

Mad River Valley Recreation District Board Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Board members attending in person: Alice Rogers, Mary Simmons, Luke Foley, Doug Bergstein, Molly Bagnato, Gina Gaidys and Laura Arnesen (Executive Director)

Attending via Zoom: Peter Oliver and Cory Ayotte

Absent: John Stokes

Tracey from the Valley Reporter joined for the first part of the meeting.

Meeting called to order at 6:39pm. Motion for January board meeting minutes approved without changes.

### **Moretown Case Statement**

Laura begins with a bit of the history of the Rec District. Originally the three towns of Waitsfield, Warren and Fayston banded together to create a municipal union, the Mad River Valley Recreation District. Today, we would like to expand that to include Moretown as they are an integral part of the Valley. The District supports recreation through funding and advocating for youth sports, infrastructure like the Skatium, adult sports like softball, etc.. The work is funded by \$40k from each town. In 2024, \$49k will be given to our partners as part of our grant program.

The Mad River Park is the only property that the District owns and operates. Moretown is currently contributing \$3k for 2024.

The benefits to Moretown joining the Rec District would be that they would be a part of the grant cycle as well as have one seat on the board. Currently 20% of participants in youth sports are from Moretown and the thought is that they use the trails as well, so it makes sense for them to be a partner. We are asking them to join as a "half-member". A half-member would be a contribution of \$20k.

The Moretown Recreation Board voted unanimously to pass the decision onto the Select Board. The Select Board wants to wait until Town Meeting. It is not on the agenda but will be discussed at the end of the meeting.

Peter remarks that it seems as though the Moretown Select board is leaning favorably.

Laura agrees but also comments that she thinks that the public, parents, etc. are unfamiliar with our work. Awareness building is key.

Tracey from Valley Reporter asks when did you start asking Moretown to be a part of the Board?  
Laura- late 2023. Tracey asks if she can contact Laura with any further questions. Laura- yes.

### **Moretown Task Force**

After Town Meeting Day there will be more work to do.

Keep spreading the word!

### **Mad River Park Update**

Waitsfield Telecom's would like to host the Easter Egg Hunt at Mad River Park on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Bear- may need to have an extra plow. The whole winter plowing situation still needs to be dealt with. They are plowing more then we need.

Bear- Matt Lillard sent an email wondering if scheduling requests need to go in front of the Mad River Park Committee.

Laura- no, we are the funding source. It's a Board decision. The Park Committee is managing the Park.

Luke- my suggestion would be to reach out to Matt and ask if there are any concerns.

Perhaps we need to revisit the document that goes over the responsibilities of the MRP Fields Committee. Financial decisions need to go thru the Board.

Discussion around how to deal with the mud for the Easter Egg Hunt. Peter suggests flagging off certain sections that are muddy. We can make these decisions as we get closer to the date. Chat with Matt about concerns at this point as well.

Doug moves to support the Easter Egg Hunt by Waitsfield Telecom on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Luke seconds. All in favor.

### **Programs**

Alice opens a discussion about the Rec District having a monthly column in the Valley Reporter. We could use it to announce youth sports registrations, trail closings, parties, and happenings, etc.

Laura wants to write this, with suggestions and review from the Board on content.

How do we gather the content for this?

Can our partners send us updates? Should not be on Laura to have to go get the info.

First part of the article is our news, and the second section is "From Our Partners"?

Do we include updates from folks that aren't our partners? Do they have to be nonprofits? Peter suggests we use the space to celebrate what we do and not worry about the partners or updates sections.

Gina asks, is the purpose of the article to raise awareness about what we are doing or is it to share info on registration, etc.?

Do we include things like trail closures?

We could ask our partners to send updates and if they don't then it's not included. Laura could use Boomerang to ping our partners each month for updates. We could use this content in the VR section and on our website.

Bear suggest that could we put a line at the end of the article that says go to our website for updates.

Luke worries that it could be very trying to organize all these events, sign-ups, etc.

Peter reiterates that this space should be focused on the news- not on dissemination of information like registration.

Laura will follow up with our Partners and the Valley Reporter. The board will have input and help create a monthly plan for content. Laura will craft the piece each month.

### *Bike Lights*

Folks need lights on their bikes! Laura would like to make the public aware of the necessity of having lights on your bike. Subsidizing them would ensure more people would have access to them.

