

LVRT Minutes

May 14, 2008, 6:36pm
Charlemont Restaurant

Committee Members Present:	Dan Hale	Laird McDowell, <i>Chair</i>
Chip Sawyer	Alan Spitzer	Dan Zucker, <i>Secretary</i>
Zeke Zucker, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Julius 'Red' Goodman	

Committee Members Absent:		Steve Larrabee
Dan Favreau (Resigned)	Sharon Ahearn	Mike O'Hara

Other Attendees:	Alan Roberston, <i>Project Mgr</i>	Bryant Watson
Todd Sumner	Ken Heopner, <i>Fundraising Consultant</i>	Jim Hill

Pat Poulin

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Laird.

Public Comments: None

Secretary's Report:

Zeke. moved the April minutes as submitted, Dan H. seconded, unanimous approval w/out discussion.

Financial Report:

Laird reported, with no further details:

March Ending Balance	\$20,000.00
Expenditures	-908.05
April Ending Balance	19,091.95

Bryant Watson's Report:

- The Engineering Assessment in its current form was submitted to the members. This amounted to an enormous printed document in a three-ring binder with DVDs included in protective sleeves. The document was titled "Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, Engineering Assessment and Proposed Trail Alternative Description, April 2008". The assessment was performed by Alan Robertson and Brian Lenzi and prepared by Robertson with the assistance of VAST personnel. This document was submitted to VTRANS as part of the RFQ Scop of Work for Phase A, B & C services in the LTF project development process.
- Bryant requested a special LVRTC meeting on May 21st, 4pm at the VAST office in Berlin for a review of the Revised Management Plan. The purpose of this additional meeting is to move the project rapidly forward and toward the public comments phase. The RMP will go out by a week from Monday (5/26, Memorial Day).
- General discussion ensued over maintenance, fundraising, modifications to MP however no substantive or formal actions were taken.

Alan Roberston's Project Engineering Report:

- Laird commented on Alan's presentation in St. Albans, echoing praise from other members on the quality and clarity of the presentation.
- Alan went to DC to talk to our congressional delegation about farm bill funding. He reported that funds in the farm bill can be used to resolve issues of encroachment once farms along the trail are

identified. The feds will increase funds and priority of these problem areas, provided the farmers request the aid and provide matching funds. Sanders and his staff have all the information including a copy of the assessment distributed at today's meeting.

- Attended a logger's convention and came away with information on signage, in particular brought back an example of a sign indicating graphically the hierarchy of right-of-way of pedestrians, horses and cyclists in a triangular sign of white symbols on a brown field.
- Alan reported that VTRANS has removed a bridge over rte 2B in St. Johnsbury with no notice to the LVRTC, although discussions prior to that included promises by VTRANS to both coordinate the construction/destruction and to give the granite blocks that formed the abutments to the LVRTC for other construction purposes. Negotiations are now ensuing over how to replace the bridge. No explanation was forthcoming as to the apparently completely unwarranted premature action and lack of communication other than sheer unbridled incompetence. *[This last assessment was not a board-approved statement but an editorial comment by the secretary who, while complaining, finds he still can't get over such egregious violation of ethical standards in the state highway system.]*
- Additional discussion over the VTRANS use of "Recreation Trail" signage on the unopened trail.

Chip Sawyer's LAC Report:

- Chip reported that members are looking forward to review of the MP. LAC members are still interested in mileage reimbursement.
- Three members from Lamoyille and one from Calendonias have resigned and recruitment efforts are ongoing to replace them. The June meeting will include elections. Chip attributes turnover to frustration among those unfamiliar with the slow pace of statewide projects, however the turnover rate is not extraordinary given the year-long terms of members.

Friends Report:

Laird reported that he, Ship & Bryant are meeting with the friends on 5/15 at 5pm at the Bakersfield Historical Society building to have a 'summit' about cooperation between the groups. Alan's presentation will follow at about 6:30pm. Dan H. asked about the nature of the meeting and the reason that the meeting wasn't generally announced. There was a suggestion that a specific comment(s) in the April minutes prompted concerns expressed by the friends, hence the diplomatic gesture of the meeting. The discussion moved from the topic of the comments triggering the meeting to the fact that the meeting was not generally announced. Members generally supported the idea that such meeting should be done with the fully informed board. No formal action was taken.

