

**GOVERNOR'S SNOWMOBILE COUNCIL**  
**Notes 2/5/2020**

**Present:**

Pat Poulin, Chair  
Trevor Colby, Vermont State Police  
Sean Fowler, Vermont Fish & Wildlife  
Gary Nolan, Law Enforcement Committee Chair  
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee  
Jessica Savage, Vermont Forest, Parks & Recreation

**VAST Staff:**

Cindy Locke  
Peggy Whiteneck

The chairman called the meeting of the February 5, 2020 Governor's Council to order at 3:04 PM. There being no quorum present, the minutes of the January 15 meeting were not formally approved. A change was noted for the Fish & Wildlife section: replace Trevor Colby's name in the reporting with Sean Fowler's name throughout.

**SSTP Report**

Matt Tetreault was out examining trails today, but he did submit a revenue and expense report on the SSTP budget, copies of which were distributed to the Council with nothing significant to note.

Negotiation with the state on SSTP budget categories is ongoing, and this will be on the agenda for the next meeting of the Council to get its perspective and input on the issue.

**State Police**

Trevor Carbo reported that a replacement for the Safety Coordinator does not seem to be in the cards and that safety classes have been running without one. The staffer who compiles the numbers for course attendance has been on sick leave, so Trevor will email the updated numbers to the Council members as they become available. Trevor also reported that he had been to Maine to attend a reciprocal meeting and was shocked by the contrast between Vermont and Maine in trail marking. Vermont, he said, does a much better job, from a trail user standpoint, in signage to orient riders to their location.

Cindy Locke reported that, in relation to a recent tour group accident in which signage was a factor, contracts with Snowmobile Vermont have been reviewed, and they make no explicit mention of responsibility for signing the tour group's sections of trail. Attorneys will be meeting to hash that out for places where trails for tour groups overlap with those of VAST clubs.

**Vermont Fish & Wildlife**

Sean Fowler reported that Orange, Essex, and Caledonia counties have enough snow that law enforcement has been active. Work on the scheduling app is ongoing with the hope that it can eventually be a useful tool in identifying problem areas in coverage.

### **DMV Report**

Although Council reps from DMV were not present, Cindy was able to report on snowmobile registration numbers. We are currently running ahead of last year, with 18,954 registrations vs. 18,016 by this time last year. Revenue is \$483,055. But if we have 18,954 registrations in Vermont and we have 16,286 TMAs sold, that leaves 2668 registered VT sleds with no TMA. How many of those are just ice fishermen or farmers?

### **Sheriff's Association**

Not present.

### **Southern Vermont Task Force**

Not present.

### **Forest, Parks & Recreation**

Jessica Savage reported that the ranking committee for RTP funding met yesterday and that funding notifications will be going out in the next couple of weeks. The MOA for the \$50,000 the state legislature has allocated for the LVRT for this year is being reviewed. Jessica also said she was pleased and impressed by the coordinated effort to re-deck the ailing Joiner Brook Bridge.

### **VAST**

Cindy Locke reported on TMA sales. Early Bird TMAS numbered 15,102 vs. 15,665 last year, with a club or two still late in submitting their paperwork. This year lags behind both budget projections and last year's season, but this is largely due to poor snow cover, and it's too early to really tell what regular season TMAs will come in at. Cindy noted that VAST's biggest expense is grooming, however, and there being less snow to groom should mean that we will probably come in at \$1.3 million in revenue vs. the \$1.4 in the budget.

Cindy expressed a concern about the number of people out riding with no TMAs; she has seen multiple illegal sleds, and this is a particular problem in Orleans and Caledonia Counties as well as in Essex and Washington. She is conversing with Trevor Colby about the possibility of moving some Franklin County enforcement to Orleans, but Sean Fowler also noted that this is partly a manpower issue, with just a few men to cover responsibilities that include but are not limited to snowmobile enforcement. The Council is still grappling with this issue of coverage and how it can become more flexible to respond to gaps.

It was suggested that, in addition to the Sherriff's Association, we invite some individual sheriffs to attend Council meetings.

This weekend is a free weekend, so we do have some lead time to figure out a way to move law enforcement around most effectively for the weekend after. Cindy noted that Eden and Lowell are good law enforcement launch points, with weekend parking available for trailers.

### **Law Enforcement Committee**

Much in this area had already been discussed in the meeting. Gary Nolan further noted that the *Burlington Free Press* had printed only part of the Safety Course press release Trevor Colby had sent them. Some important information was cut.

The issue of loud pipe enforcement was tabled.

**Legislative Report**

Neither legislator was present, but Cindy Locke was able to report that Senator Jane Kitchel's proposed language (that safety course documentation carried by riders may include a digital copy by phone) is being inserted into the transportation bill and passage is anticipated with no problems or changes.

Cindy Locke also announced that the governor has proposed, in his budget, a 4- to 5- year window of completion for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail using the state's capital funding. Forest, Parks and Recreation and the Agency of Transportation have been very supportive of this proposal. The Rails to Trails Conservancy has also been very supportive, including at the national legislative level, because this proposal advances the dream of an integrated interstate trail system of which the LVRT is a part. The proposal involves AOT taking over the construction of the trail while VAST remains, for the near future, in charge of general trail maintenance.

**Appointee Reports**

Star Poulin, reporting for the northwest, was the only regional representative present for the meeting. She said there is some snow out there, with snow that is hard packed in the woods but poor snow cover on the fields. Chittenden County is pretty much closed although she noted that some riders insist on being out on its trails anyway. While awaiting better snow conditions, the clubs are still clearing brush and doing other maintenance tasks as needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Whiteneck  
Recording Secretary