

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

Board members attending: Laura Arnesen (executive director), Alice Rogers, Doug Bergstein, Luke Foley, Molly Bagnato, Cory Ayotte, Mary Simmons

Attending via Zoom: Peter Oliver, John Stokes, Gina Gaidys

Meeting called to order at 6:35pm. First order of business -- minutes from September meeting unanimously approved.

Presentation from Sam Robinson from Mad River Valley Planning District. Please see <https://mrvpd.org/2023/09/27/the-2023-mrv-data-report-is-here/> to view the presentation.

6:55 Sam departs.

### **Mad River Park Update.**

Bear is planning to meet Matt Lillard to go over draining the irrigation system before winter. John is welcome to join. Needs to make sure that she has all the tools, etc. November 15<sup>th</sup>- pull the port-a-lets.

Received a request from Maggie Stone to have an AED at the Park. Bear updates us that LAX bought one many years ago. It is hopefully still around. Bear will look for it and follow up.

### **Budget.**

Alice reminds us that the formal budget meeting needs to be warned 15 days in advance of the meeting. Budget needs to be finalized by the 15<sup>th</sup> of December. Today is the draft proposal.

### **CRV**

Laura updates that CRV needs more funds to complete their work. The anticipated gap in funding from what VOREC has promised and what they need is \$25k. CRV is wondering if the Rec District would fund them in the amount of \$10k to help close that gap. Alice asks Laura the following questions: is this going to be a regular line item? How do we justify this to our grantees (taking money out of grant funds for CRV)?

Laura- there may be other requests from CRV but she doesn't think there will be an annual request of \$10k. They would most likely be more in the \$2-\$5k range. After 2024, they would like to find a home for CRV. Maybe with MRVRD ? The research is going to go into a living document, some details may need to be updated/changed so there will be ongoing maintenance and expenditures.

To Alice's second question- the point isn't to take money from youth sports and give it to CRV. We have said in the past, that we may reduce the amount we give to the Riders or Path because of the amount of time and money we are giving to VOREC- perhaps the funds for CRV come from there?

Bear- do we have any responsibility to report to the towns how we are spending the money? Is it at all "earmarked money"? Alice and Laura- no.

CRV received a \$5k grant from Lintillac and there is another \$5k pending so they are actively working to close the gap.

Alice- we will have received the grant proposals by the time we have to finalize the budget so it may be that the requests are less than anticipated which may help us if we decide to allocate funds for CRV.

Alice- we can think of the work of CRV as part of the next wave/the next chapter of what the Rec District is and what we do.

Luke- have we had the conversation with the Path and Riders that funding may be smaller this year? Laura- they were aware last year and should be this year but she will remind them.

CRV is looking for grants to fill this hole. Peter asks if partners could contribute? Is this falling disproportionality on the Rec District?

Molly asks for clarity on the timeline. Laura- CRV has until the end of 2024 to come up with \$20k.

There needs to be participation from our partners to feel like there is skin in the game.

Luke- fully supports CRV. Hopes we can find a better balance of recreation and ecology. At the same time, thinks we should look at the list that Laura sent and see who can contribute. Can this be the base for fundraising?

Laura- the Fayston Conservation Commission gave 5k for the next two years, total of 10k. Waitsfield and Warren looked at using the pandemic funds and decided not to give.

Situation could change as CRV gains momentum. We have a vested interest in this moving forward but we can't be the sole contributor.

Bear- SB and MRG should have a vested interest, should CRV ask them for support?

Alice- If we give \$5k, we are giving 50%. That doesn't seem equitable.

If CRV is a community effort, the task should be equitable, not just Laura's time and our money.

Bear- if we financed/fronted the money and then more grant funds were secured, could the Rec District get paid back?

Currently, Emily is writing grants with some oversight from Laura. Emily is paid thru VOREC so it's not currently taking up a lot of Laura's time or the Rec District's money.

### **Doug leads up through budget spreadsheets.**

*Overview:*

We have \$17k -\$20 rolling into 2024. Total proposed for 2024 is \$144k.

*Mad River Park:*

The Park 2024 carry over is basically all from Lawson's.

Bear and Doug increased the Mad River Rec District's contribution to the Park to \$12k for 2024 to cover increased costs of mowing, irrigation and treatment for dust.

Do we have to plow in the winter? \$1,300 right now. No need to plow in winter. We have plowed for only the past 2-3 years. If we are offering it for Nordic skiing, it would be nice to have a few spaces plowed but no need to do the whole thing. Doug and Bear will see if we can "break" this agreement with Kingsbury, it has already been paid but could it be put to next summer's maintenance instead?

Mowing is based on a set rate for the season. Not how many times they mow.

There are some discrepancies between the contributions of various sports and seasons such as, soccer pays less than LAX and spring soccer is more than fall.

Suggestion: Change all the sports regardless of season to \$1k.

Perhaps we need to ask all the sports to pay more since we are running at a deficit? We slowly increase the "rent" to LAX and soccer and summer soccer.

Ask Moretown to give a little more.

Never going to make money but it should be solvent.

