

Montpelier Parks Commission, DRAFT meeting minutes

February 19, 2019 6:00pm, Montpelier Police Station Conference Room

Commissioners Present: Carolyn Grodinsky, Daniel Dickerson, Fabienne Pattison, Kassia Randzio

Parks staff: Geoff Beyer, Alec Ellsworth

Public present: Dona Bate, Shelby Perry

Meeting Minutes

6:06 pm Meeting moved to order

Carolyn motioned to approve minutes, Fabienne seconded. Dona Bate asked minutes be amended to include mention of public present. Minutes approved as amended.

Dan asked that agenda be modified to bump 2019 priorities to next meeting. No change was ultimately made. Fabienne motioned to approve agenda, Carolyn seconded. Agenda approved.

6:09 pm Public Comment

Shelby Perry, who filed for election to fill the 2-years remaining in a parks commission seat vacated this fall, introduced herself. She is stewardship director at Northeast Wilderness Trust, is a lifelong Vermonter, has a strong conservation background, and frequents Montpelier’s parks with her dog.

6:15 Budget Debrief

The city council approved funding for a new full time parks position beginning January 2020 (6 months into the new fiscal year). This was a compromise in order to limit position costs in 2020, though needs in the park would ideally bring in additional staff earlier in the year. Geoff suggested revisiting staffing levels with city manager Bill Fraser, and assessing whether there may be opportunities to combine available funding for a part-time seasonal summer position with the new full time position, finding a solution within the budget to add permanent staff sooner. Possibilities could include a position that begins part-time, then transitions to full-time. Commissioners noted that the candidate pool may be different for a part-time or full-time position, so clarity will be needed before hiring processes begin.

Donna Bates recommended that the city council, parks commission, and tree board meet for a retreat to identify where goals align and find ways to move forward together toward shared goals. Fabienne agreed that this would be a positive way to potentially reduce silos.

Geoff noted that, due to emerald ash borer and population changes, parks and trees will both need increased staffing over time, not decreased staffing. Geoff and Alec will discuss possibilities with Bill Fraser, as well as the tree board, and report back at the March parks commission meeting.

6:36 Parks Staff Hiring Processes

Dan and Bill Johnson met with Bill Fraser to discuss processes and protocols for filling the parks director position. Geoff has indicated intent to retire, but will need to officially file notice with the city before the city can move forward with a hiring process. In order to give a range of applicants opportunity to apply, the director position will be publicly advertised, even if there are interested candidates from within parks staff.

Commissioners asked that Geoff and Alec assess needs in the park, and draft job descriptions - potentially shuffling current responsibilities. Geoff and Alec will share drafts with commissioners via email, and will discuss positions at the March parks commission meeting.

6:50 Caretaker Update

Incident Report The commissioners received an incident report in late January, which reported an person/dog incident that occurred in December. Carolyn called the victim shortly after receiving the report, and discussed possible paths forward, including public processes to help resolve this and other recreational use challenges in the parks.

Dona Bate recommended that commissioners broaden potential public processes to look at the entire city limits, not just uses in Hubbard Park, so that there may be more opportunities to resolve recreational use challenges. Kassia concurred. Carolyn noted that public meetings could be an opportunity to help move [green print](#) implementation forward.

Shelby recommended Nancy Bell at The Conservation Fund as a possible facilitator if there is a public process. Others noted that it's important that, if a public process and facilitator are selected, that it's important that the facilitator have a neutral background on Montpelier parks issues.

Dan noted that, as a commission, it's important that we establish our goals first. Is the green print separate from a parks plan? Or are those the same? Carolyn offered that the green print and parks plan be implemented in parallel.

More specifically to the January incident report, Geoff suggested that two commissioners become trained to respond to similar incident reports each time they occur. He also recommended establishing dog owner ambassadors who are educated about how to interact with

the public, and can help encourage fellow dog owners to increase responsibility in Hubbard. Shelby agreed that an ambassador program could be helpful.

Dan suggested that the website could be improved to provide improved recreation information (ex. maps for skiers or bikers), as well as information for people who may want to volunteer in the parks, including as ambassadors.

Truck A parks pickup truck was totaled in an low speed ice accident in January, and insurance determined that it was totaled. Insurance is providing a payment for the truck. When combined with equipment funds available, it will be possible to buy a much newer truck that will better meet parks needs - it will have a full cab, allowing for transport of larger work crews, reducing the need to bring two trucks to work sites.

Grants Parks did not receive a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which would have provided funds to add two small portions of properties to Hubbard Park, allowing construction of a new multi-use trail. In lieu of this, staff recommended allocating a portion of park reserve funds to purchase one of the properties, as well as remaining park impact fee funds, while launching a campaign to raise funds to purchase the second connecting property.

Kassia made a motion to approve purchase of the Ripon property of approximately 5-acres at a cost of up to \$12,000 from available park impact fee funds. Fabienne seconded the motion. Approved.

Ice on Fire The event drew a larger crowd than ever before, with more than 600 people present. Parking was challenging. A volunteer with Montpelier Alive produced a short video that could be used to promote future events. <https://vimeo.com/317294015>

Ski Trail With the closure of Morse Farm, Geoff has been working to identify ways to connect Montpelier's ski trail system with the East Montpelier and Morse Farm trail systems. He's had conversations with eight landowners who would need to provide public access to ensure connectivity, seven of whom have granted permission. One property was recently transferred to a group of nephews, who are unwilling to allow public access.

Geoff mentioned that there's the opportunity to purchase a piston bully valued at \$25-45,000 at a cost of only \$7,000. This additional equipment would allow for improved grooming of a larger trail system, but may not be useful if the trails cannot be connected with East Montpelier.

Geoff is reviewing alternative ways to connect the trail systems.

8:04 Adjourn

Fabienne made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Carolyn seconded. Approved.

