



Winooski Valley Park District

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Minutes for January 21, 2020 Board of Trustees Meeting for Winooski Valley Park District

The meeting began at 4:30 PM.

Present: Sonja Schuyler (Jericho), John Nittler (Williston), Erin Dupuis (Winooski), Susan Gilfillan (Colchester) Nick Warner (WVPD Executive Director), Lauren Chicote (Programs Director)

Absent: David Crawford (South Burlington), Aaron Keech (Burlington), “To be Named” Essex Trustee.

Guests: Nick Fortin and Chris Saunders from Vermont Fish & Wildlife; Steve Stitzel

December Meeting Minutes at 4:35 PM: Minutes of the December 2019 meeting were reviewed and accepted by the board without change.

Public Comment Period at 4:40 PM: There was no Public present.

Agenda Changes at 4:40 PM: The following change to the Agenda were made: Review of EAHM/WVPD financial reports was tabled until the next meeting due to planned presentations from Vermont Fish and Wildlife and Steve Stitzel.

Presentation and discussion with Chris Saunders, Project Coordinator and Nick Fortin VT F&W regarding wildlife health and deer herd management at 4:40PM: Nick began the presentation discussing the overabundance of the deer population in Vermont due to a shift in public attitudes and awareness, reduced natural predation, and human land use changes. He mentioned that to maintain a stable population, the take must be around 30% of the herd per year and we are currently at about 10%. Herd size is growing in part since deer are edge species and prosper from the increase in the open land mosaic from agriculture expansion and residential construction, adding to the human/deer conflict in residential and farm areas.

He described the various problems caused by this unbalance to include ecological impacts of over grazing, stemming natural regeneration of our forests, including the aggravated impact of deer favoring native versus non-native species, the damage to farms, gardens and landscaping, and health and security issues including car accidents and the increase in the tick population.

Nick suggested that regulated hunting was about the only possible solution as birth control is not very effective and expensive. Chris then presented about the current status of hunting in the state. He presented that hunting is largely a cultural trait and that it is passed down through generations, especially in the rural areas. The main reasons for hunting include the provision of meat, the sport of it, and getting out into the woods to enjoy nature. Given increased urbanization and corresponding changes in attitudes and awareness, the number of hunters has been declining

and this trend is likely to continue reducing the 79,000 current hunters to approximately 35,000 over the next decade. This will have an economic impact as well as a further increase in the deer population.

Discussion with Steven Stitzel regarding Birch Tree Farm access road proposal at 5:20

PM: Mr. Stitzel has continued his efforts to gain Colchester town approval to subdivide his farm and donate 10 acres of land to the WVPD in exchange for shared use of the access road. He reported that he is moving to the next level and has determined three steps that he wants WVPD to consider:

- Using the mechanism of a “Boundary Line Adjustment” to increase the size of WVPD’s Colchester Pond property and reduce his farm size.
- Utilizing the Property Exchange Agreement (IRS Form 1031) considering that according to his valuation of both assets are comparable.
- Extending the easement from 700 feet to approximately 800 feet given that the town requires an adequate turn space after the entry way into his subdivided properties.

Upon conclusion of his presentation, the Trustees considered his proposals and unanimously voted to approve all three subject to further legal review by WVPD.

Updates on Jacob’s Parcel, Derway Cove, and Ethan Allen Homestead Museum (EAHM) at 6:10PM: WVPD Executive Director Nick Warner reported:

- The FEMA grant for Derway Cove is in the closeout process.
- A request has been made to REI for funding activities at Jacob’s Parcel given the proximity of the area to REI’s retail store.
- EAHM will be invited to the next WVPD meeting for a comprehensive update on their activities and plans.

Executive Sessions to discuss Real Estate and Personnel at 6:25PM.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Next Meeting: The date for the next meeting will be February 18, 2020 at 4:30 PM.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:

John Nittler: WVPD Trustee-Williston