Laura has reached out to Local Motion. They can get 500 lumen front and back lights for \$27/ea. (a near \$50 retail value).

We would want people to bring us their bike and we put the light on the bike. Want to ensure that they get used.

We could discount them even more to \$15. And offer scholarships.

How best to distribute these?

Famer's Markets, events, school bike weeks? Maybe we do our own safety day? Promote it in our article!

Peter- when he used to work with the Riders they would do a safety event up at Mt. Ellen. Possibility to coordinate with the Riders.

Charge out of staters \$27 and locals \$15 since it is subsidized by taxpayer money.

Bike helmets cost \$15, maybe we keep the price the same for continuity?

If we wanted to offer them for \$15 the Rec Dept would need to pay \$12/light.

Doug, we could offer them for \$27 and if you need a scholarship, ask.

Bear asks where would the money for subsidizing them come from? Doug responds that we have \$1k in grants leftover, we could tap into that.

Luke asks who is the target audience?

We personally handed out the vests to people we saw walking who needed them. Can we hand out the lights in the same manner? We want to make sure we get lights in the hands of the people that need them.

We will do the helmet project again this summer. It was well received two years ago and we purposely skipped a year to not saturate the market.

Finalize the bike lights project at the next meeting.

### *E-bikes*

Local Motion has stopped their E-bike lending program. Middlebury's library has 3 e-bikes that they rent out. At some point in the future, we may want to consider owning our own bikes and lending them out.

Luke mentions that they thought about lending out the kayaks that were purchased for the Mad River Park camps when the kayaks are not us use. The idea of a "gear library".

### *VOREC*

Laura, we need to start to think about what we want to do with the VOREC cash, funds were set aside to help with the VOREC cash flow that will be available to be spent in 2025.

We have asked for an extension on VOREC. The CRV project is going really well, but we need more time. The bridge, etc. will be done by the end of 2024 but CRV needs more time.

VOREC gave us an exception and allowed us to do an extra reimbursement for \$80k for the bridge. Now we need \$44k more to finish paying for the bridge. We would pay it out and then get it back in 6 - 8 weeks. MRVRD has more cash at the start of each year than later since expenses and partner grants are paid gradually throughout the year. Alternative to not doing this is that we would have a lot due at once and would have to borrow money. Since we have the cash now, we should pay as much as we can.

Luke, I move to temporarily allocate \$44k to the VOREC Bridge loan. Seconded. All in favor.

### *CRV updates*

Phil Hoffman is the co-chair with Laura. There are two working groups under the co-chairs and they each had co-chairs. The format is changing to have one chair for each working group, Laura for Rec & Trails and Ira Shadis, Ex. Director of Friends, for Ecological Integrity.

There are lots of maps, datasets and studies being researched and presented by our consultant, Arrowwood Environmental. All this is being used so the two working groups can come together and create a vision for ecological integrity when building trails.

This visioning document will help lead communities to best practices when developing land for recreation. It is not a legally binding document. Therefore, we are trying to gather more and more stakeholders. The more people who are involved, the more the document will be embraced.

Who oversees this moving forward is a question yet to be answered.

### *Board makeup*

Doug no longer lives in Warren. He is now a Waitsfield resident. This means Peter moves to Warren from at-large and Gina goes to at-large.

### *Luke and Nordic event*

Luke- we are creating a Nordic event in partnership with the Bill Koch League and Mad River BC at Blueberry Lake. There will be a few different ways to engage including a Story Ski that the library is putting on. Date is TBD.

Blueberry Lake has graciously offered to give discounts on day passes and rentals, reducing the cost from \$45 to \$30. Luke would like to offer a full scholarship to each attendee. This will help with our effort to reach folks who aren't already engaged in skiing. We did a similar event at Mad River around snowshoeing and received \$200 from the Rotary to offset the cost.

The request is for a donation of \$100-\$200 from the Rec District. If the money isn't used, it will be returned. They have reached out to other organizations like Stark Mtn for donations.

Laura, would we be named as a "sponsor"? Luke, yes.

Bear makes a motion to fund Friends of the Mad River \$200 for their scholarship program for their Learn to Ski event in March. Doug seconds. All in favor.

Doug moves to adjourn, Bear seconds. All in favor.