

Montpelier Parks Commission, meeting minutes

March 19, 2019 6:00pm, Montpelier Police Station Conference Room

Commissioners Present: Carolyn Grodinsky, Daniel Dickerson, Fabienne Pattison, Kassia Randzio, Shelby Perry

Parks staff: Alec Ellsworth

Public present: Dona Bate

Meeting Minutes

6:10 pm Meeting called to order

Dan called meeting to order. Kassia motioned that we approve the February minutes, Carolyn seconded. Unanimous.

Fabienne made a motion that we approve the agenda, Carolyn seconded. Unanimous.

6:09 pm Public/Opening Comment

Discussion: Dan would like to step down as Chair and suggested Kassia for the position. Kassia said she would be glad to become Chair, but requested assistance with notes, reserving meeting space, etc. Others offered to assist. Dan continued as Chair for this meeting, and Kassia will be Chair going forward.

6:13 Park Road Plan - Alec

Friends of the Winooski initiated a Hubbard Park road study to reduce runoff into streams and ponds (especially the frog pond), and to improve water quality. They contracted with an engineer to put together a plan that addresses four main areas: ([summary memo](#)), ([full plan](#))

1. Triangle where road splits
2. Old shelter driveway
3. Frog pond
4. Park roads in general

Main goals: Keep physical sediment out of the frog pond. Cut down on road maintenance. Likely that there are funds available through DPW municipal roads program.

Discussion:

- The proposal would eliminate the “triangle” at Corse and Park to decrease the area/space taken up by road, add a culvert, and catch runoff.
- Alec - would likely be safer driving, as well as improved sediment capture.
- Shelby - What would be material of sediment basin?
- Alec - Unsure what material would be. Road takes an enormous amount of effort for parks staff to maintain, dig out catchment pools, pond fills in more each year with sediment.
- Kassia - Was there any consideration to closing Corse Street in the winter at the park boundary? Closing Corse in the winter could decrease sediment while improving winter recreation.
- Alec - It’s winter neighborhood access from Corse Street neighborhood, and is a public works facility (not parks).
- Dan - Would like additional time to review documents, post to the website, and make available to the public for feedback. It would be interesting to explore the option of decreasing vehicular access to the park in the winter. Plows drop salt and sand, steep grades deteriorate the road surface.
- Alec - Previous parks commissions may have tried to seasonally close roads without success.
- Dona - If there is discussion to seasonally close roads, there would need to be significant collaboration and public participation.
- Shelby - It’s hard to see how big sediment basins would be from the plans. They can sometimes be eyesores in practice. Cutting down trees to build a catchment may be problematic. Trees store a lot of water on their own, so removing trees is getting rid of a sink for water. Have green space solutions been considered? Not concerned about the check dam upstream of Frog Pond. The Y structure is already on impermeable surface. The structures on the side by the old shelter road and across from it looked like they had quite a bit of money for tree removal (\$3,000 on sediment basin 2, \$2,000 for sediment basin 3). If there is funding, money may not be the concern, but removing trees that are sinks for water to build a sediment basin may be neutral to water quality. How are we actively removing phosphorous?
- Alec - Where these catchments currently exist, parks staff take to the stump dump, fill in holes in the road, or use along trails.
- Dona - I would like to see the rationale from Watershed Consulting.
- Shelby - Would also like to ensure that sediment basins are aesthetically pleasing. Not just hole with rip rap.
- Fabienne - Would like to see sediment catchments planted.
- Shelby - Are there more “green” solutions like check dams that have been considered?
- Fabienne - Could you plant additional vegetation along the road?

- Alec - Steep sections - no room for check dam, no room for catchment basin. Instead, push all water to one side and into a basin.
- Kassia - Is there any time crunch with funding if we don't move forward with these plans this evening?
- Alec - DPW has municipal road grant that they have to spend on projects like this, but there aren't a lot of Montpelier roads that qualify, so this should be a good candidate for that funding. Friends of the Winooski is also looking for funds for us.

Questions for Follow-up with Friends of the Winooski/Engineers:

- How many trees do they plan to remove? Was consideration given to the quantity of water that these trees store? How would that storage be offset?
- How are we actively removing phosphorous? What is the plan for disposing phosphorous from the drainage basins? Does phosphorous degenerate, or is it more concentrated once it collects in sediment pools?

