

Board of Directors
March 28, 2022
Meeting Minutes – FINAL

Members Present:

OFFICERS PRESENT

President, Jeff Fay
Vice President, Mark Reaves
Secretary, Jim Hill
Patty Companik, Treasurer

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Addison: Lewis Barnes
Bennington: Carol DeJohn
Caledonia: Bruce Carlson
Chittenden: Pat Poulin
Essex: John Hull
Franklin: Mike Burns
Grand Isle: Damien Henry
Lamoille: Carmin Lemery
Orange: Juliann Sherman
Orleans: Roger Gosselin
Rutland: Curt Marecheaux
Washington: Jeff Haplin
Windham: Michael Garber
Windsor: Doug Jacobs

STAFF PRESENT:

Executive Director, Cindy Locke
Trails Administrator, Matt Tetreault
LVRT/Trails Manager, Ken Brown
Technology & Media Manager, Beth Flint
Office & Programs Manager, Mandy Dwinell

GUESTS:

Barry Messier Windsor County Trail Master, Milo Day, Orleans County Alternate Director, Dave Domenico Jr., Essex County Alternate Director, Ivor Stevens, Windham County Alternate Director, Stan Choiniere, Safety Committee Chair, Brian Currier, VAST Trails Committee Chair, Ed Hebebrand, Caledonia County Alternate

Jeff called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Approval of Agenda

Addison County: Motion to approve, Rutland County seconded to approve as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of Secretary's Report

Rutland County: Motion to approve, Windsor County seconded to approve as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of Treasurer's Report

Patty Companik gave a report of the financials as of February 28, 2022.

Summary of Financial Report: GF, TF, SF

February 2022 - 5 months - 42% of budget season

Income thru February 2022:

- Budget: \$3,310,443
- Monthly Activity: \$252,735 (228,762 from membership income)
- Income to date/season: \$3,002,994 (-307,449 to make budget income expectation)
- PR, Marketing and Grants is 420k less than budget expectation - Pass thru money - GMNF (grants thru Ntl Forest)/198k and RTP Grooming Grants (grants which VAST bills for after all grooming payments have been made/\$228K) - will see later in summer
- Overall income is at 91% of budgeted income expectations - compared to Feb 2021 we were at 92%

Expense thru February 2022:

- Budget: \$2,752,476
- Monthly Activity: \$119,688 (41k & 33k = 74k in Salary/Benefits and Operating Costs)
- Expenses to date/season: \$853,447
- Currently at 31% of budget expense expectations - compared to Feb 2021 we were at 29%

Washington County: Motion to approve; Rutland County seconded to approve the Treasurer's report as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

Consent Calendar

n/a

Old Business

n/a

NEW BUSINESS

A. Free Weekend

Cindy mentioned that there have been questions, concerns and suggestions about VT Free Weekend from clubs all over the state. I am curious about club and county feedback. While we started a voluntary registration for free weekend, the data is not pure because it's not mandatory. Currently, there's no state law that says our VAST free weekend registration system is required to ride in VT for free weekend. It does not sit well to offer trail riding privileges without folks signing waivers. Other topics are how much trails get used and it is an added burden to clubs. A reminder to that we do offer a three-day TMA so if folks only want to come to experience VT for a short stay they can, and we can capture their signatures.

Lewis asked if there is a way to track who registered for free weekend & then purchased a 3-day pass and if we track who registered for free weekend or 3-day & purchased a RS next year Cindy answered that yes, we can track that. Cindy asked the BOD members to ask their county and clubs how they feel about the weekend and make suggestions to come back to the BOD with.

B. *CPI Increase – Matt

- Annual request from trails committee based on consumer price index
- Looking to increase to the amount in reports.
- For January 2022 the change is 6.0 (see *attached CPI Index*). The new rates are in parentheses. *The Trails Committee made a recommendation that the Board of Directors approve a 6% increase to raise the capped equipment grant amounts to:*
 - 0-7.9 Weeks: \$37,200
 - 8.0-11.9 Weeks: \$55,650
 - 12.0-16 Weeks: \$74,200

Predicted based on the economy, an increase for next year may be expected as well.

