



Winooski Valley Park District

Ethan Allen Homestead

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

The meeting began at 4:32PM. 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: Aaron Keech (Burlington), Susan Gilfillan (Colchester), Jeffery Theis (Essex), Sonja Schuyler (Jericho), John Nittler (Williston), Erin Dupuis (Winooski), Nick Warner (WVPD Executive Director), Lauren Chicote (WVPD Operations Manager).

Absent: David Crawford (South Burlington).

Public Comment Period: No members of the public were present at the time of public comment.

Agenda Changes: No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and Approve Minutes from Previous Meetings: The minutes for the February 16 meeting were reviewed. In the first paragraph under 'Updates from Executive Director and Operations Manager' discussing the Allen House roof, the word 'extension' was corrected for clarity to the word 'extensive'. Susan Gilfillan abstained from the vote since she was late to the meeting. Jeffery Theis motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by John Nittler. Minutes were accepted unanimously.

Review and Approve Financial Reports: The financial report for FY21 through the month of February 2021 was presented to the board, showing a net income of \$87,300.01. The budget is on track for this time in the fiscal year, and year-end projections indicate WVPD will end the fiscal year with either a slight surplus or 'breakeven'. WVPD staff continue to seek grants to support projects as well as for COVID related financial support. The financial reports were accepted unanimously.

The Treasurers reports for February 2021 for the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum was presented and reviewed by the board. The Museum continues to do well even during the off season with small income from online bookshop sales, online lecture series, and course in partnership with Alnobaiwi. Their bank accounts show enough to get them through to the open season, and they are planning for another modified open season.

Updates from Executive Director and Operations Manager: Executive Director, Nick Warner, and Operations Manager, Lauren Chicote, shared a power point presentation highlighting the projects worked on and accomplishments by WVPD over the past month which included:

Grants Submitted:

- 2021 Recreational Trails Grant: Riverwalk Trail Rehabilitation. Applied for \$22,000 to support the replacement of the staircases and steps on the Riverwalk end of the Salmon Hole Trail. Project would be a collaboration between the WVPD Crew and Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Crew. Project would likely take place in

summer 2022 due to VYCC's availability (if awarded).

- 2021 Department of Environmental Conservation Watershed Grants: Outreach and Education: Applied for \$4,000 for the replacement of entrance signage at Colchester Pond, Salmon Hole, and Delta Park.

Fiscal Agent/Partnering Grants:

- VT 2020 Aquatic Nuisance Control Grant-In-Aid: WVPD will once again be the fiscal agent for the Lake Champlain Committee's research on Freshwater Mussels as well as Asian Clams in Lake Champlain.
- Partnering with University of Vermont, VT Fish and Wildlife, and Lake Champlain Land Trust on a study for Spiny Softshell Turtle Habitat (Delta Park, Derway Cove). Grant Pre-application was submitted by UVM Staff. More details will evolve if pre-application is selected.

Park Updates from Park Superintendent, Tim Larned, and Projects and Programs Coordinator, Remy Crettol:

- Partnering with VT Fish and Wildlife – a fish monitoring station was installed at the Ethan Allen Homestead. This will stay until June and will help to monitor newly released fish in the Winooski, with the goal of monitoring the fish until they reach Lake Champlain.
- Partnering with US Fish and Wildlife on connecting people to nature – focusing on removing a section of elevated trail on the Riverwalk Trail and hopefully re-establishing a hiking trail connection to the Intervale.
- Working on logistics to bring on seasonal crew. At least one former seasonal staff member will be returning, and we will be hiring a second member.
- Traffic flow signage at Derway Cove, Entrance Signage improvements at other parks.
- Vault Toilets Roof replacement and upgrades at the Ethan Allen Homestead.
- Getting ready for spring!!!!

Burlington Wildways Updates:

- The Invasive Pilot program continues to move forward. WVPD, the Intervale, and BPRW are evaluating sites within the greater Intervale to use as test plots to focus removal projects on for the coming season. BPRW will be hiring seasonal interns to assist with these removal projects with the support of the other organizations.
- City Nature Challenge Event: Part of world-wide BioBlitz-type event to encourage citizens to get outside and record, through apps, phenology of plants and animals in their area. The event will take place from mid-April through early May with a virtual speaker series, and field trips (limited and with social distancing measures in place, some may be virtual as well). This is a collaborative effort between UVM, City of Burlington, City of Winooski, Intervale Center, and others with support from Wildways as a way to encourage citizens to get out on the trail and connect with the natural areas the trail runs through.

Other WVPD Updates:

- WVPD held its annual Partners Meeting with organizations that use the Ethan Allen Homestead during the summer. All the gardening organizations will operate at full capacity with the COVID mitigations/protocols that were used last year (requiring masks, hand washing stations, distancing, etc.). Gardening continues to be extremely popular, and all garden plots have been filled for the year. There are some exciting partnerships and programs developing between the various partners as well.
- We have decided not to hold our annual Conservation Field Day again this year. With guidelines and restrictions around group gatherings still very limited, schools still operating in a hybrid model, and the limited staff capacity of many of our partner organization that lead workshops, we felt it would be too difficult to try to coordinate an event again this year. Fingers crossed we can hold the event in 2022!
- We are discussing our ability to open the picnic shelter to rentals this year. We have already received several inquiries for rentals. Several factors play into the decision including state guidelines around group gatherings, our ability to manage the rentals, and logistics around bathrooms and other facilities for the rentals. We hope to make a final decision by the end of the month.
- Burlington Forest Preschool and Ethan Allen Homestead Museum are coordinating and creating a joint operating procedure for the shared Education Center building at the Ethan Allen Homestead. The Museum plans to open in May and hopes to be able to allow guests, on a limited basis in line with state guidelines, into the building to view the exhibits starting in June. The Preschool will be operating a 9-week summer program with all three classrooms.
- Derway Cove updates: Vermont Community Foundation grant that supported park development and re-naturalization has been closed. The conservation easement with Lake Champlain Land Trust is almost complete and will satisfy the requirements to transition the loan to a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board that was used to purchase the property.
- Jacobs Parcel, Williston, update: The Bittersweet community Homeowners Association accepted the right-of-way deed for access to the parcel and it will be entered into the town record. This allows the process to move forward for acquisition.

Executive Session: Aaron Keech motioned for the board to enter executive session to discuss real estate and personnel matters, seconded by Erin Dupuis/Jeffery Theis. The board unanimously entered executive session at 5:21PM. The board left executive session at 6:00pm with a motion from Susan Gilfillan, seconded by John Nittler.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:01PM.

Next Meeting: The date for the next meeting will be April 20, 2021 at 4:30 PM via Zoom.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:

Lauren Chicote, Operations Manager