

## **Richmond Recreation Committee Meeting December 5th 2023**

**Members present:** Sheri Lynn, Mark Fausel, Kate Kreider

**Community members present:** Hannah Harrington from the Trails Committee, Jeanne Agner from the VG/BC (Volunteer's Green/Brown's Court) Project Committee, Jack Lazarowski from the Senior Center.

Meeting started at 7:05 PM

**Public comments:** None

**Non-agenda items:** None

**7:07 PM: Update regarding the VOREC Grant proposal:** Sheri and Kate presented the draft of the VOREC grant proposal to the selectboard last evening and the selectboard approved our proposal, so Sheri will move forward and complete the application process for the VOREC grant.

Sheri updated Hannah regarding our committee's work over the past two years and informed her of the new VG/BC Project Committee that we are working in partnership with. Hannah discussed that the Trails Committee considered writing a VOREC proposal this fall but decided that they would not have the time to complete a proposal for this year. The Trails Committee may try to submit a proposal for next year. The Trails Committee is interested in making the Rivershore Trail more accessible to various user groups.

Hannah mentioned that the trail at Volunteers Green could use some work too and asked if that could be added to our grant. Sheri stated that would not be possible at this point because the grant at it is has been approved by the selectboard and there would not be time to alter the grant and present it to the selectboard again for approval. Next step: The Rec Committee is interested in supporting the Trails committee work and will check in 2024 on the status of improvements to the river trail and/or VG trails.

**VG/BC Project Committee Updates:** Jeanne provided updates from the most recent VG/BC meeting. The first focus regarding Volunteers Green is to catch up on needed maintenance and landscaping/tree work. Some members of the VG/BC Committee met with Tyler to learn about the zoning regulations and how they affect what can be done at the parks. At the Round Church Green there are no restrictions. At Volunteers Green any replacement of structures has to stay in the original footprint, no new structures are allowed, and tables and benches have to be secured.

Mark commented that one of the biggest drawbacks with doing anything at Volunteers Green is the strict zoning regulations. Mark stated that he feels that there may be the possibility to get approval for certain structures if we have a discussion with the Planning Commission about zoning and what structures we want. Jeanne stated that Fran met with Tyler and he said that

he's going to need to see a plan/design for the playground and/or other structures in order to make a decision regarding what can and can't go in. Sheri asked what the process is for getting permission for new structures, would we need to obtain permits? Mark stated that any new structure would have to go through the town DRB (Development Review Board) for approval. He feels that there may be some reasonable flexibility regarding the zoning rules and it is worth having a conversation about flood regulations with the Planning Commission.

Jeanne stated that the bandshell needs major work. The trusses are failing, the foundation needs to be replaced, the roof may need work, it needs to be more accessible, and for safety there should be more of a natural visual barrier at the edge of the river by the bandshell.

Kirsten and Jeanne have met with three playground reps and Jeanne will be getting quotes from the reps for new playgrounds. Jeanne and Kristen also looked at the benches and tables in the playground area and discussed replacing them. Jeanne mentioned the donated mats that the town has and looking into whether or not they could be used. She was told by a playground rep that the mats can only be used for short structures because they would not provide enough cushion/protection for higher structures. Jeanne stated that the playground reps will provide recommendations regarding the various base options.

The VG/BC Committee is also looking into putting a hard surface walking path at Volunteers Green. The VG/BC Committee is looking into various base options and working to figure out what will work best in a floodplain area and then they will seek a quote. Jeanne mentioned that Fran has traveled to other local recreation paths to learn more about the options and what works well. Hannah mentioned that the Trails Committee has tools and is able to assist with cleaning up debris and help maintain a path if that is desired.

The VG/BC Committee is looking into putting pickle ball courts and possibly a tennis court at Browns Court. Jeanne mentioned that there are some specialized structures/nets that can be used for multiple sports and she is going to look into that. They are also looking into the possibility of a bocce court. The VG/BC Committee met with the Parking Committee to discuss parking at Browns Court.

**7:52 PM Community Engagement Discussion:** Sheri stressed the importance of making sure that we do a thorough job conducting community engagement regarding the new playground structure. The Rec Committee will submit the application for the VOREC grant by 12/15 and hopefully we will hear whether or not we have been selected to receive the grant sometime in February, but it could be later. The VG/BC Committee will do a presentation in March to the selectboard to seek approval for their project ideas. Sheri confirmed with Jeanne regarding the steps and timeline for the VG/BC committee and when the public engagement will happen. Community engagement would happen after the selectboard reviews the VG/BC project ideas.

