

MRVRD Minutes, August 15, 2023

In attendance: Board members Alice Rodgers, Mary Simmons, Cory Ayotte, Molly Bagnato, Luke Foley, Peter Oliver, Shevonne Travers, John Stokes (via Zoom), MRVRD Executive Director Laura Arnesen, guests Gina Gaidys and Misha Golfman (of the Mad River Path)

Meeting called to order at 6:37pm.

Gina Gaidys introduces herself as a possible replacement for board member Shevonne Travers, who is stepping down. Gaidys has lived in the Mad River Valley with her family, which includes three children, since 2001. She has been a teacher at the Warren School for more than 20 years. She tells the board that her family is very active recreationally.

Minutes from the July board meeting are approved unanimously by the board.

Alice reports that she has consulted with a representative from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns regarding revisions of the MRVRD personnel policy. After making revisions accordingly, Alice says that the new policy still needs to be reviewed and approved by a labor lawyer, who will presumably need to be paid. There is money available in the MRVRD bank account -- \$9,000 in reserve and a balance total of \$10,477 -- to cover the cost. However, some of the money will need to go to grant reimbursement and other expenses.

Mary suggested that a lawyer might be willing to take on the personnel-policy review on a pro bono basis, after which Alice suggests that any payment to a lawyer should be capped at \$800 if a pro bono lawyer cannot be found.

Mad River Park

Quick update from Bear that we will need to put up signs for parking at fields when fall sports start.

Shevonne- Bear, did you talk to Kingsbury about the cost of doing irrigation for us? She did a while ago but since then it has been raining.

Misha from the Mad River Path

Presentation on the visioning of the Mad River Path. Questions from the board should be focused on clarification about the project, not feasibility.

Goal of the Path is to connect Warren to Moretown.

Design of the Valley is perfect for a multi-use path.

Looking into the future, a path like this will be necessary as more and more people are using 2-wheel modes of transportation.

Emphasis on climate change as well as people who cannot afford to buy a car. It would be 10' wide and used for a variety of things such as strollers and wheelchairs.

Connect to Velomont and Cross VT.

Alice, who have you met with to date?

Misha- this is meeting number 26. Planning commissioners, select boards, 501c3's, Sugarbush, Chambers, etc. Next step is meeting with key landowners who will be directly affected. Still figuring out the number of landowners who would be affected.

Shevonne- have you met with the folks who made Stowe happen? Because landowners there got a tax incentive, which made that path possible.

Luke- there may be a future for getting a savings (from the state) if you give your land for recreation like you do for agriculture, etc. Misha comments that Local Motion has a staff person working on this.

Peter- does it have to be paved to meet ADA standards?

Misha- no, it could be aggregate. These decisions will be researched in the scoping study.

Luke- what kind of support would you look for from us? Misha- letters of support.

Misha- We will need an entire environmental review/scoping study. One major concern is exasperating the flood conditions. This will be considered when planning the path.

Misha- The Mad River Path for many years has not been able to sustain itself financially. We have been tapping into operating reserves that were built up years ago. Misha's first step is getting the Path sustainable. Most every other path system in the state has earned income, which we do not have. This earned income is typically programming. His idea is to start a summer program for kids. Mad River Path Adventures. The camp would be an overnight camp based in recreation and adventure.

Payment would be on a sliding scale.

Will need money for capital investments to create an adventure camp. He's hoping that we may be interested in helping him get this thing off the ground.

Alice- what is the \$ need? Misha- at least \$10k to get it off the ground.

Camps- 12 per session. Ages 10-14.

Alice- have you gleaned any info from locals?

Luke- there is limited options for camps, one would think it would be popular.

Misha leaves the meeting. The Board is grateful for his time and presentation.

Review of our Grant Program

The review of the grant program coincides with the purpose of the Rec District.

Quick review of our mission.

We need to think about long-term obligations of the Rec District. What does the future look like? Our grant boundaries will, to some extent, dictate our future as an organization.

Discussion about Misha's camp. We will need to think about what the funding is for. Do we buy big ticket items (like canoes) and loan them out?

Another concern about funding the Camp is we are funding out of state residents to some extent. And we are inadvertently funding an ED as the proceeds from the camp will go to their salary- we don't fund admin positions.

Bear- what needs to be changed to fund this project if we wanted to? And if we change those eligibility requirements, are we opening the door to other projects?

This is complicated because if we open the door to this, we are opening the door to other for-profits.

Luke- we talk about how to expand the demographics we hit. Will this program do that?

Issues are:

- it's a lot of equipment
- indirect funding of an administrative person
- tuition is high
- will it expand our demographics?
- how many local kids will be able to afford the camp? We look at these numbers when we fund other orgs, actual numbers of people impacted.

This wouldn't be the largest grant request we have received but in the past few years, we have asked that people narrow their projects and ask for less than \$7k. This request would be on the high end of things.

Bear- thinking Misha request is for seed money, one time request? Yes.

Laura- we should tell Misha what we would fund.

Shevonne- I would be more interested in supporting the Path, not so much the camp.

Luke- is supportive of the idea that the Path is coming up with a creative way to fund their ED.

Conversation is concluded that the advice is that the Path should apply for something that falls into our prevue like vegetation management.

CRV is also looking for funds. CRV is about balancing the trails and the environment.

Would make more sense for the Rec District to reserve money for CRV rather than having them apply for a grant. Laura will advise the rest of the committee.

Survey

Ecological integrity question needs to be reworked. First off, it is a bit out of context. Do people know what ecological integrity is? Are we just asking about trail recreation and the environment? What are we trying to get at?

How important is balancing trail development with environmental responsibility?

The question needs context.

Change to "primary" residence.

Where to collect surveys-

Siptemberfest, Craft Fair, Farmers Market, Ski and Skate Sale, School bulletins, Senior Center, Green and Gold, Mad River Oct 7 running race,

Laura will put together a list and folks can sign up.

Staff Report

VOREC grant may get signed tomorrow!

Brooks Field- we need some communication about the rules of the tennis courts.

Shredfest- happening this weekend.

Dog Park- need to put temporary signs up since the Park isn't officially open yet. Later an official wooden sign will be at the Dog Park with rules approved by the Town and VLCT

Some complaints with pickle ball/tennis so there might be a need for a sign explaining things.

Thank you Shevonne.

Alice moves to approves the nomination of Gina Gaidys to the Mad River Rec Board. All are in favor.

Bear makes a motion to adjourn. All in favor.