

Vermont Horse Council Annual Meeting held at  
Stone Grill Restaurant in Morrisville, Vermont  
on March 16, 2014

Meeting called to order by president, Patricia Branon at 1:37 pm. Secretary report accepted as printed in the newsletter, motion made by Heidi Krantz, seconded by Morris Lasell. Treasurer report tabled at this time until the report can be printed with all expenses showing. Motion made by Heidi Krantz, seconded by Mary Gilman.

Membership report: currently have 4 new members since the last meeting. No discussion. No membership reports handed out at this time.

Horse Person of the year: President Patricia Branon read nomination letter and presented the Horse Person of the year Plaque to Ilene Douglas who gave a speech of thanks.

Guest Speaker: Doug Morin from Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife. Spoke about land the state owns and how horse back riding can be implemented into the plan. Doug works on state owned property, 50% of which is in the Northeast Kingdom, called the St. Johnsbury district. There are a variety of uses including hunting, fishing and trapping, hiking, snowmobiling, and horseback riding. For rules governing recreational uses and how to designate the area for it go to Victory wildlife website. (<http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra/>)

For horse trails that are approved google ANR Vermont natural resources atlas

The NEKET map new rule: Private roads needs to be designated. Town roads are governed by the town while life road are untouchable. Any new plans have to follow the new rule.

NEKET can use dirt roads and camp sites. These are the most extensive horse trails that the fish and wildlife have in the state. There are also some horseback riding approved trails in the Plymouth area. There is a legal contract coming up for renewal. Doug Morin and Patricia Branon are going to talk about that later.

Ancient roads bill: if the town throws up the 4th class road, the right of ways would revert to the current land owner. Doug encourages you to contact your town to designate it as a 'trail' if not a 4th class road.

If you have questions/suggestions/concerns, his contact information is:

Doug Morin, wildlife biologist/state land planner

[Doug.morin@state.vt.us](mailto:Doug.morin@state.vt.us)

802-751-0621

Ken Hoepfner spoke about the VHC NEKET map (former Champion lands) and asked if someone would send Doug a copy of our map so he could see the trails we are promoting. Vickie Smith noted that horse

back riding and motorized vehicles are lumped together. Should horseback riding and hiking be together instead? Doug explained some terms in 'wildlife uses' and 'non wildlife uses'.

The process to propose a change:

1. Long rang plan – management plan (every 10 years). This is the best time to make a change for hose back riding.
2. Stewardship team – in between the 1st and the 10th year of changes
3. State Forest & Parks.

FYI: Lou Bushy is the Forest Parks and Recreations contact state wide. Doug is Fish and Wildlife at the Federal level.

Ilene asked if the NEKET trails were funded by Pitman Robertson funds? Doug was informed that the Federal Government is lightening up on horseback riding at the Federal level. Discussion regarding increased access in places it makes sense with Vermont Horse Council and the Fish & Wildlife department making decisions regarding that together.

Plum Creek: The Agency of Natural Resources is in charge of it. Currently only 10 miles out of the 88,000 acres are approved horseback riding trails in Plum Creek. Doug offered to ride a horse on the trails with Patricia to discuss access to more trails.

The last step is when the commissioner signs off on any changes VHC has.

Morris mentioned that draft animals are used to pull out game animals. Draft horses were doing logging and invasive species became a problem for the Fish & Wildlife Department. Generally, F&G is fine with horseback riding. But, horseback riding could conflict with other users for safety sake. User conflict issues could be monitored. The major problem is with the people littering and make-shift tie stalls, etc.

Bill Moore of the Farm Bureau spoke. He's a mule owner and said that a good time to push for wide open access for everyone is right now.

After the guest speaker wrapped up, Dr. Betsy Greene was recognized for her work on the PSA and presented a certificate of appreciation by President Patricia Branon. Betsy reported that 20 television stations in 8 states are using the PSA. Windsor County started using it right after the Rutland horse/vehicle accident. Iowa, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Utah, Ohio, Michigan, and Washington are also using it. With over 16,000 hits on YouTube, it ranked within the top 10 International video awards and was the National Video Communications winner.

