



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 8, 2020 Board of Trustees Emergency Meeting for Winooski Valley Park District

The meeting began at 4:36PM. 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), 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)

Guests: Julie Hulburd, Colchester Select Board Member

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. Julie Hulburd announced herself as being present with the intention of listening in to conversation regarding possible closure of Colchester Pond. She asked a question to be answered during the board's discussion in regards to if the board does close the park, how will it be monitored and managed for compliance.

Discussion of COVID-19 impacts and WVPD Policies: Nick Warner gave an update on information received since last meeting. No new information had come from the state – Governor Phil Scott gave a press conference earlier in the day (April 8) explaining that more information will be announced on Friday (April 10) at another press conference in terms of extending the Stay Home order and any new guidelines being put forth. While WVPD staff were looking for potential recommendations from the state, they did have a few days to brainstorm and discuss ideas to present to the board. Staff also updated board on steps made over past few days to manage overcrowding at Colchester Pond, such as putting up more ‘no-parking on access road’ and a hand written sign at front of the park encouraging people to seek another location if parking lot is full. WVPD recommended the following:

- Closures should be park specific and not a blanket closure of all parks. This is due to visitation at each individual park and the ability for monitoring and managing closures at parks without caretakers or gate tenders. Most other WVPD park gates are currently closed from the winter and will remain closed for the time being. Gates typically open in late spring (end of April – May). WVPD looking for guidance on closing gates at the Ethan Allen Homestead and Colchester Pond.

- Closing the gate at the Ethan Allen Homestead and the park to vehicle traffic starting Friday after the Governors address. Access via the bike path for bikers and pedestrians would remain available. Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront staff are in alignment with this decision, if made by board, as it aids in the management decisions they have put in place in regards to the community gardens (currently closed until at least April 17) and does not shut down a portion of the bike path that the City owns and maintains.
- Discuss situation at Colchester Pond and provide guidance, as well as permission to ask Colchester Selectboard to discuss give advisory on how to manage the overcrowding issues while still keeping the park open.

Julie Hulburd was asked if the Colchester Selectboard would be open to discussing this at the next Selectboard meeting. Julie said she would ask the Selectboard chair if it could be put on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled for Tuesday April 14. Susan Gilfillan noted that if this was offered to Colchester it should also be offered all other member towns.

Board discussed at length the recommendations and the pros and cons of keeping parks open, instating a blanket policy vs. a park-by-park policy, and the various ways the ‘Stay Home, Stay Safe’ order can and is being interpreted.

Susan Gilfillan made the motion to keep the park gates open; post signage throughout the Ethan Allen Homestead and Colchester Pond with language and guidance to ‘Help Keep the Park Open’ and information that if guidelines are not maintained by park users parks could close; approach Burlington City Council and Colchester Selectboard to discuss and provide feedback regarding future closing at Ethan Allen Homestead and Colchester Pond and for Nick to follow up with other member towns for input on guidance for potential closures. Motion was seconded by Dave Crawford and passed unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:35 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