee. Sheri suggested making a formal request to the Selectboard to have the needed playground repairs that were identified in the inspection addressed and fixed. Kristen suggested asking the playground manufacturer professional to help identify what makes sense to repair and what doesn't, considering that the playground will most likely be replaced in the near future. Sheri suggested that we could request the selectboard for other items then, such as new picnic tables, trash/recycling bins, and benches.

8:51 PM: Kate motioned to adjourn, Kirsten seconds. All in favor, meeting adjourned.

Appendix A:

Recreation Committee Key Points

History and Achievements

1. Re-established Rec Committee in 2020 as a result of work supported by the Rise Vermont community wellness efforts for Richmond, Bolton, and Huntington.
2. Rec Committee appointments 8/20/2020.
 - a. Kirsten Santor and Mark Fausel original committee members.
 - b. Kate Kreider started in June 2021 and Sheri Lynn in July 2021.
3. In 2020 - 2021, committee members worked on mission and vision statements and aligning work with the Richmond Town Plan.
4. Designed and implemented a Greater Richmond Recreation Survey to hone in on the desires and priorities of the community.
5. Hired an intern to assist with community recreation opportunity promotion
6. Provided supporting funds to the Farmers Market and co-sponsored the purchase of picnic tables for the Library
7. Late 2021, Vermont Outdoor Recreation Community Grant Program (Vorec), Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation opened grant applications. Rec Committee submitted one, to raise funds for a new playground
 - a. The grant application was not funded.
 - b. Continued to look at how to raise funds for new playground equipment (including Capital Funds)
8. Early 2022 promoted the use of snowshoes, purchased by the committee with grant funds from Rise VT, on loan by the Richmond Library. Huntington, Bolton and Richmond residents could access and reserve.
9. Updated 2022 - 2023 Rec Committee plan
 - a. Helped with the July 4th, 2022 festivities and set up a lawn games area. The lawn games were purchased earlier to be used by park users.
 - b. Met with other recreation committees to understand their structure and goals.
 - c. In May June 2022 tried to purchase a bench with leftover grant funds for Browns Court but never happened.
 - d. Purchased hiking poles for library and games.
 - e. Requested to the ARPA committee in Jan 2023 funds to cover the new playground based on an updated budget from the VOREC grant application.
 - f. Had a green up clean up day May 5, 2023 to encourage spruce up Volunteers Green, a safe place for families and young children.
 - g. Website page developed to inform committee members of re committee history and efforts and recreation opportunities.

- h. Requested a playground inspection which was completed in May
- i. The July Flood takes out mulch and dirt from the playground
- j. A second inspection was completed and no further action outside of what was stated in the first inspection was recommended.
- k. Learned the ARPA committee would not be funding for the new playground and a new committee would work on public engagement for what residents wanted for Volunteers Green and Browns Court.

What we have been working on

- 1. Volunteers Green improvements
- 2. Outreach and Education
- 3. Recruitment
- 4. Fund raising

Committee Challenges

- 1. Re-developing a committee from the ground up (goals, mission, vision, work plan)
- 2. Member recruitment and loss
- 3. Determining what is and is not feasible based on community desire
- 4. Funding
- 5. Land use limitations (flood plain, neighborhoods, etc)
- 6. Being intentional with project selection and recognizing community passion around certain areas which necessitates lots of community engagement

Reasoning for why committee was restructured

- 1. After steering committee was established with the three towns to look at community wellness, and meeting with the action committee, there was a recommendation to institute a three town recreation committee to support healthy lifestyles for all ages across the three towns. There was already an emphasis on three towns by the Senior Center so this expanded to recreational activities

Questions

- 1. How can we improve communication with the select board in what we are doing and vice versa around recreational activities?the selectboard members envision for the future of our committee, its purpose, and its structure
- 2. Are there expectations from the Selectboard that we are not aware of?
- 3. Do we have a budget, and if so, how much? We have been told both that we do and do not have a budget and we have never been given a firm amount.