

**Montpelier Parks Commission**  
**Tuesday April 9, 2019 / 6PM**  
**Montpelier Police Station Conference Room**

Commissioners: Carolyn, Fab, Kassia, Shelby, Dan

Staff: Alec, Geoff

Public: Bill Fraser, Dona Bate, Nolan Langwell, Kip Roberts

**Meeting Agenda**

- 6:03      Kassia called meeting to order. Fabienne made a motion that we approve March minutes, Shelby seconded. Approved. Shelby motioned to approve April agenda. Fabienne seconded. Approved.
- 6:05      Comments from the public - none
- 6:07      Carolyn made a motion to move into executive session to discuss personnel with Bill Fraser. Dan seconded. Approved. Moved out of executive session at 6:32.
- 6:35      Comments from the public - none
- 6:36      Parks Planning/Mission/Vision Update (Kassia)
- Yvonne with Montpelier's Center for Social Justice has agreed to help facilitate mission and vision discussions with the Parks Commission. She plans to do phone interviews with all commissioners and staff, as well as Dona Bate and Bill Johnson prior to the in-person meetings. Special meetings are scheduled May 28 and June 5 from 6-8pm for Yvonne to facilitate meetings. The goal of these meetings is to focus on the mission and vision of the Parks Commission. Carolyn mentioned the importance of ensuring there are opportunities for public participation. All agreed this is important, and that the focused mission and vision discussions will lead to broader public participation conversations leading up to the City Plan..
- 6:34      Summer 2019 Work Plan updates (Geoff and Alec)
- Hubbard tower area vegetation management
    - Dave Wilcox, the state forester, had been recommending a forestry project near the base of Hubbard Park on *state land* near Hubbard tower. He hasn't presented anything in writing yet, but has shared ideas for a viewscape and addressing hazard trees with staff. Staff have already taken care of some hazard trees. Project could open up the view from Hubbard Tower, and make it possible to view the tower from town, increasing visual connectivity between downtown and the park while maintaining a green backdrop to the statehouse. The project could also add edge habitat to diversify wildlife habitat.
    - Would the project require long-term mowing or other maintenance to maintain an open view? Geoff envisions planting trees that mature at a shorter height such as birches or fruit trees, rather than the current trees that mature at heights of 80-90 feet. More of the area would be open, while some of the harvested area would be reforested with shorter trees.

- The project could be an opportunity to create more “urban” park space where people could play and picnic with views. It could also be sought after for special events like weddings, potentially generating some revenue.
- Commissioners would like to see a written plan, and would like to see some visuals to show what the project would look like from downtown, as well as from the tower.
- Geoff will help to organize a field tour for Commissioners and the public to walk the project and get a better sense of the proposal.
- Phase II North Branch trail construction
  - MAMBA was awarded a \$50,000 Recreation Trails Program grant, bringing their fundraising to a total of \$114,000 for North Branch trail construction.
  - Brook of the company Sinuosity plans to begin construction in late July/early August, hopefully completing all of phase II. Depending on progress, it may be necessary to complete some project elements in spring 2020.
  - MAMBA has put up orange fencing and signage to close newly constructed trails during mud season and prevent damage to trails constructed summer 2018.
  - Phase II trail site has been flagged and mapped, and the Parks Commission approved the project spring 2018. There was some concern that Phase I construction included more engineered features than were expected, a surprise to the public and the multi-use intent that was approved by commissioners. Staff and MAMBA will work closely to ensure that the Commission is aware of planned structures and minimize surprises.
  - Staff requested that MAMBA and Brook/Sinuosity proactively schedule time with parks staff to walk the proposed trail route. Together, they will annotate a map to mark features (tables, rollers, banks, etc.) that are planned to be installed to share with Commissioners.
  - Geoff expressed concern that we may be getting to the threshold of triggering Act 250, which requires environmental review for projects above 10-acres. Currently, 7.5 acres of parks in North Branch and Hubbard. Montpelier is responsible for 16 miles of trails. Adding more trails could put us over the 10-acre mark. Geoff will look into details to ensure we’re in compliance. To ensure compliance, Dan requested we put any other new trail construction on hold until North Branch trails are complete, since they’ve already been approved by the Commission and MAMBA has completed fundraising. Geoff will explore Act 250 details.
  - The North Branch property has an easement that was originally funded by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Shelby asked whether there are requirements of the easement to notify or get approval from VHCB prior to construction. Geoff will review the easement and share the easement with Commissioners.
- Hubbard road management proposal: Postponed until next meeting. Alec will continue to collect information from Friends of the Winooski and Watershed Consulting. Staff will incorporate a site visit into the Hubbard tower forest management field tour.
- North Hubbard tree management proposal
  - Ed Larson, a forester who regularly visits Hubbard Park, approached parks staff about developing a thinning proposal for areas in the north

end of Hubbard Park. The proposal recommends removing mature ash trees to create wildlife openings and encourage sugar maple growth. -

- Staff like that the proposal would expand the only sugar maple stand in Hubbard, increase wildlife browse, diversify forest types, and - if a logger is hired - could create an opportunity to construct a more intentional, improved trail in that part of the park.
- The project would not generate considerable revenue (Report indicates a range of \$4,800 to \$6,600), and may not be worth bringing in logging equipment, facilitating public outreach, and removing trees for minimal financial gain.
- When those 50-acres were purchased, the agreement includes managing for wildlife. This could take lots of forms, but is part of the land agreement, so some thinning may be required.
- Staff plan to continue considering possibilities for management, which may likely be much smaller scale removal of some hazard ash trees, and create small openings to promote sugar maple sapling growth. This would happen on a small scale, and would not happen until winter when the ground is frozen. Accomplishing the work with draught horses could be a possibility.

7:30

#### Park staff update

- Winter fat tire biking trial: Commissioners approved an experimental season of fat tire biking for winter 2018-2019. Feedback staff have received has been positive, though there needs to be improved signage to show where bikers are and are not allowed. There were some bikers going beyond where permission had been granted, continuing onto the Morse Farm trail system, where biking is not permitted. Overall, Commissioners and staff reported that bike encounters were slow, respectful, and positive. Alec shared that there was positive collaboration between staff and MAMBA, with lots of good communication about trail conditions, grooming, and keeping trails open. Staff and Commissioners will continue to collect public feedback to determine whether to continue allowing fat tire biking in the future.
- New groomer is much better quality. Staff plan to remove some trees along narrower trails this summer so that groomer can access more terrain next winter. Shelby requested that some narrower trails remain ungroomed so that walkers have areas to go where they won't disturb grooming.
- Dan requested that there be a winter parks map on the Parks website showing trails that are groomed on a regular basis, trails that prioritize snowshoers and walkers, where bikes are allowed, etc., as well as a similar summer trails map.
- Parkapalooza - No updates.
- Parks budget update - No updates.

8:00

Adjourned by unanimous consent.