

**Mad River Valley Planning District**  
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
**April 26, 2018, 7:00 P.M.**  
**Waitsfield Town Office**

Present were:

Fayston: Don Simonini, Planning Commission

Waitsfield: Jon Jamieson; Selectboard, Steve Shea, Planning Commission

Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Dan Raddock, Planning Commission

Sugarbush: Jim Westhelle

MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren

CVRPC: Eric Vorwald

Mad River Valley Recreation District (MRVRD): John Stokes, Doug Bergstein, Mike Nucci, Luke Foley, Liza Walker

Guests: Alison Duckworth, Bob Cook, William Dugan (Woody)

The meeting opened at 7:00 pm. Bob Ackland, Chair, brought the meeting to order.

**I. Adjustments to the Agenda**

1. No adjustments were requested

**II. Public Comment**

1. Woody said that he was in attendance on behalf of Darlene McCormick, she is distraught about how she was treated in the hiring of a consultant to redesign the MRVDP website.

**III. Accept Minutes of 3/15/18 Steering Committee Meeting**

1. Jon moved to accept the minutes, Peter seconded the motion

**IV. New Business**

• **Mad River Valley Recreation District Strategic Plan**

- Liza Walker, Waitsfield's MRVRD representative and Board Chair, gave a presentation of the recently completed final draft of the MRVRD Strategic Plan.
- She said following an indepth discussion amongst the group that they decided on the MRVRD's role in recreation as "recreation facilitator."
  - Bob Ackland asked who is going to be the recreation leader in the MRV? He said leadership is more than facilitation and if no one entity leads on this issue, then it won't received the attention it deserves. Luke Foley answered his question by saying that not having paid staff is a limiting factor. Liza said that MRVRD is leading in terms of facilities management at Mad River Park.
- MRVRD's Six Focus Areas- several action items were identified within each area
  - Trails
    - Lead trails collaborative effort with MRVDP
    - Help create a MOU to clarify roles and responsibilities of trail stakeholders for development and maintenance of trails
    - Support trails collaborative initiative to establish unified signage and trailhead kiosks
    - Support trails collaborative initiative to create a singular trails map
    - Planning, Construction and Maintenance: Ensure thoughtful, sustainable and balanced trail development

- Can use the leverage of grant process to invest where the community wants trails and ensure they are built/maintained sustainably
- Programming
  - Recreation Program Brochure and Website- MRVRD has a website and a Facebook presence, but they are trying to figure out how to create a one-stop-shop for families looking to get their kids involved in various sports and activities. But the question is, who is going to coordinate and update a site?
  - Link Volunteers with recreation stakeholders
- Events
  - Support and facilitate organizers and promoters who want to provide recreation opportunities and events
    - What type of resources do existing events need?
  - Utilize grant program to incentive new kinds of events that reach all members of our community (seed money for new events?)
  - Identify opportunities for events
    - Look at what types of events are working well? What does the MRV have in terms of capacity of lodging and transportation for additional events?
    - Partner with existing community events to hold new events- Wednesday night trail running series that ends at the Round Up (support local businesses)?
- Parks & Facilities
  - Manage Mad River Park- has proved to be a lot of work, especially for volunteers
  - Facilitate park enhancements & construction projects- gazebo as a memorial to the 5 families, trailhead kiosk, MRPA path, storage shed for current programming
  - Explore future recreational facility opportunities/needs
    - Music and food truck event (ensure there won't be destruction to the field)
    - Swimming pool, pump track, recreation courts
- Needs Assessment and Planning
  - Produce Annual State of Recreation Report
    - Want to expand it to include more information/data about recreation. MRVPD said they want to incorporate additional recreation data points in its Annual Data Report (number of new trails added for example)
    - Reflect information received from community and stakeholder surveys
  - Community-wide Recreation Surveys (every 3-5 years)
  - Post event/program follow-ups from grant recipients, community participants
  - Facilitate cooperation and collaboration among partners
- Grants
  - Fund strategic partners with annual municipal allocation
  - Grant Writing Support- help to identify and pursue other funding sources for recreation activities, be a source to encourage organizations to find outside money
  - MRVRD awarded \$40k+/- this year in grants, but the need was over \$60k; and the requests many times are above \$80k.

