

Mad River Valley Recreation District

Minutes for monthly meeting, Tuesday, July 25, 2023

Board members attending: Laura Arnesen (executive director), Shevonne Travers, Doug Bergstein, Peter Oliver, Cory Ayotte, Luke Foley, Mary Simmons. Attending via Zoom: Alice Rogers.

Absent: Molly Bagnato, John Stokes

Meeting called to order at 6:45pm.

First order of business -- minutes from June meeting unanimously approved.

Budget review. Doug reported that of the \$125,146 budgeted for 2023, \$44,084 had been spent through the first six months. Among line-item expenditures: grants (about a third of 2023 grants covered to date), the VOREC CRV Project Manager stipend (about half of the \$15,000 stipend covered so far), payroll service, new Zoom account fee, website domain registration fee, professional development, and other smaller items. Doug noted that there had actually been a refund for workman's comp due to previous overpayment. Doug also mentioned that money for the Mad River Park had yet to be "put in." Alice noted that most of the grant fulfillment requests typically come in September. As for VOREC reimbursements, Laura said that the agreement with the state would (hopefully) be signed in the next two weeks, to enable the process of reimbursing partner expenditures.

Mad River Park report. According to Mary, there had been three pavilion rentals so far this summer. She also reported that, due to the heavy rains, the new irrigation system had not been used since the dry weeks of May. Kingsbury continues to mow the fields but has not yet been engaged to manage the irrigation system, although according to Mary, the process of moving the irrigation wheels around by hand is extremely cumbersome and paying Kingsbury to do the job, using motorized equipment, makes good sense.

In addition, the fields survived the heavy July rains in good shape, even though some users (pavilion groups) had been on the wet fields with standing water. Alice pointed out that at future board meetings, future field enhancements -- e.g., a running track, pickleball courts -- would need to be discussed. It was agreed that a fall update should be sent as a courtesy to Lawson's to indicate how Sunshine grant money was being spent.

Community survey. Laura noted that, in order to keep the survey at a user-friendly length, it should be no longer than two pages and take about five minutes to complete. Several questions were then raised on how to address the issue of the frequency of use of MRVRD facilities. It was felt that including a line to allow survey respondents to enter a number was perhaps the best solution. Next came questions about how best to administer the survey. Survey Monkey was one option; Luke suggested that Google Forms, with which he was familiar, might be a good

option and offered to show Alice (and others) how it could work. How, then, to reach a wide, varied population in which all recreational activities were fairly represented? Luke expressed concerns about a summer/fall survey not reaching winter activists, specifically snowmobilers. There was also concern about "ballot stuffing" -- that, without well-planned distribution, some user groups might become overrepresented. Peter said that the possibility of ballot stuffing was largely out of the board's control, and to just "run with" whatever data the survey produced. Concern was expressed that distribution through certain means or venues -- e.g., trailhead kiosks -- might skew survey results toward certain user groups. However, Luke suggested that distribution in as many venues as possible was probably the best way to spread the word to the largest audience possible in order to collect actionable data. Among the possible venues/media to be considered for the placement of a QR code for the survey: kiosks, posters, Front Porch Form, the Valley Reporter, the MRVRD website, MRVRD-partner Facebook pages, September Fest and other events.

Discussion briefly diverged on the subject of Moretown -- how to reach Moretown residents and perhaps how to prod Moretown into coming on board as a MRVRD member. Laura suggested that by including the mention of the three current MRVRD towns -- Fayston, Waitsfield, Warren -- on the survey, survey respondents would become aware of Moretown's absence. It was agreed that discussion about Moretown was a matter for future board meetings.

Finally, there was the matter of incentives to encourage survey response. The most sensible incentives appeared to be those that would be of value to all survey respondents -- e.g., a Mehuron's gift certificate, a Valley Grocery gift certificate, gas cards. Peter suggested, however, that, at least for the first year of the survey, offering incentives added a logistical twist to the whole process that might make it harder to manage. It was agreed that no incentives would be offered this year.

Board meeting scheduling. Alice reported that she had been developing policies, "based on procedures for municipal bodies," that also abided by guidelines outlined in the MRVRD's Memorandum of Understanding. Among other things, she reported that notification of meetings on the website was legally sufficient but that the posting of meeting agendas at town halls and other public spaces, while not legally required, should continue as a standard MRVRD practice. She also noted that special meetings (especially at grant time) and executive sessions needed to be announced. Alice said that, as she was working on the process of establishing clear meeting rules, she would "continue working on a policies-and-procedures manual" for pretty much all things MRVRD. The board voted unanimously to approve meeting policies outlined by Alice.

Staff report. Laura said that the opening of the dog park at Brooks Field had been delayed, but a late September or October grand opening was expected. She also said that, with all easements and permits in place, the VOREC grant agreement should be signed in a couple of weeks. She noted that there was still a need to "resolve contradictory language" regarding reimbursement

rules. Alice issued a "bravo to Laura" for her work in plowing through the bureaucratic minutiae of the VOREC process.

Two final items -- Shevonne announced that she was joining the Vermont Playwrights' Circle, whose meeting schedule conflicts with the MRVRD meeting schedule. She would therefore be resigning from her MRVRD board position. And it was noted that the Mad River Path was working on a new \$50,000 fundraising initiative, a topic for discussion at the upcoming August MRVRD board meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14.