#### *General Budget*

Board decides to move the Project Manager's salary to reserve (VOREC/cash flow) because that isn't really a budgetary thing as it is reimbursed. It's more of a cash flow issue.

We need to do a staff review and decide about Laura's compensation and salary. Currently Laura is working and managing a lot but what will the future look like, without VOREC and CRV? Maybe a bonus makes more sense than an overall raise as the workload may decrease.

We need to have two meetings in November. We can use the first meeting to vote on the budget and still have ample time to warn the public.

We need to keep more money in the bank because of VOREC. After 2024, this will be different. The towns and the public may look at this and wonder what we are doing with all this money.

Peter- can we increase the reserve/cash flow? Doug- that's sort of what the \$20k is from carry over from 2023.

Alice- are we at the point where we can present the public with a draft budget? When we warn the meeting at the end of October it has to include this draft budget. Doug- we go with the higher number when we present.

Our explanation is simple that we have money left over from grantees that didn't spend it. And VOREC. Antidotal statement that goes with the budget proposal. Can Doug and Laura come up with the language for this?

Luke makes a motion to accept a preliminary budget proposal for the purpose of the forewarning a formal budget hearing. All in favor.

### **Staff Report**

We are almost at the end of the meeting, and we still have a lot to get through. Peter's proposal is to table Moretown case statement for now. Laura worries about the timing of this.

Let's get through meeting dates as they are important. We are moving November meeting to the 14<sup>th</sup> because of Thanksgiving Break. Purpose of that meeting is three-fold- executive session and staff review, formal budget hearing, and lastly, speak to any grantees who we may have questions for.

Tuesday, November 28<sup>th</sup> is the second November meeting. The purpose is to review grants.

December 19<sup>th</sup> is the December meeting.

### *Moretown Statement*

MOU says we must bring on town representatives if they give more money. We could change the MOU?

Current proposal is to ask for a slow, incremental increase in their contribution.

Peter- ask for \$20k/year rather than this slow, incremental increase.

Luke- I agree, we should ask them for the whole amount. The way Laura has it is a softer ask so maybe that would land better?

Moretown's contribution to the Park will be rolled into the whole Rec District not a separate item.

Laura- should we just ask for the \$40k? Luke- it would be fair but maybe it wouldn't land as well.

Laura's strategy is just to make it more palatable.

Alice- ask for \$20k. That's 50% of what the other towns are paying.

What are we doing with the \$20k? Grants, Park, operating costs.

We are often 50% short on grants each year so that's an easy answer.

\$4k each for the Mad River Park. Once you are a full member, you won't be paying that in so the ask is really only \$16k, not \$20k.

Staff report submitted by Ex. Director Laura Arnesen in writing after the meeting:

- Community Survey: Thanks to Bear, Peter, and Alice for doing surveys in-person, Luke put it on Google Forms and says we have 202 responses to date, thanks Luke. I will post it on FPF again, remind our recreation partners one more time and add it in whenever I can. We just had 12 signs with big QR codes put up at the major trailhead kiosks throughout the Valley.

- VOREC: VR article 10/12/23, another VR article on Conservation Recreation Visioning (CRV) 10/19/23, these will be posted on our website as updates. There was a delay first reimbursement sent to the State by late-October, funds come back to us in December.

\* CRV is planning a Community Learning Session for the week of Nov. 13th (6 - 8 pm), date and location TBD. The goal is to better understand important dimensions of ecology and recreation to provide solid grounding as we develop a community wide vision on how to balance them in the future. It will focus on the broad picture of biodiversity/ecological integrity and outdoor recreation/trails - what key aspects to consider, why they matter, current trends at a variety of scales (global/national/statewide), etc. We'll have a recognized expert on each aspect who isn't directly tied to the project. Drew Pollack Bruce, formerly of SE Group, has agreed to cover the recreation part, and shortly we will announce the biodiversity/ecological integrity speaker. For more information check [MRVRD.org](http://MRVRD.org). I'll keep you all posted. It will not be on Tues., Nov., 14 since that is our new Board Meeting date.

- Dog Park: Since they saved money because of volunteers doing the fencing and structures, they will have approx. 15K remaining for future maintenance, insurance, etc. once the buildout is complete (one more structure is being worked on by Charlie Hosford. Big shout out to Charlie for making the park look so good. They will not utilize about half of their \$3,000 grant from MRVRD. They have their own insurance for officers so are no longer asking the MRVRD to help with that. They are thrilled that MRVRD will continue as their fiscal sponsor. When they set up a Paypal account, funds will then get directed to MRVRD, but funds will come in electronically with a note regarding Dog Park. Multiple PayPal links for different uses are allowed. If we decided to use PayPal in the future their use of it now won't affect us. We may have to set up a separate PayPal account or it would be a secondary use for the original one that was set up. Eve is taking care of all the final reports for the Better Places Grant.

- Bear is helping me with a short video and photos of the irrigation system for the required final report to the Foundation for Rural Services, the 5K grant that Waitsfield Telecom helped us get. Bear makes a motion to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourns at approximately 8:30 pm.