

## **Mad River Valley Recreation District**

Minutes for special meeting, Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Board members attending via Zoom: Laura Arnesen (executive director), Alice Rogers, John Stokes, Shevonne Travers, Doug Bergstein, Peter Oliver, Molly Bagnato, Luke Foley, Mary Simmons.

Absent: Derek Bennett

Meeting called to order at 6:36pm.

This special session was called, as a continuation of the regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, to complete the process of discussing current-year grant applications and to vote on grant appropriations. Of the 13 entities applying for grants, discussion of 10 was covered in the November 15 meeting, leaving three applications remaining to be discussed before voting on appropriations. The three were Mad Valley Sports (the Mad Marathon), the Skatium, and the Warren Skatepark.

- **Mad Valley Sports.** The grant request was for \$5,000 after awards of \$2,900 in 2021 and \$5,000 in 2020. It was noted that the Mad Marathon has generated a significant impact on the Mad River Valley economy; in its application, Mad Valley Sports calculated the dollar figure to be more than \$1.5 million. Laura noted that participation for the 2022 was lower than had been hoped for by organizers due to high rental car and airline prices, below the average annual registration number of 850 runners. However, the event draws far more visitors than just the athletes (family, friends, coaches, etc.). Luke noted that the lower 2022 participation figure probably now represents a participation limit, given the unusual difficulty of the course. To boost participation, it was noted that a bike event was being considered. Race Director Dori Ingalls, who joined the meeting later, reported that, in another attempt to increase participation, organizers, had applied to the USA Track Federation to have one of the relay events designated as the national high school relay championship. The application was pending. The board agreed to consider the full \$5,000 request.
- **The Skatium.** The grant request for \$5,000, was to cover the costs of starting up an interactive web site with e-commerce capability. Alice noted that she and Shevonne were on the Skatium board and, while able to provide information about Skatium plans and management, would avoid any advocacy in the Skatium discussion. Alice did report that there had been “revitalization in terms of leadership” for the Skatium. After Luke noted that past requests from the Skatium had been “pie in the sky,” Alice said that the board had become “far more pragmatic” in its fundraising objectives. The budget for the web site start-up was a little more than \$4,000, well short of the \$5,000 grant request, and Molly questioned why \$79 a month was needed for an internet connection when the Skatium was in operation for only four or five months a

year. After a quick call to a Skatium board member to answer that question, Alice reported that there had been concern (on the Skatium board) that disconnecting and reconnecting could be more costly than simply remaining connected throughout the year. However, Molly said that Waitsfield Telecom does not charge disconnect/reconnect fees, meaning the \$948 for the annual cost of the connection could be reduced significantly. The MRVRD board decided to consider a grant on the \$3,000-4,000 range.

- **Warren Skatepark.** The request was for \$5,000 to complete an ongoing paving project. Peter noted that, of all the MRVRD grantees, the Skatepark had been particularly diligent in applying grant money to its projects as well as seeking funding from other sources. In 2022, the Skatepark privately raised more than \$15,000, and the current \$5,000 request aimed to cover only half of the \$10,000 need to complete the ongoing project. The board agreed that the \$5,000 requested would be money wisely spent.
- After the board had tentatively set a grant-amount range for each applicant, the bottom-line allocation range was \$45,400 to \$50,000. Doug reported that the total amount available in the 2022 MRVRD budget for grants was \$45,000. That apparently called for a need to pare \$400 from the low-end application total. A few suggestions came to the floor. Alice thought that perhaps less expensive nets might reduce the \$1,400 pickleball request. Mary suggested perhaps starting the cutting process at the top of the request chain, meaning the biggest requests should take the initial cuts. There was discussion about how much of the maintenance and/or repair costs of the Mad River Ridge Runners the MRVRD should cover. Peter suggested perhaps taking the \$400 shortfall and dividing it equally among the 13 applicants.  
Doug then reported that, heading into the final month of 2021, there was still \$10,000 left in this year's budget. Of that, \$3,000 was needed to cover expenses (primarily staff salary) and another \$1,000 to cover a carryover from the Skatium's 2021 request. That left \$6,000 of cash available for any other purpose, and the board agreed that taking \$400 from the 2021 remainder to cover the 2022 grant-allocation shortfall was a sensible solution.

The board voted to approve all grants, amounting to \$45,400:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Bill Koch League  | \$2,500                                  |
| Brooks Field      | \$3,500                                  |
| Couples Club      | \$6,000                                  |
| Youth Basketball  | \$4,000                                  |
| MRV Little League | \$5,000                                  |
| Mad River Path    | \$2,000                                  |
| Mad River Ridders | \$2,000                                  |
| Ridge Runners     | \$4,000                                  |
| MRV Dog Park      | \$3,000                                  |
| Mad Valley Sports | \$5,000 (Mad Marathon Relay Sponsorship) |
| Pickleball        | \$1,400                                  |
| Skatium           | \$3,000                                  |
| Warren Skatepark  | \$4,000                                  |

Total \$45,400

- Having completed the grant-approval process, a few business items needed attending to. Alice said that board member Derek Bennett would be stepping down due to scheduling conflicts. An announcement of (and solicitation of applicants for) the board opening was to be published in the Valley Reporter and Front Porch Forum. Alice also noted that the agenda for the next regular board meeting, on Tuesday, December 13, was “light” and was open to suggestions for possible agenda additions. Finally, on a side note (not involving the MRVRD directly but regarding an issue of recreational interest), Molly raised concerns about Sugarbush employees being endangered by walking to work along the Access Road. She asked what the status was of a proposed VTrans project to build a pedestrian path to the ski resort, and it was reported that VTrans had decided not to allocate money toward the project. As a funding alternative, Laura thought that a safe walking path to the resort should be of interest to the Town of Warren and perhaps should be taken up in the town’s budget deliberations.

Meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.