Next steps:

- Ask questions of Friends of the Winooski/Engineers (Alec)
- Ask if Friends of the Winooski would host a site tour a week before our next parks commission meeting (Alec)
- Add map to the minutes/website. (Alec)
- Share costs and benefits on Front Porch Forum, outline plan details. (Carolyn)
- Ask Jamie Granfield about how to notify the Corse Street neighborhood (Carolyn)
- Consider at our next Parks Commission meeting

6:46 Planning: Public Process for City Plan / Green Print - Carolyn and Kassia

In follow-up to our February meeting, Kassia and Carolyn have been exploring how a public process for Montpelier's parks might intersect with the City Plan. Kassia shared that she met with Mike in the Planning Department to learn about the City Plan process. Mike's vision is that the plan will include 4-6 pages for each chapter, and one chapter will focus on parks, and would likely be initiated this fall. Kassia and Carolyn shared draft proposal for how the Parks Commission could prepare for the City Plan:

1. **April:** Hold special meeting to establish Parks Commission mission, vision, and goals. (The mission and vision will provide the foundation to build a work plan, which is where we can line out steps to mitigate recreational impacts like dogs, build a plan to implement the Green Print, etc.)
2. **May:** Draft a Parks Commission work plan for 2019. This may need to happen during another special meeting.

3. **April/May:** Meet with the chairs of the Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Planning Commission. Learn how they expect to incorporate the Green Print vision into their own chapters of the City Plan. Ensure the Green Print will be a priority in “their” chapters.
4. **June:** Host community listening sessions asking residents to answer questions like:
 - a. What’s your vision for Montpelier Parks (or similar, What could Montpelier parks do to positively impact you, your family, and your community?)
 - b. Share the Greenprint. Where do you see yourself on this map? (Work towards placing people on the map to gain community buy-in and establish priorities)
5. **August/September:** With community buy-in and input, work with planning department to draft the Parks’ chapter in the City Plan.

Discussion:

- Dona - This process would require a skilled facilitator to help with public meeting.
- Carolyn - More and more users, more and more pressure. Timeline to get everybody engaged, facilitator. Hard to accomplish on a short timeline.
- Shelby - Hard to plan without getting lost in the weeds. Can we do this at a higher level? 4-6 pages, we could be vague vision wise. What will hang us up is details. Could we hold something close to this timeline on a higher level? Then with a higher vision, do a deeper dive to work out the nuts and bolts of implementation.
- Carolyn - Green Print is a vision of having something like the “Trail Around Middlebury.” Could be 10 years in the making. Laying out the framework and the vision, and then all the multiple users year-round.
- Dan - We’d need to commit ourselves to at least 3 special meetings over the next 3 months so that we can be consistently on top of the planning objectives. Will need two meetings April, May, June: mission, vision, goals.
- Dona - Is there someone on staff who could help us facilitate staff/commission discussions?
- Dan - There is funding in our budget for planning.
- Alec - Bad timing for staff to jump into this. Ideally would start in November or October, but realize we are working within the constraint of the City Plan process. Would like to get Geoff’s input. Yes, there is likely funding for planning in the budget.
- Dan - How about two special meetings? April - Mission/Vision. May - Goals. Skip the work plan details for now.

Next Steps:

- Kassia to talk to Bill about a facilitator for April and May meetings.
- Fabienne can look for a facility.

- Establish specific dates based on facilitator and facility availability: April 9th 1st choice, April 30th 2nd choice. 6-8pm. May 7th 1st choice, May 28th 2nd choice. 6-8 pm.
- The facilitator should meet with individual commissioners prior to the April meeting.

7:29 Parks staff position description review

Alec shared three draft position descriptions for the Parks Director, Parks Supervisor, and Parks Caretaker. Goal is to post Director position description by April 1. Geoff has still not submitted his resignation. Discussion focused on the Director position, since that needs to be finalized first.