Washington County: Motion to approve; Rutland County seconded to approve the motion to increase based on the CPI as presented. MOTION PASSED.

C. Update on Administration Request - Cindy

\$1 million for budget was pulled out unexpectedly without testimony from VAST by House Appropriations Committee. Budget is currently transitioned over to the Senate. Sent an email requesting to come in to talk with the Senate this morning regarding the aging fleet.

Lobbyists are permitted to return in person and Frank has returned on site.

D. Taiga Event Recap - Cindy

The week-long event went very well, and we were glad Taiga came to VT. It was very interesting to see the machines and to learn more about the technology. At this point, the technology and charging support would need some revisions in order to be a good fit for VT. Currently, electronic snowmobiles can go roughly on a 60-mile run on a single charge. Possibly quite a few years from being viable to being ready for the masses. As updates are available, they will be shared with the BOD. Thank you to all who helped with the events.

Mark mentioned how prime targets for electronic snowmobiles could be ski resorts and tour operators for now. Exciting to see a manufacturer come fresh into the market is encouraging. During the event, Mark questioned Taiga on charging stations in Quebec and what the charging process looks like for multiple sleds. Taiga shared a positive connection with VAST.

Jim Hill extended a thank you Cindy for bringing the event to VT and introducing VAST to Taiga.

Mark shared how it was great to have the manufacturer partner with VAST and VT. Mentioned if Polaris, Artic Cat, Yamaha or Skidoo wanted to host an event here, we'd absolutely welcome them too. The event helped to bring National press to the area with focuses from Car & Driver, Washington Post, Electric based media, YouTube

Trail Administrator's/ED Report/LVRT Repot – Cindy, Matt and Ken

Grooming Contractors

Juliann Sherman reviewed Trail Administrator's Report, regarding groomer equipment why a for-profit contractor is asking for grant funds, and how that may take away from clubs. She said she didn't understand why a business can apply and can get money as a for-profit contractor, doing so she said it could take away from volunteer clubs, there are other resources and shouldn't be permitted.

Matt shared that grooming contractors are eligible for VAST grants.

Matt mentioned that the only time the contractor runs the equipment is for the clubs. Grants are allowed to contractors after thorough consideration

Juliann stated we're not encouraging enough consolidation of clubs for grooming, this would open the conversation.

Jeff Halpin mentioned we need to be careful of clubs who don't want to or can't groom, groomer contractors, and have taken over many areas where clubs weren't able to get to. We need to be mindful if we were to remove grants to contractors, we wouldn't want that to take away from clubs that aren't able to groom.

Resource Committee Presentation

Jeff stated that he is postponing a presentation by the Resource Committee for now. Last week they presented to the Trails Committee some of their findings. Mostly it was about the need for more funding tied to TMA increases. Jeff would like them to continue their work and he is also forming a Working Group to help dive deeper into other ideas like grooming consolidation and leasing programs.

Jeff is open to hearing ideas from county meetings. When sending emails, please include Brian, Matt and Cindy. Encourage BOD to connect with the clubs and see the feedback on the possible TMA price increase.

Curt mentioned it will be tough to try to have an increase for TMAs for next year after a low snow year, after getting a lot of push back and feedback from this year. Some don't remember and realize that winter sports are expensive and there's a lot of work, time, and money that goes into the trails and the sport.

Cindy shared that the ideas regarding potential changes with TMAs pricing are preliminary. The Resource Committee interviewed 12 counties. Changes could be voted on in July or August, with potential updates in May - June for more information and to digest mid-summer. Would have to be voted on at least 30 days from Annual Meeting.

