

VAST Board of Directors Meeting Minutes – 1st Draft to be approved at the February 22, 2016 meeting

Monday, January 22, 2016

OFFICERS PRESENT:

President: Tim Mills

Vice President: Jeff Fay

Treasurer: Tom Baltrus

Secretary: Jim Hill

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Addison: Lewis Barnes

Bennington: Vacant

Caledonia: Ken Gammell

Chittenden: Pat Poulin

Essex: Stewart Ahearn

Franklin: Mike Burns

Grand Isle: Dave Ladd

Lamoille: Carmin Lemery

Orange: Ron Garvin

Orleans: Roger Gosselin

Rutland: Merritt Budd

Washington: Jim Morrill

Windham: Roone Gibbs

Windsor: Dick Jewett

ALTERNATE DIRECTORS PRESENT: Stewart Ahearn

STAFF PRESENT:

Executive Director: Cindy Locke

Trails Administrator: Matt Tetreault

Trails Manager: Shane Prisby

Cyndy Jones: Office Coordinator

GUESTS PRESENT: Ed Hebebrand, Angel Emmons, Greg Rouleau

Meeting Called to Order: 6:00 pm

Recognition of Visitors

Approval of Agenda: Lewis Barnes moved to approve; Roger Gosselin seconded, motion carried.
Pat Poulin requested an Executive Session after the regular meeting with regard to the Resource Committee.

Secretary's Report: Dick Jewett moved to approve; Dave Ladd seconded, motion carried.

Jim Hill noted a correction on page 4 under New Business - Grooming Grants. Remove the statement "Roger Gosselin did not abstain from the vote".

Tim Mills noted that when you have a specific county issue, you should abstain from the vote.

Treasurer's Report – Tom Baltrus gave a brief overview of the finances as of December 31, 2015.

Roger Gosselin moved to approve; Lewis Barnes seconded, motion carried.

Consent Calendar – Mark Reaves moved to approve; Pat Poulin seconded, motion carried.

- Cindy Locke noted that there is a copy of the liability bill for VAST per Chip Conquest, H.308. The Governor's Council has been working on this bill. We have to make a decision whether we want that specific wording in the bill or not, i.e., leaving the trail.
- Jeff Fay asked why would we want that language in the bill? Cindy Locke explained that it would lesson our liability if that wording were in there.
- Tim Mills – If the rider is out of control and leaves the trail system because of that, VAST should not be held liable. Cindy Locke and Tim Mills thought that we should let the Governor's Council review this again.
- Cindy Locke – Just a reminder that March 18th is our day under the dome. Cafeteria and card room are reserved; we need volunteers for the morning.

Old Business – Club Compliance

Cindy Locke noted that both Jeff Graham and Leighton Detora are both working on a guide for the clubs to be in compliance. We have come up with an idea to give each county a small grant to pay the compliance officer to help the clubs.

Mark Reaves asked if this would compliance fall under the Policy? They should all be trained the same way; same guidelines, etc. Cindy Locke noted that we should be getting the guide by the time of the next board meeting.

New Business

TMA sales update. Cindy – we have six clubs that have not yet sent in their Early Bird TMAs. We told these clubs last year (same clubs as last year) and said if they were late that they would have to be COD next year. Cindy read the list off so that the county directors will contact the clubs that are delinquent. We are short by 2,588 this year, compared to last year.

General discussion about looking at the budget for next year to try and make some cuts because of the slow year.