Safety: Morris reported that a PSA suitable for radio stations was being worked on. Also, we plan to order more safety vests for the Everything Equine weekend as soon as Heidi gets the count from Carmel of what we still have and the board decides what sizes and how many should be ordered.

Tunbridge ride: the ride this year is being held September 19th, 20th, and 21st, 2014.

Equine Emergency: Marta Merrick asked what the procedure is for asking/receiving money. The board approves any requests for money. It is purely the boards' decision. Marta asked if a token amount would be considered for the relinquishment and recovery of seized horses.

Newsletter: no report

American Horse council: Ilene Douglas reported that the AHC directory is here and she passed it around. She asked that we go on line if we have any questions on the bills going into congress. The soring bill is on the list. The American Horse Council annual meeting is June 21-25 2014 in Washington D.C. The Coalition of State Horse Councils meet the Sunday of the annual meeting and they report on issues in each individual state. Ilene recommends any and all of us attend. And, on the last day of the meeting, you can go into the White House.

NEKET: Ilene Douglas asked to still be on the committee. No report on the annual NEKET ride.

Website: Lynn Knight reported that a lot of work was done and will continue to be done. She created a spreadsheet with changes done and when the requests were made and the work was done. She sees no problems working with EquineSite. She is considering re-doing our website in a new technology so that she can make the changes herself. The new technology will cost \$450 plus \$25.95 per month maintenance fee. With that \$450 we get 6 months additional support for free and can put up a photo gallery and a members only section.

Riding & Driving: Brenda Lasell reported there is one new member, Phyllis Civitello. Karen Rosemark currently has 237 1/2 hours and Diane Kane has 146 hours.

Scholarship: 4-H/Youth: Morris reported that the fund needs \$1,000 from the general fund to send kids to camp. Motion was made by Morris and Seconded by Betsy Greene. All Approved.

A scholarship application was sent to Lynn Beebe so someone needs to get her name and contact information off the form as soon as possible.

Trail Maintenance Fund: Morris reported there have been no applications for the last couple of years. Marta Merrick asked if we could use that money to go towards NEKET.

Facebook: Doug Smith reported that Facebook is open to VHC members. Carmel Stone and he monitor/maintain the page. The Extreme Trail announcement gets a lot of reaches and we could 'boost' it for an additional \$5.00. Discussion ensued it was decided the extra money was not worth it. So instead, Doug suggested everyone who gets the announcement like and share it on their page.

Groton State Park: Vickie Smith spoke to Jeanette Cole and there are 25 miles of trails we can ride on at Groton. Brenda spoke about how rocks were being moved and Groton was getting organized. There is a

map of multi-use trails available at the Nature Center. The multi-use trails include horses. At the 10 year summit group plan, increased access and strengthening partnership were included in the vision statement. Jessica Savage is the contact person at the Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation (802-249-1230 or [jessica.savage@state.vt.us](mailto:jessica.savage@state.vt.us)). Discussion regarding the committee 'chair' ensued. Phyllis Civitello and Meg Costello, with the help of Brenda Lasell is the committee.

Suggested organizations to help in the Groton area were VERDA (Vermont Equine Riding & Driving Association (<http://www.verda.org/>) and VYCC (Vermont Youth Conservation Corp. (<http://www.vycc.org/>) groups.

Farm Bureau: Bev McMullin stressed that there are many benefits to joining the Farm Bureau. Nationwide insurance for home and auto (7% discount), 20% discount on Choice Hotels, and quarterly 'Fences' magazine. Bev introduced Bill Moore as the Legislative Director and County Coordinator for Farm Bureau.

Bill talked about the water quality bill. Betsy Green talked about the H202 tax bill H. 202, the Equine equality (bill H. 202, the Equine equality bill). Chittenden County worked with House 202 to use one definition of farming to include equine facilities, cheese making etc. Horses belong in current use so the tax department could not disclude horse owner who it into current use for tax purposes. Bill describes the bill as a barn salvage bill. You can't keep land open without the barn and Keeping people working on open land. It was determined the bill is going nowhere this year.