Carmin reminded that VT is their own entity as a non-profit organization vs. other states that are run through the state. The last time there was an increase was a few years ago.

Cindy confirmed last price increase for TMAs was 3 years ago. The price increase for TMAs was \$5 and goes directly into the trails each September.

Carmin reminded the BOD of the massive undertaking the Resource Committee had to review this project and welcomed the idea of offering extra support. Thank you for their time.

Cindy reminded BOD this doesn't have to be voted on prior to annual meeting and can be pushed out more, unless you are seeking a TMA increase.

LVRT - Ken

Next public meeting for LVRT Management Plan will be Tuesday 3/29 in person in St. Johnsbury and via Zoom. Progress seems to be on track for possible completion by next summer.

Other

Carmin extends a warm welcome back to Brian Currier in his role of chair for the Trails Committee. Jeff shared his appreciation to Brian for returning.

Brian thanked the BOD. Brian was on the BOD 2009-2013 and was an alternate prior to that.

Committee and Other Meeting Reports

Northeast Chapter and USA - Pat Poulin, Jeff Fay at VT Representatives

Pat Poulin shared there was a meeting 2 weeks and reviewed things going on out west with National Parks and with the Feds.

VT Snow Trails Conservancy – Jim Hill, VSTC President

n/a

Law Enforcement – Gary Nolan, Chair

n/a

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee – Ken Brown

We will finally be requesting bids to replace the rotten LVRT bridge decks. It is expected there could be a month or two wait for materials, so we will be getting complaints about the plywood patchwork, but if you do hear from people, you can let them know we are trying to get the bridges fixed, we're just waiting on weather and materials.

Awards & Nominating – Patty Companik, Chair

We welcomed Amber Stevens as a new member of the committee last month

- May 1 - deadline for award nominations
- Scholarships:
- Small pool of scholarship candidates this year - but all were excellent!
- Top 2 scorers were just 1 point apart from each other:
- Dustin Beloin - Club: Country Riders - Orleans County
- Nicole Fullerton - Club: Long Hill - Windsor County. Notification will be sent to the scholarship recipients this week. Dustin's application was also sent to the Northeast Chapter.

Name badge contact isn't there anymore.

By-Laws & Policy – Mark Reaves, Chair

Waiting to connect on where things are at. Cindy offered to meet with Mark to review the bylaws.

Annual Meeting, Cindy

Meeting is on September 10th in Island Pond, the venue is outside.

Executive Committee, Jeff

N/a

Finance - Patty Companik, Chair

Soon we will be working on the budget with Cindy and the Committee Members in preparation of the annual meeting.

Long Range Planning & Organizational - Mark Reaves, Chair

Still in process of getting license approved. Working on wording, looks to be on track.

Carmin asked if insurance will be ready for next season. Mark is hoping to have license within the next month or so.

Resource Committee – Ivor Stevens, Chair

Presentation last Monday to the trails committee. Reminder presentation was a collaboration of year ½ of meetings and gathering information from BOD and counties, working on revising plan and information to BOD.

Personnel – Juliann Sherman, Chair

Meeting scheduled Tuesday 3/29 at 4:30pm

Trails – Brian Currier, Chair

Meeting last week, resource committee report. May 9 and 14 special Spring construction trails meeting for new trails. Reminder to send Matt information week prior to seminar.

Safety Committee – Stan Choiniere, Chair

No meeting last month due to weather.

Safety informational signs have arrived. Wrote brief article and photos to Beth for next Snowmobile Vermont magazine.

Safety Course (received December – February)

29 classroom

357 online

1586 total for safety courses

Down from prior year

Governor's Council – Pat Poulin, Chair

DMV to date: 21,343

Mark reminded BOD there is a safety course next week hosted by the Washington Snoflyers. Cindy reminded BOD that VAST has lots of pencils, Mandy can send to the instructor for safety course.

Motion to adjourn by Rutland County; Chittenden County seconded to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Hill
Secretary