



Winooski Valley Park District

Ethan Allen Homestead

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Minutes for February 16, 2021 Board of Trustees for Winooski Valley Park District

The meeting began at 4:30PM. Meeting was held via conference video call (Zoom) due to the current situation regarding the coronavirus, COVID-19. WVPD offices are closed to the public until further notice.

Present via conference call: Susan Gilfillan (Colchester, arrived at 5:43pm), Jeffery Theis (Essex), Sonja Schuyler (Jericho), David Crawford (South Burlington), John Nittler (Williston), Nick Warner (WVPD Executive Director), Lauren Chicote (WVPD Operations Manager).

Guests Present via conference call: Dan Cahill, Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Land Steward; Steve Whitman Resilience Planning & Design; Liz Kelly, Resilience Planning & Design; Ryan Crehan US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Absent: Aaron Keech (Burlington), Erin Dupuis (Winooski).

Public Comment Period: No members of the public were present at the time of public comment. Guests present discussed and presented on items later in the agenda.

Agenda Changes: No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and Approve Minutes from Previous Meetings: The minutes for the January 5 meeting were reviewed. Jeffery Theis motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by John Nittler. Minutes were accepted unanimously.

Review and Approve Financial Reports: Due to the rescheduling of the December 2020 meeting to January 5, 2021, two financial reports for WVPD were presented to the board: the financial report for FY21 through the month of December 2020, and the FY21 financial report through the month of January 2021. The July – December 2020 report showed a net income of \$133,627.50, as most member town allocations for the fiscal year had been received as of the date of the report (December 31, 2020). The only remaining member town allocations yet to be received are from the City of Winooski, and one installment payment from the Town of Jericho. The budget is on track for this time in the fiscal year, and WVPD received several unexpected year-end donations from park users wishing to express their appreciate and support for being able to access WVPD trails during the pandemic. Additionally, WVPD received reimbursements from the Burlington Forest Preschool and the City of Burlington Ventilation Mini-Grant. The July 2020 – January 2021 report showed a net income of \$115,128.42. The budget line for Park Expenses shows a negative number indicating overspending. This line is a consolidation of several budget lines from WVPD's Operation Budget, including Park Maintenance, Utilities, and Buildings Maintenance. Due to the building upgrades and purchase of air filters to meet COVID guidelines, the Buildings Maintenance budget line has been spent for the year. However, as noted before, WVPD has received reimbursement for some expenses under this line item from the Burlington Forest Preschool, but that amount is reflected in the Facilities Income line item. Overall, the budget remains on track for this time of year. WVPD staff continue to seek grants and other funding opportunities/support that could be applied for to offset COVID related expenses. Dave Crawford motioned to note that the financial reports were reviewed and accepted by the board, seconded by John Nittler. The financial reports were accepted unanimously.

The warrants reports summarizing spending for the months of December 2020 and January 2021 were shared with Treasurer, Dave Crawford, prior to the meeting for review. Dave noted he received the reports and accepted them.

The Treasurers reports for December 2020 and January 2021 for the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum was presented and reviewed by the board. The Museum continues to do well even with limited hours and tour capacity this past season due to COVID-19 limitations. Their bank accounts show enough to get them through to next season, and they continue to provide on-line/virtual content.

Updates from Executive Director and Operations Manager: Executive Director, Nick Warner, updated the board on the Allen House roof project by the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum. Shingles for the roof will be delivered later this week for construction to begin soon. While the Museum was denied a Historic Preservation grant from the State, Dan O’Neil, EAHM Executive Director, has met with Historic Preservation staff to discuss getting a historic designation applied to entire site of the Ethan Allen Homestead. Nick Warner gave background information on this issue – the Allen House is not deemed historic enough due to extensive renovations to the building during its discovery and separation from another structure on the site. Getting a historic designation on the entire site would be a path forward for future grant and funding opportunities, and WVPD staff is supportive of this effort.

Nick Warner also gave an update on communications with member towns in preparation of Town Meeting Day coming up on March 2nd. WVPD has presented its FY22 Budget to all member-towns, met with Select Boards/City Councils as needed, and have received positive feedback with no indication of changes needing to be made. WVPD is waiting until after Town Meeting Day and budgets voted upon to make decisions on seasonal staff and other programmatic matters for the upcoming work season.

Lauren Chicote, Operations Manager, updated the board on a grant application that was submitted to the Lake Champlain Basin Program for upgrades to park information kiosks and maps. Notification of grant award status will be made in early spring.

Presentation by Dan Cahill, Burlington Conservation Board: Dan Cahill, Land Steward for the City of Burlington’s Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, on behalf of the Burlington Conservation Board gave a presentation on the City’s Climate Change Addendum to the City’s Open Space Protection Plan. Consultants Steve Whitman and Liz Kelly from Resilience Planning & Design, LLC working with the City supported the presentation. After the presentation explaining the need for the focus on nature-based climate change solutions and the addendum public process, the board discussed with the presenters how this will impact and benefit the Park District, being one of the major landowners/managers within the city. Dan Cahill explained that the plan is a tool that can be used to inform and guide prioritization on projects within the city, and that the Park District can also use the plan as a point of reference in a similar way. The website for the [Open Space Addendum \(https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPI/CB/Open-Space-Addendum\)](https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPI/CB/Open-Space-Addendum) was shared with the board, and the board was invited to a summit taking place on March 29th. It was requested that WVPD and the board help spread the word about the process and the summit by sharing the website and information about the summit – WVPD will be sharing this information on their website and social medias. The board expressed support for the addendum and look forward to future updates.

Presentation by Ryan Crehan, USFW on new trail development: Ryan Crehan, Biologist with US Fish & Wildlife Service Habitat Restoration presented on two trail projects that USFW could provide funding and staff support on: 1) Proposed Winooski Discovery Trail that would connect existing protected natural areas (Casavant Natural Area, Woodside Park) as well as to downtown Winooski and Burlington's trail network. 2) Removing the old trail infrastructure

(damaged stairs, bridge) north of the current trail/stairs on WVPD's Riverwalk Trail leading up to Intervale Road and re-establishing the trail connection under the train trestle/bridge to connect to Intervale Center Trails. The Riverwalk Trail used to extend under the train trestle/bridge but was damaged due to flooding many years ago. The board expressed excitement and enthusiasm for these potential projects as they support other connected trail goals within the area. WVPD staff will continue to work with Ryan Crehan and USFW on these projects.

Executive Session: Dave Crawford motioned for the board to enter executive session to discuss real estate matters, seconded by John Nittler. The board unanimously entered executive session at 5:34PM. The board left executive session at 5:59pm with a motion from John Nittler, seconded by Susan Gilfillan/Jeffery Theis. From the Executive Session discussion, Susan Gilfillan motioned to authorize the Park District to enter a six-month option on the property discussed and up to \$100 on said option to allow time for staff to evaluate the property and perform due diligence for potential acquisition. Motion was seconded by Dave Crawford and accepted unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:02PM.

Next Meeting: The date for the next meeting will be March 16, 2021 at 4:30 PM via Zoom.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:

Lauren Chicote, Operations Manager