If you can, contact Bobby Star but don't talk about horses when you talk about the bill. Betsy suggested you fill out the survey concerning current use. Betsy will get the link to the survey to Lynn Knight who will put it on the VHC website. The tax department chose only certain farms to send the survey to.

The H586 bill (water quality bill) or small farm bill. Bill asked that you talk to your legislators. If you have livestock, this bill affects you. It is a real mess. It has created complicated piles of work at the Ag agency. It scares the Heck out of small farmers and it does not add staff to the Agency of Agriculture. The Farm Bureau wants the bill to stay at the Agency of Ag. Not Agency of Natural Resources. Email your legislators asking them to slow down, think, and listen to our concerns.

For information regarding these 2 issues go to: <http://www.vtfb.org/vermont-farm-bureau-legislative-priorities.html>

2014 Everything Equine: Doug Smith reported that the planning process for the Extreme Trail Challenge is complete. The theme is "Pony Express". T-shirts are being made up, the timer is being ordered, and Tim Stone is doing most of the obstacle construction. There are 18 different obstacles. They need more participants by April 12th. There will be a booklet made up with the participants for advertisement. Rick Vanderploeg is in charge of organizing the gifts ([rvander@us.ibm.com](mailto:rvander@us.ibm.com)). On April 11th Everything Equine will be on Across the Fence (a UVM produced 15 minute farm and home television show). Betsy and Doug will be taping that day. Air time will be the following Friday at 12:10 on WCAX. Judges and Announcer gifts will be thank you cards with \$50 cash inside. Motion made by Terry Rose for \$150 for thank yous. Seconded by Brenda Lasell.

Bev McMullin asked if we could please require all riders of the trail challenge wear helmets. We, as VHC members should live up to our reputation for safety and require all competitors wear helmets. Brenda Lasell agrees with Bev. The public is coming and watching people ride. Helmets should be worn. Marta Merrick said that we want riders to come in and we could announce how we feel about helmets. Betsy said we could say we 'encourage all riders wear helmets'. Doug said it's too late for this year. We will 'turn off' a lot of riders. We could do a survey next year. Vickie Smith spoke and said the Champlain Valley Expo sends out the packets. We are going to have to involve them as well. Betsy Greene thought there would be no problem requiring helmets. Right now if you are over 18 you sign a waiver. Mary Gilman said it is going to kill a lot of entries. She wishes all clubs would have helmet use. This is a Western discipline event and helmets are not part of the outfit. Ilene Douglas said that Libby Liman requires helmets at her trail challenge clinics. Patricia Branon said that In a Western Pleasure class a helmet does not make sense. Betsy recommended we say VHC recommends but does not require helmet use for riders of 18. There could be bonus points at the trail challenge for a properly fitted helmet. More discussion ensued about the VHC limited liability insurance and directors and officers insurance or an errors and emissions line in our policy.

#### Old Business:

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. Heidi Krantz reported that the East end construction from Morrisville to Cambridge has bids going out. Fund raising is in full bloom. Please get involved with trail heads. Wolcott was informed that it may need to go through Act 250 to get a trail head. There is a 93 mile long trail. They need people to get involved with communities along the way. They need money for trail amenities for horseback riders. Talk was made about loops or point to point riding or riding out and back. Marta asked if Trail Maintenance Fund money could be used for LVRT?

PSA- Meg reported that for various reasons, this project has stalled but after today's meeting they are moving forward.

By-Laws changes: Morris asked that the Directors terms change because at some point all 3 directors' positions would need to be filled at the same time. So, we would like to change the 1 year to a 3 year and next year change the 2 year to a 3 year term. In the end all 3 would be 3 year terms. Morris made the motion, Ken Hoepfner seconded.

Lynn Kniht brought up the fact that there are standing committees identified in the by-laws that do not currently exist. The BOD needs to either set those committees up as standing committees or remove them from the bylaws. She also asked how do we remove an officer if they are not suitable? Ken Hoepfner answered by saying VHC uses Roberts Rules of order and there is a policy for that. Another committee is being formed for By-Laws and they will be re-worked by Lynn Knight, Morris Lasell, Vickie Smith and Marta Merrick. Betsy made the motion, seconded by Doug Smith.

