

**Annual Meeting - Pre Meeting**  
**9am-11:30am**

## **Description & Overview**

A few years ago, we brought back our premeeting. It has proven to be a successful action because it allows for more time to discuss the organization. This is a time for asking questions, offering suggestions and finding solutions and options. Since this is more of an informal gathering too, we can have discussions without the restrictions of our formal annual meeting because we do not need to follow Robert's Rules. So, this meeting is not a place to make motions and vote, but purely to talk about the association, items and initiatives. Out of respect for all of those in attendance, we will ask people to raise their hands to be recognized before speaking. This will help us to hear everyone and be respectful of everyone's ideas and time here.

## **Agenda**

### ***Welcome***

### **Health of the Association**

What does "health of the association mean"? It means looking at VAST from a 35,000-foot level to see the big picture, as well as diving into certain areas to help everyone understand the organization better and how it runs. While many of you come to our annual meeting every year, we also have new members coming each year, so some of what I will present to you, you may have heard before, but to benefit everyone, I would like to take a few minutes to introduce VAST.

VAST has a board of fourteen dedicated directors that are voted in by their county each year. In addition, there is an alternant director and a county trails coordinator. Each one of these individuals dedicate hour upon hour each year to help govern VAST and be the connection between the VAST office and their county and clubs. We also have officers at VAST voted in by you our membership each year. As officers these individuals act as a team of advisors for the board. To keep it so no one county or club has the ability to have more than one vote at VAST board meetings, the officers of VAST do not vote. Although in case of a tie in a vote, the president has the ability to vote to break a tie.

VAST has been in existence for 52 years now. This is the largest association in the state of Vermont with about 22,000 members. VAST is made up of 147 clubs that vary in membership numbers and numbers of volunteers. One thing we know is that most clubs operate with just a few volunteers managing the club, the trails, landowner relationships, all the paperwork, TMA sales and their club events. Without these dedicated few VAST could not operate as it does, but it also takes a team of staff to make sure we can support the volunteers and clubs, as well as do all the other jobs that can only be done by organizational staff.

The Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance suggests that nonprofits not exceed a 35% spending for administrative costs. Another resource I use for many different association management forecasting and other fiduciary ideas is the American Society of Association Executives. The average that nonprofits spend is 36.9%. So again, the BBB suggests that nonprofits not exceed 35% for administrative spending and ASAE states that nonprofits in the US average spending at 36.9%. At VAST we take our expenses very seriously and we evaluate budgets, income and expenses during the entire season, so we can do our best to not exceed our budgets. VAST currently runs at 28.2% administration (staffing, marketing,

building expenses, insurance, IT, government affairs, legal, etc.) and 71.7 for trails and .1% for scholarships.

- Grooming last year spent 66% of TMA income (\$1,629,765). Past years: FY16 was 63%, FY17 was 52% and FY18 was 58%.
- Equipment requests were \$1,305,166 and VAST was able to grant out \$232,240
- Construction grant requests were \$709,108 and VAST was able to grant out \$299,552
- If you add the grooming done in FY19 with the two grants you come to: 87.6% of all TMA income annually directly back into trails for grooming, equipment and construction aid (Total of \$2,153,549 this year)

In the past three years the staff at VAST have identified areas of savings regarding administrative costs and by bringing some of work inside of VAST by current employees, instead of contracting out, and some renegotiation of contracts we have saved more than \$200,000.

### **Leadership Summit**

This past June the VAST Board had a two-day leadership summit to discuss the organization. This is called a summit because that is what it is. We spend two days, eight to ten hours each day over a weekend at the summit. During this summit we can dig deeper into topics than we can do at a monthly board meeting. These two days are spent looking at the big picture like: how much money does VAST need to continue to keep up with the rising costs of grooming equipment? How do we manage our 4,700 miles of trails with 22,000 members? What should TMA rates be? What are other states and provinces doing? What do we do about trail signing and liability insurance costs due to accidents when signs are down? What do we do as winters seem to not be strong anymore in certain regions? How can we help clubs become and stay current with any state or federal laws and requirements? How do we attract more riders to Vermont? Is our trail and signing quality worth the price of a TMA and what is the tipping point of that?

### **Insurance**

In 2018 there were two accidents on our trail system when VAST ended in litigation. One is still going on, so we cannot talk about specifics. What I can tell you is that we were notified in May that our insurance company would no be renewing with us. After providing more information to the company, including information regarding our new Safety Ambassador Program, they agreed to resign with us, but at a cost of an additional \$50,000 a year. So now our liability insurance costs us \$175,285 a year. We also had our current broker and an outside broker searching for a better deal to no avail. There are not many companies that insure a risk sport like ours. Since most states run their snowmobile industry through state government, that are sovereign.

What I can tell you is that the first case that has been settled was someone riding recklessly, but he had not signed his TMA form. The other which is pending has to do with a regulatory sign (stop sign) being down. I cannot say more about this case to you now, but believe me, I have done so to the attorneys and our expert that is working on the case.

