



VERMONT HORSE COUNCIL BOD & MEMBERSHIP MEETING
October 10, 2023 MINUTES
(VIA ZOOM)

A meeting of the Vermont Horse Council was called to order by President, Mikayla Pick at 7:05 pm. Present on the Zoom call were: Carla Quandel (member and BOD candidate), Kelli McArdle (member and BOD candidate), Chel Brewster (member and BOD candidate), Jennifer Kennett (member and BOD candidate), (Monica Raymond (BOD), Kerrie Garvey (BOD), Mikayla Pick (President), (BOD), Lisa LaFont (BOD), Robin Severy (BOD) and Jeannette Cole (Secretary/Treasurer).

Absent from the meeting were BOD members, Jean Audet , and Jim Robinson

Mikayla welcomed the BOD candidates. Each current and prospective BOD member did a short introduction.

Treasurer's Report – Checking Account = \$11525.77; Savings Account = \$8290.08 Expenditures for the month included: \$240 VT Greenways Symposium for Jim Robinson attendance, \$36 Square Space hosting, \$737 for Liability Insurance (2023-2024), \$607 D&O Insurance (2023-2024), \$350 AHC annual dues. Treasurer's report was unanimously accepted.

Secretary Report – Minutes from the August 7, 2023, were read. Correction for typo for 501-c3, inquiry regarding VHC 50th anniversary for 2024 (check incorporation date) and a request to include titles and absent officers in future minutes. Minutes were unanimously approved with noted corrections.

TRAILS

Vermont Greenways Symposium – a summary of the event was given by Lisa LaFont who attended as a volunteer. Jim Robinson was absent, so no other information was available.

A written committee report was submitted by Monica Raymond as follows:

- The summer of 2023 has been particularly difficult for trail riders (not to mention for people who live in flood zones, businesses, and farmers) due to the extreme flooding events in July. This resulted in washed-out trails, muddy trails, and other trail damage.
- Willoughby State Forest: Lisa Lafont and Jim Nickerson drafted several documents for the public comment session for requesting equine access to trails in WSF. Committee members provided comments and Kerrie Garvey worked with Jim and Lisa to update the map to reflect the proposed trails and campsite. We also heard from Luke O'Brien at FPR that two pull-offs on the CCC road have been widened and improved to allow for trailer parking.
- Groton State Forest: we learned that there were 230 horse camping nights at New Discovery State Park in 2022. We reached out to FPR regarding the need for sand in the corrals but are waiting to hear back.
- Victory: Dog River had to cancel their annual ride due to wet trail conditions. There were some communication issues with the club that we are trying to sort out.
- Riding clubs: there is a desire for us to build relationships with riding clubs in the state and will be working on this over the next year.
- Vermont Trails and Greenways: Jim Robinson and Lisa Lafont attended the Vermont Conference on Recreation + Trails Symposium in Killington on Sept 27-28.
- Grants: the committee is planning to develop a list of grant opportunities with application deadlines to take advantage of all opportunities.

- Trail maintenance: Jeannette Cole attended a webinar sponsored by American Trails, titled “Got Mud: Tackling Mud and Erosion on Equestrian Trails.”
- Silver Lake: activities have been hampered by compromised trail conditions due to the wet summer.
- Website: committee members contributed content to the new website.
- Kingsland Bay: Monica Raymond assisted a member with new restrictions on equine use of Kingsland Bay State Park. Horses have been using these trails – unofficially – for many years. We are working with Kelli McArdle to submit a request to FPR for equine access to these trails.
- Monica Raymond and Mikayla Pick attended an Equine Technical Rescue course put on by the Massachusetts SPCA at Tomten Farm in NH.

NEKET – Jeannette and Lisa were not able to complete the DR mowing of the Island Pond property due to rainy weather. Lisa is getting a quote for a private company to do the work.

SILVER LAKE – Nothing new to report

WILLOUGHBY – Lisa and Jim met with Luke O’Brien to review the slide presentation for expanding equestrian access. Unfortunately, the internet was down at the state offices and the task could not be completed. Rescheduled presentation for early November. Date to present to Stewardship Committee is 1 pm, November 13 at the state offices in St. Johnsbury.

COOLIDGE – Nothing new to report

GROTON – nothing new to report.

EXECUTIVE

- We reviewed files to be dropped in “google drive”. No new files were added.
- The November 4th BOD retreat has been rescheduled to November 18, because the Monkton space was not available.
- The BOD briefly discussed the resignation letter from Jim Robinson. All agree this is a disappointment. Monica will reach out to him to solicit feedback about his decision. We agreed to accept his resignation.

LEGISLATIVE

VHC goals for the Farm Bureau relationship were reviewed.

1. Maintain relationship with the Farm Bureau to assure equine voice is included in the organization’s discussions and priorities.
2. Continue work with Farm Bureau/legislators to obtain agricultural status for equine farms within the state
3. Continue to assure equine owners are aware of pending legislation that would affect their operations and their recreational opportunities.
4. Maintain connection and presence with legislators through periodic face to face contact during 2024.
5. Act as a liaison with Farm Bureau, state legislators and the American Horse Council on matters affecting equine businesses and owners within the state.

EDUCATIONAL/EVENTS

- Decision to support an Equine Business Summit for 2024 was made. Heidi will lead but she needs the active support of the VHC board to make this a reality.
- Decision to support a plan for 50th anniversary event(s) in 2024 was tabled, because we think the anniversary is not until 2025 (VHC incorporated in 1975?).

MARKETING/MEDIA

- Website design upgrade is ongoing. Launch date has been moved to November.

OTHER BUSINESS

- December 12 next membership/BOD meeting via zoom
- List of grant opportunities is being developed and documented by Monica.

- Lisa is working on setting up a meeting with the Lunenburg/Caledonia snow machine clubs to discuss the trail maps and maintenance on the Victory and Island Pond trails.

Next meeting for the BOD will be the in person retreat in Monkton from 10 am to 3 pm on November 18. Potluck lunch.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeannette Cole, VHC Secretary/Treasurer