#### Nomination and Election of Officers:

The Nominating Committee presented slate of officers as:

Patricia Branon – President

Meg Costello – Vice President

Terry Rose – Secretary

Martha Benoit – Treasurer

Moved to close by Betsy Green, seconded by Ilene Douglas

Secretary cast one ballot for all of the above.

Nomination Committee presented both Heidi Krantz and Ken Hoeppner for a 3 year term as Director.

Heidi and Ken spoke about their involvement with VHC and a paper ballot was done.

Heidi won with a vote of 19. Ken had 11 votes.

Next meeting date to be determined.

Motion made to adjourn the meeting by Ilene Douglas, seconded by Betsy Greene

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm

Respectfully submitted by Terry Rose, Secretary

## **Vermont Horse Council Annual Meeting Website Report**

### **Lynn Knight, VHC website coordinator**

Lynn Knight took over administering the VHC website in February, 2014. After an initial review of the website's condition, she realized that the site needs significant work for the following reasons:

1. Many pages are out of date with old information.
2. Many "bad" (or dead) links exist on the current site.
3. It appears that the original architecture has "morphed" over time so that it is no longer clear what information was on what page.
4. No documentation existed that explained what changes were done, nor when or why they were done, hence all information needs a thorough review.

There had been concern expressed regarding the timeliness of changes being made in the past. It had been suggested that part of the reason may have been due to a response lag between when the changes were requested to the hosting company Equinesite, and when the changes had actually been implemented.

Therefore, because of the above issues, Lynn created a spreadsheet that documented the requested changes, where they needed to be made, what needed to be made, when (date) the request was made, and when (date) the change was made by Equinesite. The changes and requests to date are listed in the table below. Based on Lynn's experience and as documented in the table below, she has not had any issues with a lag of time between when she made request to Equinesite and when the changes were completed. All changes were made in a timely manner. The only issue has been that more changes are needed than what can be completed in the 1 hour a month timeframe allowed in the existing contract.

Lynn has presented a recommendation to update the site to newer technology (Joomla) to the board of directors. The recommendation is summarized below:

#### **Summary of Proposal to Update VHC Website:**

Lynn recommends that VHC upgrades the webpage from the obsolete Frontpage/standard HTML format to Joomla technology.

Equinesite will design and set up the site, while we (Lynn and any volunteers) can enter all our own content to cut the cost. Equinesite will create the custom design, set up the structure and navigation, put modules and plug-ins in place and give VHC 6 months of support. Most of the sites that Equinesite had created using Joomla are maintained by users with no web design experience. We could update as much as we want, and as often as we want and not need to worry about additional charges.

The actual cost for this updating is \$450 (non-profit rate) based on the current size/navigation of our site. Joomla site hosting drops down to \$25.95 month, and that includes our promotion on EquineSite.

The **advantages** to updating to Joomla are:

1. The current site needs significant review and updating for bad links, old contact and other information, and assurance that the correct information resides in the correct place. This can all be done while updating to the new site architecture.
2. We can update the information on the site ourselves at any time at no extra cost (hence it will be cheaper in the long run).
3. One need not have web experience in order to update the site. This means that anyone in the future can take over the website responsibilities and need not be an “expert” to keep it up.
4. Time between requests for changes and when the site can be updated with new information will be decreased because there will be no need to “bundle” requests, nor will we need to rely on Equinesite to make the changes.
5. The site will have a new, updated look and be much more flexible for changes in the future.
6. The new site will have much more capability to add content, such as a photo gallery or a “member’s only” section.
7. We will receive 6 months of support once the new site is running at no additional cost.
8. The monthly hosting cost will decrease from \$40 to \$25.95

The **disadvantages** to updating the site are:

