

Governor's Snowmobile Council

Date March 9, 2022

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Sergeant Trevor Carbo, Vermont State Police
Cindy Locke, VAST Executive Director
Gary Nolan, Law Enforcement Committee Chair
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee
Dick Jewett, Governor Appointee
Michael Smith, Vermont DMV
Jenna Reed, Vermont Fish & Wildlife

VAST Staff Present:

Cindy Locke, Executive Director
Ken Brown, Trails Manager & LVRT Project Manager
Matt Tetreault, Trails Administrator
Mandy Dwinell, Office & Programs Manager

Guests:

Stan Choiniere, VAST Safety Committee
Mike Mustachio (in for Ken Gammell)
Jeff Haplin, Washington County
Paul Doucette, Southern Vermont Task Force

The meeting was convened at 3:04 PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Star Poulin moved to approve the February minutes as presented; Gary Nolan seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

SSTP Financial Report

Matt Tetreault shared that the January SSTP financial report was basic and included administrative services. The next invoice will include plowing and will reflect one equipment grant paid, possibly two.

Star Poulin moved to approve the SSTP reports as presented; Dick Jewett seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police, Trevor Carbo

To date, there has been 29 classroom and 1557 online Safety Courses, which is quite a drop from last year. There was a jump from last month with 340 within 2-week period. Things are starting to quiet down. Patrols were out during the abbreviated season. No major violations were reported. There were 2 significant accidents in Island Pond area on 3/4 and 3/5.

Trevor Carbo mentioned an update regarding VSP and Southern VT Task Force. A separation of the departments is in the process to include schedules & budgets. Working on statewide details for next season. Reorganization with VSP budget and implementation.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Game Wardens were eager to get out once snow hit. Three possibly four Game Wardens have responded to calls since last Governor Council's meeting. Most serious being in Louis. A press release last week regarding crashes. Fish & Wildlife Dept. working toward using the Valcro system to search for data on crashes – access codes are needed. VSP uses this program and has its department code. Hoping to be able to use Valcro to create uniformity with reporting. Hired three recruits, while they are waiting to go to the academy, hoping to get them out on the trails as well.

Sheriff's Association

Not present

Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue, Chief Paul Doucette

Paul shared Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue has enjoyed the partnership with VSP. Going into 2022-2023 season there will be \$35,000 to be split among the remaining departments.

Doing best to get out and conduct patrols. The trail between Sunset to Dover is cut off, looking forward to this being open next season. Cindy asked if logging is done or close to completion. Paul is unsure and said it's currently not open.

Stan inquired on what compliance is like this season. Paul shared that they haven't had a lot of people not compliant, many people were for not displaying 2022 TMA sticker. When riders were given the option to pay \$88 fine or put TMA sticker on now, everyone put the stickers on. Cindy received patrol invoices from some Sheriff's departments and shared the majority is showing compliance, with a couple of warnings.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Mike Smith

2022 Stats 21343,

2021: 20,452

2020: 20,236

2019: 20,352

2018- 20,371

Trevor Carbo noticed a similar increase with boating registrations as well.

Forest, Parks & Recreation

Not Present

VAST

TMA Report, Cindy

On par with last year. Cindy shared her screen Early Bird up slightly, Regular Season down slightly, Family are up. 3-day is about what it usually is, about 150 above year over year. 222 transfers, 23,976 total once transfers removed.

Expected to see a gradual decrease once the season moves along.

Michael Mustachio asked if there is a commonality of when 3-day passes are purchased. VAST to look into this.

Around 800 registered for free weekends. Some people will buy passes to extend the free weekend. Michael tries to promote free weekend at club level. Cindy has received a mixed response from club's surrounding free weekend. The VAST Board will discuss the future of this program.

Taiga

Electronic snowmobile company, Taiga was in Stowe for 5 days for a press event. It went very well, very interesting technology. Thank you to Jenna and Fish & Wildlife, VAST staff, and volunteers for their help. Was nice to be able to sit and ride-on machines. Machines have a way to go for manufacturing. Taiga staff is mostly from the electric automotive industry. Suggestions for possible adjustments for the windshield, seat, charge (currently 65 mile range), charging options, and overall sleds improvements are needed. Sleds are very quiet, primarily hearing the track. Worthwhile and helpful event. Maybe a helpful supplement to standard snowmobiles.

Star Poulin extended thank you and support to Cindy for hosting Taiga and welcoming them to VT and VAST.

Cindy extends a thank you for everyone's help, hard work, time, and support during the event. This was a great event and something to look forward to within the next few years. Recommendation for VAST to wait a couple of years for manufacturing and charging.

Stan mentioned may be helpful especially to ski resorts, charging options, and energy efficiency.

Gary Nolan asked to take a moment to thank Cindy for her hard work on this event. Bringing Taiga to VT was a smart & quick-thinking move on her part. I was there all five days & she was constantly around directing & leading. Getting Taiga to come to VT instead of Lake Tahoe was amazing & just like Cindy does, she asked for no credit for herself. She deserves credit. She did an outstanding job!

Machines are lower maintenance, they are heavy, and machines still need to cool due to the battery used. Noticed differences with skies, carbides, back flap. Maybe a think tank with riders and snowmobile manufacturers would be helpful.

Tim Mills

Cindy shared an update on the unexpected passing of VAST President Tim Mills. Tim was a wonderful friend and had an instrumental role leading VAST and will be greatly missed. VAST released a notice publicly regarding Tim's passing on 3/8. More details to come. VASTBOD has voted Jeff Fay, President, and Mark Reaves, Vice President.

Jeff Haplin has asked to join the Governor's Council as a Central VT representative. If Jeff agrees a letter to be sent from Cindy and Pat to go to the Governor's office. Some roles are up for re-election 2022.

Free Weekend

On the fence, brings people here but not necessarily following trail protocols, trails being torn up, increased liability. At the next BOD meeting, to discuss ideas and plans for next season. This last weekend was free weekend in NH, saw an increase in accidents due to speed and ice.

Law Enforcement Committee

Gary Nolan asked for accident investigation training for Morrisville. Inquiry on training by Lamoille County. Jeremy Smith Game Warden of the Year. Gary again thanked Jenna and Cindy for their help with the Taiga event.

VAST Safety Committee

Stan asked for increased signage for riders to be smart & safe, and Zero Alcohol sign. Adding Safe & Responsible riding sign. Beth will add to the magazine next month. The suggestion of adding a Zero Alcohol sign on way to Breweries, restaurants etc. Sharing with Trails & gathering new ideas for next season at Committee Monday.

Legislative Report

Not present

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Star Poulin

Very little snow, and limited base

Central, Jeff Haplin (Temp)

State police Auxiliary being abolished. More full-time troopers on trails, few auxiliaries.

Northeast, Mike Mustachio

Maybe some riding if we get more snow. Lots of ice. Have had some nice events.

South, Dick Jewett

Lots of ice, may not groom, let sleds ride, but may not be able to groom.

Next meeting April 6th 2022 at 3pm

Star Poulin moved to close the meeting at 4:34pm; motion seconded by Mike Mustachio.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Locke
Executive Director
VAST