- Liza said that the MRVRD should consider telling the story of what people used the grant money and how it supports the community in order to ensure continued support for the grant program.
  - MRVRD wants to increase public engagement in the future by staying in closer touch with selectboards and residents. Jon suggested presenting the strategic plan to the individual selectboards.
  - The floor was opened to discussion and questions.
    - Peter suggested going to the next step and developing a strategic budget to fund some of the recommendations from the plan. He also suggested that hiring a part-time or full-time person would make a big difference.
    - Bob suggested that the MRVRD seems to be weary about asking for money for paid staff; he said that the selectboards want to hear what it is going to take to make the strategic plan a reality. Don said that the more community knows about what the MRVRD is doing and how impactful the grants are, the easier the funding requests will be.
    - John Stokes said that another town of a similar size to the MRV has 3 brand new trucks that say Recreation District on the side, and the MRV doesn't even have a bicycle that says Rec. District. He said it can be hard to coordinate with 3 towns.
      - Bob said he sees a lot of opportunities for more collaboration and sharing of costs between towns for mowing for example. Bob also suggested holding joint selectboard and planning commissions meetings for efficiency.
      - Dan said there are concerns from a land use planning perspective regarding the selling off of land that is part of existing recreation uses, such as xc ski trails.
  - Liza will be presenting the strategic plan to the Tri-town Conservation Committee meeting on 4/30/18. MRVRD will also consider giving this presentation to individual selectboards as well.
- **MRVPRD Organizational Matters**
  - 1- year terms for all positions
  - Election of Chair: Don nominated Bob Ackland, Peter seconded.
  - Election of Vice-Chair: Bob said this is his last selectboard term (2-year term) and he wants to make sure that MRVPRD is left in good hands. Bob nominated Jon, Peter seconded.
  - Election of Treasurer & Secretary- Peter nominated Jared to continue as both, Don seconded.
  - All were approved.

## V. Old Business

### 1. Website Redesign

- a. MRVPRD has been hoping to update its website for a while, however the funding for the website has been cut back several times because of other demands. Darlene McCormick has been providing web services for the last 10 years. MRVPRD went through a process of exploring options for the update and hired the same firm that the Town of Waitfield (Town Web) used for its new website. The decision was based on the fact that there is no up front money required, a consistent 3-year payment, and that it fits within available funding at the moment and is a predictable amount. Bob said that the MRVPRD considered continuing Darlene, but came to the conclusion that Town Web was the right fit. There have been no issues with Darlene's technical ability over its 10-year history.
- b. Woody spoke on behalf of Darlene and said that if a decision to go with someone else was made clear to her, she could have changed her price to make it fit

- within the budget. He said that it was an issue of communication with her. He said it's important to consider the impact of supporting a local business.
- c. Peter said it is a difficult situation and that the concern was understood, but the decision has been made and its time to move on. Don said it is a business decision about the cost of a new website and we're spending public money, so we need to keep that in mind.
  - d. Bob said that he would summarize this evening's meeting and correspond with Darlene to close the loop.
2. Update: Broad funding discussion- how to put investment into community
- a. Peter said that the work is continuing, the Economic Vitality sub-committee group is meeting each week, focusing on gathering information and background on what Woodstock did in terms of their community outreach process for example. He said they would be talking to key stakeholders as things progress; the phone company will be speaking about what impact would be on their business and MRVPD will be visiting soon to talk about housing needs. The group expects by the middle of May the background would be gathered and they will then put together a proposal to present back to the Steering Committee and Chamber Board.
  - b. Kristine mentioned the need for funding for construction and maintenance of trails in the MRV. She suggested that it would be helpful talk to other towns/trails organizations about what they spend on an annual basis for construction/maintenance. She highlighted the fact that the Town of Carrabassett Valley, Maine employs two trail crews every summer for this purpose.
    - i. Jon said it's great to keep building trails, but there is also a need for money to maintain them. He also said that mountain bikers ride and then eat and drink in town afterwards, which supports local businesses.
    - ii. Don said that there are concerns about erosion in Fayston. And in Warren, Bob said there are already parking and access challenges at Blueberry Lake. So these are important issues that need to be addresses in the future as we build out the trail network.
3. Update: MRV Selectboard Retreat 5/5
- a. MRVPD is sponsoring an upcoming MRV Selectboard Retreat on 5/5
  - b. It appears that nearly all SB members are planning on attending.

## **Staff Report**

### **4. Transportation**

- a. UVM Student Internship Project
  - i. MRVPD, Sugarbush, and GMT have been working with students at UVM on a survey to gather feedback about MRV bus service. They received over 500 responses and are currently working on their final deliverable. The group will meet on May 9<sup>th</sup> to review their findings and recommendations.
- b. Waitsfield West Sidewalk
  - i. Kristine has officially been named the LPM for the project by VTrans.
  - ii. A few more temporary easements need to be obtained in order to move forward with final design. Kristine is working with Troy Kingsbury and John Gallagher, while Trevor is working with Fit Werx. Kristine and Trevor decided to have the engineers adjust the plans to avoid the need for a temporary easement at the Methodist Church due to the fact that the owner doesn't live in the area making it challenging to communicate.
- c. Sugarbush Access Road Path & Inferno Rd Trail Scoping Studies

- i. The final study has been wrapped up and approved by the Selectboard. Next steps are to work with the Warren Selectboard to determine if they would like the MRVPD's help in applying for grant funding for the design and construction of part of the proposed path.
- ii. The final study is available on the Town of Warren's [website](#).
- iii. This project is eligible for the [VTrans Bike and Ped Grant Program](#) Design/Construction category; the next deadline to apply is July 22, 2018.

