



Winooski Valley Park District

Ethan Allen Homestead
Burlington, Vermont 05408

Tel: (802) 863-5744

info@wvdp.org

www.WVPD.org

Fax: (802) 865-0647



Minutes for April 6, 2020 Board of Trustees Emergency Meeting for Winooski Valley Park District

The meeting began at 4:32PM. Meeting was held via conference video call (Zoom) due to the current situation regarding the coronavirus, COVID-19. WVPD offices are closed until further notice.

Present via conference call: Sonja Schuyler (Jericho), John Nittler (Williston), Erin Dupuis (Winooski), Susan Gilfillan (Colchester) (joined late, 5:46pm), David Crawford (South Burlington), Aaron Keech (Burlington), Nick Warner (WVPD Executive Director), Lauren Chicote (WVPD Programs Director), Tim Larned (WVPD Park Superintendent), Remy Crettol (WVPD Project & Program Coordinator)

Absent: “To be Named” Essex Trustee.

Agenda Changes: No changes were made to the agenda.

Public Comment Period: Public comment period was verbally announced and time was allowed for any present public to announce presence. No public was present at the time.

Discussion of COVID-19 impacts and WVPD Policies: Nick Warner gave a reminder and update on how the WVPD has been handling the coronavirus, COVID-19, situation. WVPD offices and buildings have been closed since March 16, and all staff are working remotely. Nick also informed the board that WVPD has been working closely with and assisting the Burlington Forest Preschool and Ethan Allen Homestead Museum in navigating financial stimulus package opportunities to support each organization during this time. WVPD had previously hired, on a contractual basis, Brian Pine, to assist with exploring restructuring of the Education Center; his focus has now shifted to assisting the Preschool and Museum in applying for stimulus support. The Preschool qualifies for child care assistance support through the state and will be able to keep its staff and continue to pay rent. It should be noted that Aaron Keech (Burlington Trustee) and Tim Larned (WVPD Park Superintendent) both have children that attend the preschool. The Museum qualifies for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) – as loan to grant program for small business. Brian has been assisting the museum in the application process.

WVPD have been connecting with member town officials and their recreation departments to learn how each town is managing their operations, parks, trails, and open space. WVPD staff each gave an update on what they had found through communications with town staff and online searches. Most towns have shut down recreation facilities (courts, playgrounds, buildings, etc.) but are currently keeping open space parks and trails open. Nick also gave an update on his conversations with Cindi Wight and Dan Cahill from the City of Burlington, Aaron Frank from Town of Colchester, and Craig Whipple from Vermont State Parks. WVPD staff has last week

made the decision to potentially close WVPD parks – particularly the Ethan Allen Homestead and Colchester Pond – by the end of this current week. The City of Burlington were in line with the decision to close vehicle traffic to the Ethan Allen Homestead with keeping pedestrian and bike access open via the bike path. The Town of Colchester did not agree with the idea of closing Colchester Pond as it does not align with their current management of keeping parks open and would potentially put pressure on other town parks if closed. Vermont State Parks are currently remaining open and are looking for more guidelines from the State. WVPD is seeking guidance from the board on how to best manage our properties and advise on potential closure.

The board discussed at length the potential of closing down parks or keeping them open, along with the associated the ramifications and management challenges that would come with either scenario. The board discussed and debated how the parks provide our communities vital places of respite for both mental and physical health, with the fact that many of the parks – particularly the Ethan Allen Homestead and Colchester Pond – are getting heavily used which is causing issues around overcrowding, parking, and trail damage. With the increase use of some parks, maintaining physical/social distancing could become a challenge which could contribute to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A consensus was not reached, and it was decided that more information and guidance from that state that could potentially be coming over the next few days would help better inform a decision.

Dave Crawford made a motion to reconvene and continue the discussion on Wednesday evening after we receive more clarity from the state. The board will reconvene on Wednesday April 8th at 4:30pm to continue the discussion. John Nittler seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:04 PM.

Next Meeting: The date for the next meeting will be April 21, 2020 at 4:30 PM.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:

Lauren Chicote, Programs Director