Snow Trails Conservancy

- Jim Hill – Beyond our mission statement, there are a couple of things; we are looking for donated easements, but even more so, purchased easements. There is an easement that Roger Gosselin can look into and we'd like to get that information to us. One other thing is that this is tax deductible for the property owner. We have an appraiser look at the easement and figure out what the value is and then the Conservancy will generate a letter for tax purposes. The conservancy takes care of the cost of the appraisal, etc., so that the landowner doesn't have to spend that money.
- Cindy Locke – we have presentation packets with general information about easements, info on the Snow Trails Conservancy, our mission, landowner liability (what the law is right now), and an easement form itself; with a step by step guide. We would like to go to county meetings and educate them on the STC. The only reason it exists is to benefit VAST and to protect snowmobile trails.
- Jim – We are looking funding options right now, grants, etc. VAST may consider dedicating \$1.00 or \$2.00 of each TMA to the Snow Trails Conservancy to raise funds.
- Roger Gosselin – If they donate an easement they could get a tax break? Jim responded, possibly.
- Roger noted that they would use some help in the Derby area with Walmart coming in.
- Mark Reaves - Checklist or application process – i.e., my club has talked to Rock of Ages regarding a big chunk of land. Is there a way for VAST to do a score to compare the importance of one application against another application?
- Cindy Locke – we are trying to avoid purchasing easements; it can get expensive. We need to make some money in order to be able to purchase or help in purchasing easements; legal fees, etc.
- Jeff Fay – the clubs are going to be doing some of the leg work; i.e., looking at the trails. But, the clubs cannot be promising the landowners that they will definitely get an easement. I believe the tax break is only a one time deal, not yearly.
- Carmin Lemery – I have 3 landowners that might be interested in this. Cindy Locke noted to contact them.
- Roger Gosselin – if a ½ mile of land were donated that has a trail on it, how much would that cost us, attorney fees, deed work, etc. The Conservancy is paying for it and the landowner is getting a tax break?
- Jim Hill (?) - Appraisal costs depend on how large the parcel is, ease of access, etc.
- Roone Gibbs talked about an easement that was done about 10 years ago – Walker property.
- Jim Hill – We would like to get invited to a county meeting and get a core group to work on this.

LVRT Fundraiser

Cindy Locke - We were approached by the Craftsbury Community Care Center and they want to run a fundraiser for their Center and in turn want to give 65% of those funds raised to the LVRT for trail

maintenance. They want to use the LVRT as a “draw” for their fundraiser to possibly get more funds raised. It’s a virtual event, as well as some real events. We pay \$300 a year for software costs to help them.

Ice Crossings

Cindy Locke - it’s been about a year and half since we’ve talked about this. The Trails Committee voted to close all ice crossings by 2017; just a reminder so we keep active on this.

Matt – we have roughly 7 crossings that are active (I show eight ??)

South Pond

Green River

Lake Memphramagog – 3 different locations

Lake Derby

Malletts Creek

Starr Lake

Silver Lake

Lake Morey

- Tim Mills – He knows that Lake Morey has a trail around it.
- Ron Garvin – Lake Morey Inn has stopped selling TMAs for us and are de-emphasizing snowmobiling because of the proposed water crossings and how it affects the people that visit the Inn. Even though the alternate trail gets them back to the Inn, they are saying that the draw is to be able to go out on the ice with snowmobiles.
- Cindy Locke – We know that people are still going to go out on the ice. Do we get rid of all of them? There are specific areas that make this difficult as there are no alternative routes in some instances.
- Tom Baltrus – we are looking at closing them, but why. Is there an alternative to this. How do we indemnify ourselves from this? Ice fisherman are at their own risk when they go out on the ice fishing.
- Tim Mills - VAST trails bring them to the ice, so we end up liable.
- Matt Tetreault stated that in November of last year the board voted on closing all water crossings by 2016-2017.
- Roger Gosselin – Our county is against it because of Lake Derby and Lake Memphramagog. Are we going to get rid of the trails that lead down to the waters’ edge?
- Cindy Locke – We will bring it to the Governor’s Council – legislators and senators are on that council.
- Ken Gammell – Caledonia County is against closing any trail; once you close it you can’t get it open again.
- Tim Mills – Matt, is everyone being compliant with the trails policy? We need to make sure the signs are in place just in case there is an event.
- Matt Tetreault – some of these signs are late in getting put up.

