

APPROVED MINUTES
ST&RE Committee Meeting
April 18, 2024, 5:30
Springfield Town Offices

Call to Order— the meeting was called to order at 5:50.

Roll Call— Barbara Schultz (presiding by telephone), Bettina McCrady, Chuck Gregory and John Bond. Jim Fog sent his apologies for his absence.

Announcements— John Bond reported about the recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan meeting. It addressed planning for the next five years, e.g., how to connect towns, use town facilities and include more indoor activities, such as indoor bike parks; how to develop more youth-oriented after-school programs; how to develop activities that did not contribute to climate change; how to resurrect ski areas; and how to improve real-time communication about ski resort trail conditions and closures. He reported that there will be more meetings and provided a link to the VOREC report:

<https://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/2020%20VOREC%20Report%20and%20Recommendations.pdf>

John Bond announced the Springfield On The Move charity auction, April 27th at the Country Club. There will be valuable artwork, other items and services of all sorts .

Approval of minutes of previous meeting— It was moved to approve the minutes of the March 28th meeting (McCrady/Gregory). Passed unanimously.

Old Business

--Committee recruitment— Sue White was welcomed as a visiting member of the public. She expressed interest in joining the committee and was advised of the procedure to apply. Discussion revealed the need to update the town website information— the number of committee members and the reference to its advisory nature.

--ST&RE introductory guide— Bettina McCrady presented the updated description of the committee's work. Moved to approve the description and submit it to the Town Manager for proper disposition (Gregory/McCrady). Chuck Gregory volunteered to submit it.

--Public relations— Barb Schultz reported reaching out to Suzanne Stern of the Springfield Reporter. Ms. Stern's article about the committee's work on trail signage appeared on Tuesday the 16th. There was discussion of posting a question to Facebook participants about having stations on the Toonerville Trail for dog walkers to use for keeping the trail free of that disease vector. Bettina will confer with Parks and Recreation Director Adam Middleton about it.

--Hunting ordinance status— Barbara reported that Jim Fog sent to the Select Board the committee's letter of request for a hunting ordinance for Hartness Park. John Bond suggested getting an update on it from Town Manager Jeff Mobus for the May meeting.

--Hartness Park Rehabilitation Grant update— Bettina announced the meeting was postponed again, but is re-scheduled for April 19th. John Bond said Jeff Mobus said the money for doing the land survey of the entrance area is now available.

New Business

--Status of communication with the Army Corps of Engineers— Barbara reported connecting with the Corps of Engineers, so a link has been established with the purpose of factoring Springweather into the town's system of trail use.

--Opportunity to comment on Connecticut River hydroelectric project license—Barbara said the project has a mandate for public access— there is a May 22nd deadline. She provided to committee members a draft of suggestions for the project:

Debbie-Anne Reese, Secretary

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

888 First Street, NE

Room 1A

Washington, D.C. 20426

Re: Great River Hydro, LLC, FERC Project Nos. P-1855-050 (Bellows Falls Dam)

Dear Secretary Reese,

The Springfield Trails and Rural Economy committee is a town-appointed committee that promotes connections between the developed portions of the town and destinations of natural, scenic, and recreational interest. The committee supports Great River Hydro's commitment to recreation and conservation

The committee is requesting that Great River Hydro's recreation-related activities, during the re-licensing period, include improvements to public river access within the Town of Springfield.

Springfield's eastern boundary is along the Connecticut River, and entirely within the project's "Bellows Falls reservoir" area. The town's access to the river is impacted by hydro-dam related drawdowns at Bellows Falls and by changing flow due to the dam at Wilder.

A goal of our Town Plan is to improve access and use of the river. A 2022 study of Vermont towns, commissioned by the Department of Environmental Conservation, determined that Springfield is one of only five communities along the Connecticut River with the highest level of environmentally vulnerable populations. Our committee and our community have been working to increase recreational access for all. We have been developing parks in the developed areas of town, and have been improving the three-mile paved "bike path" that extends from downtown to the Connecticut River.

There is a Vermont Fish & Wildlife access area at the mouth of the Black River. This location is at the terminus of the bike path and at a highway crossroad. However, this area does not meet the needs of all citizens. State rules exclude users who are not fishing, hunting, trapping or boating.

Residents of Springfield, and visitors, would make use of an expanded access area, or alternative location, that allows other uses, such as picnicking, cycling, birdwatching, or simply enjoying the riverfront. Opportunities exist for partnerships to help make this a reality.

Thank you to FERC, and to Great River Hydro, for your consideration of this request.

Moved (Bond/Gregory) to submit to the project the comments as drafted. The question of the committee's authority to represent the town was suggested as the "power to recommend project concepts," it was agreed to forward the letter to Jeff Mobus for confirmation. Passed unanimously.

Sue White said that the project will be attempting to adjust the hydro dam releases to a more environmentally-friendly seasonal flow model. Bettina asked if the committee should pursue liaison with Fish and Wildlife about developing recreational areas (e.g., swimming and fishing). Barbara asked if we should be commenting as a committee— the consensus was to do so.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 16th, 5:30 PM at the town offices.

The agenda will include:

ST&RE Committee Meeting
May 16th 2024, 5:30 PM

Springfield Town Offices

Call to Order

Roll Call

Announcements

Additions to Agenda

Approval of Minutes of previous meeting

Update from Town Manager, including Hunting Ordinance Status (Proposed)

Old business—

- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

- Public Relations

- Hartness Park Rehabilitation Grant and Survey updates

- Status of communication with the Army Corps of Engineers

New business—

- Invitation to Parks & Recreation to attend and review collaborative efforts on trail maintenance (Proposed)

The next meeting will be July 25th, at

The next