## 5. Housing

- a. Norwich/Downstreet Tiny House Project
  - i. MRVPD received word that its grant application to TD Bank to fund a tiny house to be placed in Vermont in coordination with Norwich University and Downstreet Housing & Community development was awarded \$20,000. Kristine will be attending a meeting to discuss next steps at Norwich University in the near future.
  - ii. Bob is wondering where tiny houses are going to go; he said there is a need for infrastructure to support density in order to make them affordable. Steve said that Waitsfield is looking at its zoning to potentially accommodate tiny houses. Dan said that the Warren Planning Commission is not considering it at this time. Don said in Fayston you could build a tiny house if you want now, but there hasn't been a move toward smaller lot sizes for density.
- b. ZEM on-tour
  - i. Following a presentation by Efficiency VT (EVT) at a MRV Housing Coalition meeting, EVT has developed a partnership with Downstreet and will be placing a ZEM (zero energy modular) home with solar and battery storage on a vacant lot at Vermont Mobile Home Park for a period of time between April and May 31<sup>st</sup>. Several open houses will be held (Thursdays from 2-6pm and Saturdays 9am-1pm) will be held for park residents, mobile home owners, and other local residents to check out the homes.
- c. MRV Senior Housing Community
  - i. Local resident Joan Crossen followed up on her idea for a Senior Retirement Community in the MRV at the last Housing Coalition on 4/12. Since her initial presentation at the March MRV Housing Coalition meeting, the Valley Reporter wrote an article about her idea and several people have reached out to her about their interest in their project, including a potential developer.
  - ii. The potential project is envisioned to happen be located in Waitsfield near Mad Rive Park. Steve commented that it's not close to downtown. Kristine said unfortunately there is not much available space with a willing owner in the downtown area for this size of a project.

## 6. Recreation

- a. Staff is continuing to facilitate the MRV Unified Trailhead Kiosk & Mapping Project.
  - i. The fifth Trails Collaborative working group meeting was held on 4/5. MRVPD updated the group progress since the last meeting including developing a scope of work for a cartographer and sign designer, hiring a cartographer, sending updated trail data, corralling new trail data from stakeholders, and meeting with Wood & Wood on 3/27 to discuss potentially working with them on the sign design.

- ii. The group provided final feedback on Wood & Wood's "conceptual 2.0" designs that included three options for the major kiosk and the first conceptual design for a minor sign. They also propose to make a prototype of the kiosks. The group generally liked the 2.0 designs that include a 4'x4' digital print on dibond 1/8" aluminum panel, no roof, studier cedar posts. The general consensus was an interest in two of the options, and the group came up with a list of questions and Joshua followed-up with Wood & Wood. Kristine then followed-up with the task force to ask for their feedback on Wood & Wood's responses to help guide the process forward between meetings.
  - iii. Dan reported back from a recent Warren Planning Commission meeting saying that half of the group was not amenable to large kiosks. He suggested having someone come in that is a champion of the project and say why it is important to accommodate trailhead kiosks.
- b. The 2018 National Outdoor Recreation Conference was held in Burlington on 4/23-4/26. This four-day event brought together 250+ Outdoor Recreation Professionals for Learning, Networking, Celebrating and Mentoring. Joshua helped set up a MRV Field Trip focused on recreation partnerships, which includes visits to Sugarbush and Blueberry Lake. Joshua presented to the group regarding MRVPD's recent recreation work. Peter asked if Josh could share his presentation to the Steering Committee.

## **VII. Events**

VLCT Economic Development Forum | Killington | 6.14: Municipal officials across the state are contemplating how to help their communities attain goals envisioned for the future. Participants in this forum will learn about a variety of economic development strategies, tools, and resources available to those just starting the journey, as well as those further down the path of enhancing their communities. Throughout the day, speakers will address the unique roles played by local elected and appointed officials as well as community partners, agencies, and non-profit organizations. <https://www.vlct.org/event/economic-development-forum>

## **Next meeting – May 17, 2018 @ Gen. Wait House**

Peter moved to adjourn, Jared seconded. Meeting closed at 9:05pm.