Ethan Ready's Bernie Sanders Office Report:

Ready was not present, no report submitted.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Law Enforcement: The Franklin County Sheriff's department sent Dan H. a report on Jan-April trail-related enforcement. Dan submitted that the report specified 529 "contacts" and 31 tickets totaling potentially \$7,919 in fines. These totals reflected ATV and snowmobile violations combined. The department spent about \$4,800 of their original \$10,000 funding, leaving approximately \$5,200. Most of the actual enforcement activity was conducted by Fish & Wildlife and reimbursed by the Sheriff's Department. Because no additional funding is immediately forthcoming from the state, the existing funds will continue to support enforcement. Further discussion ensued on the general problem of ATV use of the trail in Franklin County and the lack of state funding for such issues. Discussion also centered on what the board felt was an inappropriate use of ATVs on the trail by law-enforcement offices due to the destructive nature of ATVs (which could be ameliorated by the use of fat tires), the inefficiency of wheeled patrol vehicles by a department with a "no chase" policy, the frequent and common crossings with public roads and the inadequacy of enforcement. Dan H. also reported that Laird has resigned from the subcommittee to play a larger role in the fundraising activities.

Communications: Nothing

Maintenance: Alan suggested that there should be an explicit mention of "No Herbicides" in the MP. The the Engineering Assessment states this, but the MP only indirectly refers to the recommendations of the Assessment.

Policy & Development: Zeke reported that:

- The subcommittee recommends that the FAQ document be considered a dynamic document with an ongoing question of its use for the website, mailings or internal information.
- The Friends had requested for a timeline for opening of sections. Discussion included the reminder that at the April meeting the board unanimously confirmed the status of the trail as "Not Open". Issues of liability, accessibility (ADA) and signage prevent the official opening of the trail. Vermont's "Open Land" laws govern all other aspects of the public's use-at-your-own-risk use of the trail.
- The board will have official representation on the Vermont Trails & Greenways council. Dan Z. had volunteered at the April meeting to represent the committee with the VT&G council but had since declined due to schedule conflicts with their summer and fall meetings. Dan H. is on the VT&G board and other members expressed interest.
- Primary focus of the subcommittee will be on issues identified in the MP.
- Chip asked about VTRANS signage that refers to "Rec Trail" and "All season trail" that have been posted on the trail intersections with some public roads. Bryant reminded us that VTRANS is responsible for signage at crossings and rights-of-way. Discussion ensued over the problem of VTRANS accidentally propagating the idea in the mind of the public that the trail is open. Danny H. volunteered to call the district office and ask them to replace the signs with "Pedestrian Crossing" signs.

Fundraising: Ken H. reported on his contacts in his attempt to obtain 10 donations of \$200k (plus additional donations as they arise). He submitted a report listing contacts to date, outcomes and a list of potential donors, including granting foundations and institutions. Ken's report included a presentation of his approach to fundraising. Ken also reported that a private citizen had donated \$25 with a letter that was highly supportive of the TVRT project, and that such a letter would be valuable as a visible token of support in further fundraising and marketing efforts.

New Business:

- Dan H. asked about the status of construction on encroachments (ballast theft and fences). Discussion ensued. Alan reported that the town of Johnson and VTRANS "are not talking to each other". On the last weekend in May Alan is meeting w/ ANR to plan negotiations.
- The dept of Agriculture will be sending out a mailing including a request for feedback from adjoining landowners regarding the LVRT. It was felt that the Ag dept. support will help in boosting the probability of identifying issues.
- Laird reported that he replied personally to about 8 specific 'complaints' (the totality of all landowner feedback to-date that warranted such a reply). He quoted extensively in his responses with information from Vermont's 'open land' policy regarding the absolution of landowners from liability for people who stray on their land.
- Laird received a letter about the railroad bridge in Morrisville. The writer was concerned about a covering on the roadbed being a hazard. Laird will contact the local VAST club.
- In a general discussion over the 30% response rate to the initial letters, Dan H. volunteered to ask the Greensboro selectboard if we can send Greensboro landowners a letter on town stationary and envelopes.
- General discussion ensued about towns, trailheads and Alan's meetings w/ selectboards to assist towns with the development of trailheads.
- Dan H. distributed the current VT&G manual.

Chip moved (Zeke seconded) to adjourn at 8:27pm.