

**Mad River Valley Recreation District  
Board Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, January 17, 2023**

Board members attending in person: Alice Rogers, Mary Simmons, Luke Foley, Shevonne Travers, Doug Bergstein, Cory Ayotte and Laura Arnesen (Executive Director)  
Attending via Zoom: John Stokes, Peter Oliver, Molly Bagnato

Meeting called to order at 6:41pm. Motion for December board meeting minutes approved.

**Community Needs Assessment**

Alice reports that we have conducted one survey at three venues. We need to continue needs assessment in some form. It doesn't have to be a survey although that is the most used tool.

We have received ~51 survey response from the initial survey. All residents except for one. The current survey included youth sports, but centered on what people did for recreation and what they wanted.

For the next rendition we need to decide on what we need and want to know and create the survey around that. What are the communities' unmet needs?

Doug asks the question, "what are people looking for that they can't find?" When we created our new website, we deferred to the Chamber to answer a lot of people's questions about recreation. Unfortunately, there are parts of their website that are outdated. Where and do we fill in?

It goes back to the question, is part of the Rec District's mission focused on communication?

What are the demographics that we are missing? What can't people find that they need to know? We can use this information to go to our partners and say that people are having a hard time finding x information.

Peter comments that he doesn't think that people know about the Rec District. Some don't know we even exist, and others aren't sure what we do. We need to get more info out there.

Alice how about a section in the Valley Reporter?

We don't have our own programs, we support our partners, and we are connected though recreation.

Alice agrees that Peter is really onto something about people not knowing who we are. Doug, how about using a QR code?

Luke comments that he doesn't visit a lot of websites any longer. If we are trying to drive traffic to our website, how do we do that? What are people interested in?

This is becoming a two-prong approach: First, we need to create a needs assessment to understand what is missing. This will be accomplished by interviews, surveys, and meetings. Second, we use this feedback to create a more relevant website and drive people there. This will help people understand what we do and get them the information they need.

Luke asks, is our purpose behind the curtains? Is the better role for us to support our partner organizations? In return for our support, we ask our partner organizations to put our name out there about our grants and how they can do what they are doing because of us.

Laura thinks we need to create multiple surveys over the next few months. These "surveys" could take different forms- through our website, one on one interviews and conversations with our partners.

Luke comments that the most in-depth conversation and useful one was meeting with Dori Ingalls, Mad Marathon Founder. We divide and conquer our partner list and ask for feedback in one-on-one meetings and/or attend the Board meetings of our partners.

Molly agrees with Luke that we should start by working with our partner organizations and asking them how we can support them. Next, we go to the community. Is there a "prize" for completing the survey? We use this information to make our website more relevant. People are most often looking for up to date information- registrations, opening dates, trail closures, etc.

Laura, Bear and Alice are going to create a list of questions for partner organizations in a google doc. Start with current partner organizations and glean info from them.

We can't use town meetings (Warren said yes, Fayston said no and Waitsfield hasn't answered) to glean information as some towns think it is inappropriate because we are funded by the towns.

Doug asks why can't the town make room for our survey at town meeting? Often there is information at the meetings for things that are on the budget.

Luke asks the question, was the purpose of the survey well communicated?

Molly comments that we need to make the survey more fun and make it seem like what they say can change the course of recreation.

***Laura's staff report***

**Mad River Park Update**

Who will be at the goat check photo event? It is January 20<sup>th</sup> at Lawsons at 4:45.

Molly, Alice, Corey, John can be there. Shevonne will reach out to Mad River Park Committee and invite them. Maybe ask Lax and Soccer as well.

### Mad River Distillery

They are asking for water from us for their sprinkler/holding tanks for fire suppression. Bear, maybe we can trade with them for potable water? Coaches would not have to bring water and we wouldn't have to change our well to be potable. Win, win.

Luke asks would it make more sense to give them a number? Like 4 water coolers 5 weekends a summer?

Alice comments that we need a better idea of their needs. Laura, we are waiting for that exact number.

### Future Enhancements at Park

Alice, we need to identify a use for the leftover funds. She is in favor of making a bench.

Doug reports that the current balance is \$9k. This is not including the \$5 from Foundation for Rural Service (through Waitsfield Telecom) or the Lawsons donation of around ~\$10k.

Other ideas for leftover funds- roof over portalets? Permeant bench? How do the mowers feel about mowing around a bench or moving it? Potable water would be a huge asset.

Peter reports (and Molly agrees) that we can't hear a lot of this discussion FYI.

Will we need added insurance for irrigation? Laura to find out including if we need the person doing irrigation to be insured. If so, that means a business, not a high schooler or adult.

Many agree that potable water would be the best next decision. Bear, this would be the next step for having real bathrooms. Would enable us to charge more for facility rentals.

Waitsfield Telecom would like to use Mad River Park for their Easter Egg Hunt again on Sat., April 1, 2023. Doug- shouldn't this go straight to the Field Committee? This is before the fields open, but the impact is so much less.

Luke comments most viewed, and most shared posts of FB are the ones that are timely and have an immediate impact like when fields open.

### Workers Comp

They were going off of Laura's 2020 salary (in 2020 she started in Oct. and only worked for three months). We were overcharged for 2022 because Laura wasn't classified correctly as administrative. This is being remedied and we will be refunded for 2022 overpayment.

### **MRV Dog Park**

The next meeting is in February. We need to verify insurance coverage for volunteers and for liability. Looking for volunteers for weekly maintenance of the Dog Park.

Doug asks, am I going to be writing a check to someone? Laura, we will get the matching funds from the Vermont Community Foundation and a transfer of the funds we raised online. We (Doug on behalf of MRVRD as the fiscal agent) will write checks for purchases as the park is built. Laura to find out the documentation needed before checks can be written.

Alice asks Laura to check with the town of Warren on liability with volunteers and build out?

### **Town Reports**

Our annual check-ins with the three towns went well and took place in Nov/Dec. Just this evening Laura also presented to Moretown to keep them informed of our work. A full report and budget were submitted to the three towns for inclusion in Town Reports.

### **VOREC**

None of the VOREC grants have been executed by the state because of lack of staffing. Goal is to have all grants signed by 4.1.23. They have not decided yet about allowing us to use the \$52,000 earmarked for the Downtown Trail to be switched to the realignment utilizing Fiddler's Walk. The state is concerned that the funds would be wasted if the VTrans intersection study brings a better route to light. Laura offered a site visit and told them that the more paths into town the better. We will probably only need around 30K for the realignment to Fiddler's Walk and are hopeful the extra 20K can be put toward parking at the Rec Hub which may be underfunded. Laura also alerted the VOREC people that the VTrans study would probably take many years and asked if one state agency might nudge another?

Shevonne asks If there are some landowners who have said no to permission for easements? Bear, one issue is the area behind the laundromat is junky. Can we move the path or clean up?

Luke, can we use the other trail towards the Mad River Meadows? Laura, no that's not an option since Ross couldn't convince one landowner and Downstreet Housing and Community Development would take many years to decide and might say no in the end.

Molly, can we make signage regarding the history/original inhabitants of the area on these new trails?

John- can't hear everyone. We can't hear Laura. Or Bear. Needs to be fixed by next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09.