

~~UN~~APPROVED MINUTES

Springfield Trails and Rural Economy Committee

Thursday, November 30th

5:30 PM

Town Meeting Room

- Call to Order - meeting called to order 5:35 pm
- Roll Call— Present were Barbara Schultz, Jim Fog (presiding), John Bond, Josie Hingston (recording), Kristi Morris, Jeff Mobus, Jim Kraft
- Announcements— There were no announcements
- Additions to Agenda— There were no additions to the agenda
- Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting -
- Old Business
- Creation of By-Laws -
 - Barbara Schultz stated there is a need to clarify and ensure observance of open meeting laws, and process and structure of committee - e.g., do we need a vice chair? What bylaws/rules do other committees use as standards for operation? How are office tenures managed and tracked?
 - John Bond added that we need officers, predictable scheduling (3rd Thursday of the month generally but not always), structure that helps people plan. Perhaps we need a mission statement more specific than the committee charter (current activities contrasting with committee's focus on rural economy)
 - Town Manager Jeff Mobus pointed out that recreation is part of the rural economy
 - Next steps: review above suggestions and generate short digestible committee status/mission
- Status of VOREC Grant - The signs are up on Toonerville Trail and two handcarved at Woodbury Hartness entrance and Dell Rd Hartness entrance (thanks to John Robison)
 - Deliverables rundown: VOREC grant started during COVID shutdown. Some of the proposed deliverables ended up completed at no or lower cost than budgeted - other deliverables cost more than budgeted, but overall we spent less than we asked for. Jeff proposed that we document in-kind/donated work and ensure that plus/minus expenditure

changes balance. Quality of work done on kiosks for example was far higher than the budgeted grant allocation could have afforded.

- The committee thanked Jeff Mobus and the Town for their active partnership in completing the grant.

- Gate Access to Hartness Park

- No change to access status at present - Jeff reported it needed a surveyor and a program of regular open hours (to be developed in cooperation with abutting neighbors) for the gate off Skitchewaug Rd. John pointed out that having both the Woodbury and Skitchewaug gates open will promote park usage. Parks and Rec could take on regular opening/closing of gate(s) per

Jeff Mobus. Barbara and Jim Fog voiced concern over the access at Woodbury which has limited parking, on a dangerous curve and susceptible to saturation in wet weather. Jim said the promotion of the new parking lot should be the main focus for now. Barbara mentioned that the new grant will aim at rectifying drainage issues at various points in Hartness Park including Woodbury access. John stated that improvement of Woodbury access would invite more users to the park and hopes to continue working on that gate.

- Hartness Park hunting use

- The committee discussed hunting in Hartness Park, following the observation of tree stands in the park. As public property, there is no such prohibition in place, although some areas of the park may be subject to the existing ordinance against ~~hunting~~ **the discharge of firearms** within 500' of a house.

- Jim worried that rifle hunting in HP is too close to people's backyards, but that bow hunting would be safe for abutting properties. John expressed that visitors unfamiliar with the park would find a no hunting rule reassuring. Barbara emphasized that this is a downtown-adjacent park that we are actively encouraging for recreational use, and while a strong supporter of hunting rights generally, does not see rifle use in the park as safely compatible with other recreational use, mentioning numerous other downtown-adjacent municipal parks in Vermont with 'no hunting' policies. The committee agreed that rifle use in Meeting Waters does not present the same concerns as it is undeveloped, has far fewer neighbors, and is further from populated areas. Jim mentioned the importance of self defense and wanted to clarify the difference between a firearm discharge ban and blanket firearm ban.

- Barbara mentioned tree stands/blinds as intimidating to visitors, and damaging to trees and asked if these would also be considered under a potential ban.

- John mentioned trail camera usage might be worthwhile to place at the Skitchewaug parking area as a possible safety guard in the event of misuse (trash dumping, water tower security for example)

- Barbara moved that we propose that the Selectboard and Ordinance Committee consider that hunting be prohibited at Hartness Park. John seconded. Discussion followed. Jim recommended including “firearm discharge” in prohibition as opposed to a blanket firearm ban. John said the recommendation should include no fire, no permanent tree stands, no hunting; and emphasized the goal is to reassure members of the public as well as ensure as much as possible that the park is safe for recreational use.
- Kristi Morris asked how many users are currently hunters and how many are currently other users. Kristi emphasized the importance of user data in any decision creating a new ordinance. Barbara pointed out we’re trying to encourage more users with an active program of trails development, signage, and public outreach. Kristi asked about enforcement. Jeff said an ordinance violation is generally a minimal fine.
- Motion: that the committee ask the Selectboard and Ordinance Committee to consider creation of an ordinance that prohibits hunting in Hartness Park. Jim abstained. Barbara, John, Josie - aye.

- New Business

- Town Manager Update— Jeff Mobus announced:

- The shared-use bike/pedestrian path from Plaza to bottom of Elm Hill - in progress.
- The Toonerville extension still in progress - negotiating continues viz. ROW behind private property (LBL) vs Black River 50’ buffer requirement. The estimate is 2026 before any work might be done.
- John Bond and Jeff pointed out that during the extension of the Toonerville Trail is the best window of time to focus on maintenance of the existing trail as construction/paving crews would already be engaged.

- Hartness Park Rehabilitation Grant

- Immediate need: VYCC/trail crew engagement for work next year. Barbara to give contact info to Jeff, Jeff to coordinate with Parks and Recreation Department.

- Next meeting date 1/25/2024

- Adjournment - Bond/Schultz moved to adjourn 6:47pm

Respectfully submitted,
Josie Hingston, secretary pro tem