Committee Reports

- Cindy Locke – the LVRTC – only a few people showed up, about 7 community people. These people are not fundraisers, no one in the community or the committee wants to run the capital campaign. When I started talking about the capital campaign, their eyes got big – they were scared. I need the board members that are on the Committee to be there to help with this. I will get an RFP out soon and hire a consultant. It states in the Management Plan there is supposed to be a maintenance plan.
- Roger Gosselin – One of the issues is that we talked a lot about maintenance and by the time we got to the fundraising at the meetings, everyone wanted to stop the meeting. The people that have left the committee are the ones where their section of the trail is done. Maybe as we move into Franklin County we will get new people from that county.
- Jeff Fay - We are two different groups targeting the same audience.
- Roger Gosselin – If in fact we don't have to go through Act 250, then why are we continuing to do so with the next phases.
- Cindy Locke – we are looking into the Act 250 issue. Maybe the Committee needs to just focus on maintenance like they used to.
- Shane Prisby – The caveat that once Phase 1 was done we would have to go back through Act 250 for phase 2 and 3; public hearings, etc. Once you are in the process, you are in it until the end. I know of no case that has ever been reversed. If we try to get this reversed, they could make it very difficult for us.
- Ken Gammell – We have never had jurisdictional opinion about Act 250. It was never asked if we actually had to go through Act 250. The Board voted to go through Act 250 because it was only supposed to cost \$50,000.
- Mike Burns asked if there was any update on bridge 68.
- Shane Prisby – We are working on three cost scenarios and should have them this week. VTrans has a donation program for lumber which could be a huge savings for us.
- Scenarios are: 1 - Repair; 2 – Removal; 3 – Removal and Replacement.
- Mike Burns - Can we do a removal without replacement? Shane said, yes, if we have a viable work around, VTrans will let us do that and there is precedence through FHWA.
- Shane Prisby is writing two grants to complete 1C.
- Ron Garvin – Ken has told us that we don't have to go through Act 250 for the future phases of the LVRT. Is there some validity to this? What are we doing and who is going to do it and when is it going to be initiated. Have we had contact with legal counsel on this issue.
- Cindy Locke – There is not a timeline for it and I don't know how far it will go. We have set up a meeting with Deb Markowitz, who is the Commissioner of ANR. We have council reviewing this; the lease with the state, etc. There is no precedence for this; so it's taking some time.
- Shane Prisby - We have to complete Phase 1, in its entirety, which includes 1C. Once that is done, they come back out and look at everything.

PR & Marketing

Carmin Lemery – We attended the Yankee Sportsmans' Classic at Champlain Valley Fairgrounds, which went very well. Talked to a lot of NY residents looking for information.

Trails

- Tim Mills – We have a subcommittee meeting on Policy.
- Cindy Locke – board minutes from last month and the previous month are now on the website.
- Mike Burns – under Old Business, can we possibly put in some items on the agenda to briefly review/update, i.e., on line tmas, grooming grants, etc.
- Cindy Locke – online TMAs are on the back burner right now because they are working on our trails portion for the website. The Committee still needs to talk about a number of issues on this.
- Dick Jewett – Report from Steve McLeod regarding trails liability.
- Mike Burns – last year we had an unfortunate accident in Maine (they occasionally use boulders to block trails) where a person went off the trail and hit a boulder. He was injured, but he was ticketed on the spot. Maine had absolutely no accountability for the incident.

Executive Session called by Pat Poulin – Mark Reaves and Ron Garvin at 7:55 PM.

Mark Reaves moved to come out of Executive Session; Carmin seconded, motion carried.

Mark Reaves moved to accept the recommendations and conclusion of the Resource Committee; Lewis Barnes seconded, motion carried.

Mark Reaves moved to adjourn and Pat Poulin seconded; meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

It is our goal to provide a statewide snowmobile trails system second to none and to provide a quality snowmobiling experience to our members.