



Winooski Valley Park District

Ethan Allen Homestead

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Minutes for May 18, 2021 Board of Trustees for Winooski Valley Park District

The meeting began at 4:36PM. 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), Sonja Schuyler (Jericho), John Nittler (Williston), Erin Dupuis (Winooski), Nick Warner (WVPD Executive Director), Lauren Chicote (WVPD Operations Manager). **Guests:** Pat Phillips

Absent: Jeffery Theis (Essex), David Crawford (South Burlington).

Public Comment Period: Pat Phillips, resident of Colchester and frequent user of Colchester Pond attended the meeting to share his observations of overuse at Colchester Pond and concerns on the impact to habitat and wildlife, specifically birds. He is on the board for Green Mountain Audubon and noted that Colchester Pond is a top birding area in the state. Pat expressed appreciation for the Park District and offered his help and support in addressing this issue in any way that may be appropriate/fitting/useful. Nick Warner shared information on some steps that Park District is exploring to help with the issues of overuse including better signage, improved parking and trail access, and trail maintenance improvements and upgrades. The opening of Wolcott Family Natural Area park near Colchester Pond on East Road may also help to spread people out between the two parks. The Park District plans to open Wolcott Family Natural Area later this summer. Susan Gilfillan suggested that if Green Mountain Audubon was able to promote Wolcott Family Natural Area as a birding destination as well it could further help with spreading the use out between the two parks. Aaron Keech asked if it would be possible for Audubon to evaluate where the trail impacts/overuse was having the biggest impact on bird habitat so the Park District could prioritize those areas for improvements. Pat said he would bring this to the Green Mountain Audubon board and keep in touch with the Park District. The Board and WVPD staff thanked Pat for attending the meeting and bringing this issue to their attention. Pat left the meeting at 4:57pm.

Agenda Changes: No changes to the agenda were made. However, Nick Warner informed the board that after almost 7 years filling numerous roles, Remy Crettol has resigned from the Park District to take a position with the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District. Remy has been a tremendous asset to the Park District over the years. His problem solving and critical thinking skills, professionalism, and knowledge has brought great value to the Park District, and he will be greatly missed. WVPD staff wish to express their deepest thanks to Remy for his time with us and we wish him the best of luck in this new endeavor. Nick asked for the board to sign a resolution thanking Remy for his service that Nick will draft for the next meeting. The board enthusiastically supported this and will happily sign.

Review and Approve Minutes from Previous Meetings: The minutes for the April 27 meeting were reviewed. Several typos were noted to be corrected and the wording under the Executive Sessions was updated to provide clarity for reasons entering Executive Sessions. The minutes now read under the Executive Session that “the board enter[ed] executive session to discuss real estate matters which premature disclosure would disadvantage the Park District.” Aaron Keech

motioned to approve the minutes with the noted corrections and additional language to the Executive Sessions, seconded by Erin Dupuis. Minutes were accepted unanimously.

Review and Approve Financial Reports: The financial report for FY21 through the month of April 2021 was presented to the Board, showing a net income of \$40,123.58. The budget continues to remain on track for this time in the fiscal year, despite the unanticipated spending for COVID related matters. The budget still reflects overspending in several lines as reimbursements have not been received yet. Susan Gilfillan asked if a summary of the estimated year end projections and estimate of what is expected in reimbursements could be presented at the next meeting. Lauren Chicote will prepare that information to be presented to the Board at the June meeting.

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 report for April 2021 for the Ethan Allen Homestead Museum was not available at the time of the meeting.

Discuss/approve Derway Cove Draft Conservation Easement Draft: The edits/comments the Board discussed at the April meeting have been submitted to Lake Champlain Land Trust (project partner and easement holder) to be reviewed by their lawyer, and the Park District is awaiting comments and an updated draft to be shared. Nick Warner expects to have an update draft by the June meeting. Discussion was tabled to the June meeting in anticipation of receiving updated draft to review.

Update and Discussion on Current/Future Operations Budget: Nick Warner informed the board that the Park District plans to ask its member towns for an increase in annual funding in the FY23. With a growing portfolio of assets of new parks and land along with increased use of parks since the pandemic, and increased cost of materials, the Park District budget will need to grow to be able to continue to provide the level of maintenance and manage needed for its assets. The Board strongly encouraged working with town leadership now to prepare and plan for the increased financial support that will be asked. Collecting statistics and data along with public comment on increased use could help support the Park District's increase ask.

Updates on Federal Funding 'Asks': With the return of federal earmarks, the Park District is submitting two requests through Senator Patrick Leahy's office – one for the Vermont Indigenous Heritage Center at the Ethan Allen Homestead and one for the Park District capital assets improvements. If awarded, project management and financial assistance to help with the single audit process will be built into the budget. Aaron Keech asked about the timeline for spending if received. Nick Warner answered that it would depend on the agency the money is received through, but typical timelines are about 3 years.

Executive Session: Susan Gilfillan motioned for the board to enter executive session to discuss real estate matters which premature disclosure would disadvantage the Park District, seconded by Aaron Keech/John Nittler. The board unanimously entered executive session at 5:53PM. The board left executive session at 6:12PM with a motion from John Nittler, seconded by Aaron Keech/Erin Dupuis.

Other business: John Nittler informed the board that he will be stepping down from the board and the June meeting will be his last meeting, as he is retiring and moving out of state. He expressed his gratitude and appreciation for all that WVPD does for the region, and for the opportunity to serve on the board the past two years. The board and WVPD staff thanked John and expressed their gratitude and appreciation for his service to the Park District during his time on the board.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:14PM.

Next Meeting: The date for the next meeting will be June 15, 2021 at 4:30 PM.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:

Lauren Chicote, Operations Manager