Sheri stated that in her experience, she's used to having community members weigh in on what criteria are important for them first, then have 3 bidders/companies come in and present their designs, and then the public has the opportunity to engage regarding the final design. Jeanne

stated that the VG/BC Committee has been told that they need to have a design to present to the selectboard at the March meeting and that they need to choose one company to use before that meeting. Jeanne expressed that she strongly supports having public engagement to discuss the options/details regarding the new playground structure after a company and base design is decided on and approved by the selectboard. Jeanne mentioned that she and Kirsten have discussed different material options for the playgrounds and that the floodplain regulations may play a big role in determining our options regarding the new playground structure.

Sheri suggested having the Rec Committee and the VG/BC Committee host three public meetings to engage with the public and present some different options that people can give feedback on. Then this information/feedback can be presented to the selectboard. Choosing one contractor/company before the public engagement may work, as long as there are some different designs and options to choose from. The timing of this would be between March and August (when the VOREC grant award would be issued to Richmond if selected).

Jeanne mentioned that the VG/BC Committee isn't done in March and they will keep working to follow through with the projects. They just need to have the projects planned by March and present them to the selectboard for approval. Jeanne will let us know when she gets bids for the playground so that the Rec Committee members can look over the bids and possibly attend one of the VG/BC meetings to discuss the bids. Then the two committees will work together to plan the public engagement process.

Sheri asked Jeanne if the VG/BC Committee is planning on doing any public engagement regarding the other structures/projects that they are proposing. Jeanne stated no, at this time the only public engagement they are planning to conduct is regarding the playground, in partnership with the Rec Committee. Mark suggested that if we don't get awarded the VOREC grant then we could apply for it again next year and we'd have an even stronger application with actual bids/quotes. Sheri stated that we could also look at requesting a capital reserve fund to pay for a new playground.

**8:12 PM: Submitting the VOREC Grant:** Jeanne will send the letters of support that she got for the VOREC grant to Sheri. Sheri asked Jack if he would be willing to ask the Bolton selectboard for a letter of support. Jack agreed but asked Sheri to give him specifics regarding what should be in the letter. Jeanne said she has specifics that she used for the letters she requested and she can send it to Jack. Sheri stated she needs the letters by next Tuesday, Dec 12. Sheri will work on the grant this weekend and hopefully finish it up early next week. Sheri mentioned that there is one section on the grant regarding project permits. She is not sure if we need to do this so she will check with Josh.

**8:17 PM Snowshoeing Event Planning:** We need to promote the event in January. Sheri suggests doing the event during school vacation in February. Kate forgot to check with the library about reserving the snow shoes to use them for the event, and she will follow up with that. Sheri is willing to organize an event in Huntington and promote it. For the Volunteers Green event she suggested having some cookies/treats, maybe hot cocoa, and maybe come up with

some games to play. Jack asked if we have discussed having a portalet, warming station, and rain dates. Sheri stated that we are thinking that this will be a small, short event, so we would not rent a portalet or have a warming station. If there isn't enough snow for snowshoeing then we could just do a walk instead. We can encourage people to bring their own snowshoes if they have some and if needed people can take turns using the library's snowshoes, since there are a limited number of snowshoes and poles for loan from the Richmond Free Library.

Jack mentioned that there is a new principal at Smilie School and that the principal is interested in doing some outreach, so we may be able to use the school as a Bolton location for a snowshoe event. Jack did caution being careful about safety there though because it is close to the Bolton potholes. Jack also stated that he knows a member of the senior center who is a serious birder and may be interested in leading a walk. Jack will look into the possibility of a snowshoeing event in Bolton and parking options.

Sheri suggested hosting a snowshoe event at Volunteers Green on 2/24/23 and one in Huntington on 2/25/23, and if it works out to do one in Bolton we'll do that on 02/26/23. The rain dates will be the following week/weekend. The events will be from 10AM until noon. Sheri will draft an announcement and share it with committee members. Kate will check into the possibility of having the announcement sent out to parents at school. Jack will assist with getting volunteers through the senior center.

**8:34 PM: Approval of minutes from October and November:** Kate motioned to approve. Mark seconds. Passed unanimously.

**8:35 PM: Town Report Summary:** Kate volunteered to write up a summary for the annual town report. Ideas of things to include: the spring clean up at Volunteers Green, the proposal and presentation for ARPA funds in January 2023, the playground inspections, the July flooding, continued efforts to raise funds for a new playground by combining grant and town funds, working in partnership with the VG/BC committee, submitting a proposal for a VOREC grant again, mention that in the coming months we will be working to engage the community regarding the new playground structure, planning the snowshoeing events, continuing to promote the snow shoes available at the library.

**8:37 PM:** Sheri motions to adjourn, Mark seconds, meeting adjourned.