Discussion:

- Kassia - Would like to see vision work included in the overview/intro, see park names in alphabetical order to diminish singular focus on Hubbard Park, and review updated draft with an eye to equity, inclusion, and diversity best practices.
- Fabienne - We need to ensure standard city language is applied (ex. "...does not discriminate on the basis of..."). Add more bullet points. Hard to follow the narrative portion. Change to "Proficient in operating..." or "willingness to learn..." rather than "Experience operating dangerous..." Much of the skills can be learned on the job.
- Shelby - Bullets should be wishlist and stated as "preferred," not required.
- Dan - Like that we've split the Caretaker position description from other descriptions. The Caretaker, which is responsible for opening gates on the weekend, caring for the house in Hubbard Park, etc. should be a floating description that can go to anyone who lives in the park house.
- Dona - Don't have to put *everything* in the job description.
- Alec - Would like to see less of the specific duties, and more communicating that this person needs to have or develop a variety of skills, balance many tasks and competing needs, etc.
- Dan - Would like to see the position description place more emphasis on budget. Ability to run reports, think about budgeting, manage spending, etc.
- Dona - There are budgeting resources available at City Hall.

Next Steps:

- Update the draft Director position description to reflect the conversation above. (ex. Alter the definition to give the Director more responsibility for strategic thinking, add more bullets for examples of work performed, etc. Shelby to convert updated draft to google doc, Commissioners to finalize over the next week.
- Kassia to share updated version with Bill to finalize and post by April 1st timeline.

7:54 Park Updates - Alec

Parkapalooza: Discussion of having alcohol served at the event. Carolyn - Are there park rules? Alec - People can bring their own alcohol to the park and do. Woodbelly would like to pour beer. Consensus - No one is objecting to alcohol being sold, as long as it's in accordance with park and city rules. Parkapalooza will be June 15, July 20, August 17, and September 21 (the third Saturday June - September).

Secured NCCC crew - 10 college age students coming in May and June to work in the park. Will stay nearby. They have their own van.

Grants

- Received a \$15,000 grant for planting trees and buying trail tools from Lake Champlain Basin.
- Got a \$5,000 grant for planting trees from DEC "Vermont Watershed Grant" as part of their Clean Water Initiative.
- Did not get the VOREC grant.

Green Print - Trying to move ahead with land purchase for the perimeter trail. Both parcels will ideally be wrapped-up in the next couple of weeks. Both are adjacent to Hubbard Park and will allow us to build the perimeter trail.

North Branch - MAMBA (mountain bike group) would like to close a section of trail to everyone in the North Branch Park to protect the berms during the current mud season. It's the trail from Cummings Street up to the next intersection. The berms are still fragile.

- Dan - We will need a good descriptive sign to explain why it's being closed.
- Alec - MAMBA plans to put up a snow fence and a descriptive sign.
- Dona - Do you typically close any trails for mud season?
- Dan - Request that staff post a notice at trailheads noting sensitive trails and requesting people stay off of them if possible. MAMBA should also post at Cummings Street kiosk.
- Shelby - Could we post a pre-made trail sign that we could print and put at kiosks?

Consensus - It's appropriate to seasonally close the trail from Cummings to protect newly constructed berms. It may also be appropriate to review additional trails that should be closed or "not recommended" during mud season in order to protect trail surfaces.

Next Steps - Alec to work with MAMBA to temporarily close the trail from Cummings and ensure there's appropriate signage. Alec and Geoff will also add signage at Hubbard trailheads requesting the public avoid certain trails during mud season.

Morse Farm winter trail expansion - In the last month, Geoff secured permissions to connect North Branch Park to Morse Farm, with loop at North Street and Sparrow Farm, down to County Road and back up. They've been grooming over the last month and have gotten positive feedback. Some concern about extending our capacity. Cannot maintain that trail network on our own. Didn't get VOREC grant, but part of what we wanted to achieve was a vision to be a regional attraction for outdoor recreation, and this connection is an amazing piece of that. If we can engage East Montpelier and VAST communities in future years, that would be progress towards that vision. East Montpelier residents came out for a couple of work days.

- Dan - It's a great idea, but want to be sure we do our due diligence. As the Parks Commission, we'd like to have an idea of how much time it'll take throughout the year to maintain these trails, including summer clearing, grooming, etc. We should then take a vote on whether city staff should be maintaining trails outside city limits. We may want to move forward and get MOUs with the East Montpelier, VAST, MAMBA, and others who are interested in these trails.

Next Steps: Staff pull this information (see above) together over the next few months so that we can review information and make a decision well before next winter.

8:10 Adjourn