1. We will need to carefully consider what we want in the new site, which will take work and a fair amount of feedback from the board and others, and my time. (but honestly this needs to be done with the current site too due to the poor current condition of the site).
2. It will cost \$450 for the initial set up. (but VHC will likely need to allocate at LEAST this amount to simply update the existing site to assure that the information on the site is current, above and beyond the monthly changes. This amounts to only about 6 hours of Louisa’s time at \$75/hour. We will easily eat up that time just in her time updating the existing site! Plus we will still be using obsolete technology if we keep the old site architecture)

**Change Requests Lynn made to Equinesite:**

REQUEST Number	DATE OF REQUEST	Prior-ity	Page	URL	Current	Requested Change
2014-1	2/5/2014	1	Home page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/index.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/index.html</a>	Annual meeting date incorrect currently March 9, 1914	Change to March 16, 2014
2014-2	2/5/2014	1	News page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/news.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/news.html</a>	Annual meeting date incorrect currently March 9, 1915	Change to March 16, 2014
2014-3	2/5/2014	1	Minutes page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/minutes.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/minutes.html</a>	Dec/13 minutes last	add Feb-14 newsletter
2014-4	2/10/2014	1	Home page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/index.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/index.html</a>		1 - Move Annual meeting notice to top, add warning information in new notice: (NEW_WARNING_OF_ANNUAL_MEETING_2014.pdf) 2 - put mission statement directly below that. 3 - move PSA under Mission Statement
2014-5	2/10/2014	1	News page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/news.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/news.html</a>	1 - Old Everything Equine stuff 2 - Farm show raffle stuff? This year or last?	1 - Remove old (2013 stuff - be specific), put in new info.:Put VHC annual meeting on top, New everything equine and forms next: Extreme Trail 2014 Instructions and Map.pdf, then Farm show info in: Farm Show 2014.docx, add pictures (get from last newsletter) 2 - rearrange so that the High Visibility is on bottom. 3 - add "Facebook" graphic and link, 4 remove 2013 Farm Bureau Horse Farm of Distinction info
2014-6	2/10/2014	1	Calendar page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/events.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/events.html</a>	2013 calendar	1 - remove NE Carriage Assoc. info. 2 - Remove 2013 Calendar. 3 - Add 2014 Calendar.
2014-7	2/10/2014	1	Committees page	<a href="http://vthorsecouncil.org/committees.html">http://vthorsecouncil.org/committees.html</a>	2013 Membership form	Update with 2014 Membership form: MembershipForm 2014.pdf

REQUEST Number	DATE OF REQUEST	Prior-ity	Page	URL	Current	Requested Change
2014-8	2/10/2014	2	POP acct		one account included with website is not set up or used	create "info@vthorsecouncil.org" POP acct.
2014-9	2/10/2014	2	Alias accounts?	http://www.vthorsecouncil.org/contacts.html	no alias accounts	1 - Create Lynn.Knight@vthorsecouncil.org alias. Link to edelweissfarm@yahoo.com email address. 2 - Change website contact to: Lynn Knight 94 Sand Hill Rd, Milton, VT 05468, NO PHONE NUMBER, Lynn.Knight@vthorsecouncil.org 3 – Remove “Vermont Trails and Greenways Council:”
2014-10	2/21/2014	1	Calendar page	http://vthorsecouncil.org/events.html	2014 calendar	Add updated 2014 Calendar with new information
2014-11	3/6/2014	1	Contacts Page	http://vthorsecouncil.org/contacts.html	Karen Blow's contact info incorrect	1 - Remove home phone number: 479-2448 (they no longer have a land line). 2 - her correct address is 26 Highland Crofts Rd. (not 29)
2014-12	3/13/2014	1	Calendar page	http://vthorsecouncil.org/events.html	2014 calendar	Add updated 2014 Calendar with events highlighted in yellow (for ease to identify new events, please do highlight on web page!) Also, link the 3 pdf files for the tack sale to the corresponding files named in the text (under the contact Mary Fay)

**Note:** We can create unlimited number of alias accounts. Emails will go to addresses assigned to each alias. Example: "Lynn.Knight@edelweissfarm@yahoo.com) without publically identifying my personal email address.