All VAST clubs that are compliant and up to date with any state or federal requirements are now covered by Directors and Officers Insurance through VAST.

## **Signing**

Signing is such a big part of what our volunteers do. They spend countless hours in the fall and in the spring putting up and taking down signs, as well as in the winter fixing them and dusting the snow off of them. It is important that signs are in place and also not covered in snow. It's so important to stop and fix a sign if we can to help the club out when we are riding or report it to the club if you can safely fix it.

## **Safety Ambassador Program**

Last winter started our new VAST Safety Ambassador Program (SAP). Currently we have about 30 active Sap members statewide and we are inviting a few more to join us this year, specifically we have locations in Vermont that are not covered like Addison, Orange, Bennington Counties. The SAP is a statewide program with a three-part approach. First is to introduce riders to our trail system and to offer assistance when needed while out on the Vermont Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS). This is done by just being helpful on the trails and at junctions or be available to escort riders around the trail system that want some guidance. In addition, it may be talking to folks on the phone who want to know more about their local trail system.

Secondly, team members are also assisting clubs by identifying trail hazards, missing signs, etc. This part includes marking hazards and notifying the club if there are issues on the trail. This is not about critiquing signing or trail conditions, this is only about being helpful and about safety.

Lastly, there is a safety component. Which means talking to riders about riding safe, identifying off trail riding, assisting riders or law enforcement if needed at an accident scene.

## **About VASTP Members**

Anyone can be an VASTP member, as long as they complete an annual instructional workshop that includes information on snowmobile safety, basic first-aid, zero alcohol tolerance policies, familiarity with the VAST trail map, phone trail app, website trail map and our Vermont Snowmobile Travelers Guide.

Team members may be contacted for general questions about riding in their area, or even be asked to take a group around to show them a trail network near them. All team members must have the ability to have a snowmobile in good working order to ride that is registered and insured. For all team members accepted into the SAP will be volunteer TMA per year for their sled after each annual workshop from VAST, a safety vest, first aid kit and some tools and trail signs.

Team members possess an outgoing personality and positive attitude about riding in Vermont. They are prepared to not only talk about their own club and trails but be willing to positively promote other clubs and regions. Team members have some level of fitness in case assistance is needed. It is their responsibility to make sure they do not overdo or injure themselves.

## **ACT 250**

Currently ACT 250 is being reviewed by the state. This is a burdensome regulatory process that the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail was subject to for years, until we finally got out of it two years ago. Currently some in the state are looking to make ACT 250 even more burdensome. We have been actively working with other trail groups in the state to take all recreational trails in Vermont out of ACT 250. I don't know

how far we will get, but we have been making headway. Our goal is to get it all laid out with state agencies, and then move to the legislature in the winter when it comes up again.

I would caution each one of you to educate your lawmakers about the burden of ACT 250. Our fear is not so much what they could do to trails only, as it is what they will do to private landowners and private businesses in Vermont. Educating yourself is the key.

### **Do We/Can We Provide Clubs With More Funding**

We have to decide whether we want to come up with money to provide more to clubs for equipment and trail maintenance. Without downsizing our consolidating or fleet, the only way to generate new money is in the form of a TMA increase.

The consideration is do we do it? If we do it we could earmark 100% of it to only go into equipment grants and trail maintenance grants if that is what the membership wants. A \$5 increase would net us about \$100,000 and \$10 increase about \$200,000.

How many groomers (large groomers, not including snowmobiles used for grooming) does VT and other states around us have (information provided by each state)?

- **VT has 106 groomers in our fleet and 4,700 miles of trail.**
- **NH has 75 groomers in their fleet and 7,000 miles of trail.**
- **ME has 125 groomers in their fleet and 14,000 miles of trail.**

We did some looking overall at the price difference for 2009 and 2019 for basic TMAs and our top sellers which are full season EB and full season RS.

#### **2009**

EB Resident of VT: \$65.50  
EB No Res of VT: \$85.00  
RS Resident of VT: \$90.00  
RS No Res of VT: \$130.00

#### **2019**

EB Registered in VT: \$105  
EB Not Registered in VT: \$135  
RS Registered in VT: \$145  
RS Not Registered in VT: \$185

- NH \$96.00 (Going up to \$140 over next two years), 43,960 registrations/trail passes, 7,000 miles.
- ME \$99, 87,986 registrations/trail passes, 14,000 miles
- NY \$100, 106,695 registrations/trail passes, 10,000 miles
- VT see above, 22,496 trail passes, 4700 miles

### **SLIDES**

- TMA Registrations and Miles Groomed
- TMA Income
- Vermont Registration Trend
- Construction Grants Verses Requests
- Grooming Grants Verses Requests
- Grooming Budget, Payments, Caps
- TMA Increases in States with Tradeshow