



Vermont Horse Council Board of Directors Retreat
November 1, 2025
10:00am Monkton Town Hall

Attending in Person: Jeannette Cole (P), Michelle Brewster (VP), Emma O'Neill (S), Monica Raymond (BOD), Kerrie Garvey (BOD), Lisa Lafont (BOD)

Attending via Zoom: Mikayla Pick (T), Laurie Baird (BOD), Robin Severy (BOD), Heidi Krantz (M)

Absent: Linsey Williams (BOD)

Agenda:

10:06am - Call to Order - Jeannette

10:10am - Secretary Report - Emma

- Meeting minutes from September 9, 2025, were approved with the following corrections:
 - Change Nick Puto to Nick Caputo

10:12am - Treasurer Report and Insurance Update - Mikayla

- Current balances as of the meeting:
 - Checking account: \$16,757.51
 - Savings account: \$8,333.46
- Mikayla has spoken to Leann (Monica's recommendation), but they have asked for a loss run report (information on past claims and policy) from our previous insurer. Hallmark (interim insurer) has been non-responsive to Mikayla's requests for this. Mikayla is waiting to hear back from Leann about this issue.
- Mikayla will look into Heidi's recommendation and ask a few other clubs about who they are now using (Dog River, Midstate, etc.). Jeannette will also check in with Verda from GMHA.
- The savings account is a normal bank account that has funds allocated for each individual committee. Nancy keeps track of each of these through QuickBooks. Jeannette will reach out to see what the current breakdown looks like.
- Discussion about putting savings into a CD, high interest savings account, or a money market account instead. A CD would lock in, making it harder to access funds when needed. Mikayla will think about this issue further and look into NSB's option for other types of savings accounts.
- Mikayla has one more year of her term, but is willing to hand over the reins sooner if anyone else is interested in becoming treasurer. Kerrie will ask her acquaintance (Ryan), who is an accountant, if he would have any interest in taking over in the future. Linsey is also a professional accountant.

- Financials accepted as presented.

Old Business

10:27am - 2025 Goal Scorecard Review - All

- Completed Goals (Green):
 - Maintain VHC communication/engagement through updates to the VHC website, periodic emails, member-only and general Facebook postings.
 - Facebook recently eliminated the group page live chat feature, which may push other posts down further on the members-only page.
 - Jeannette will make a post about the drought survey on the website.
 - Start to make more of an effort to highlight VHC posts and activities on our personal Facebook pages to hopefully get more people interested in becoming members
 - Produce quarterly VHC individual member newsletter (March, June, Sept, Dec).
 - Issues with Mailchimp formatting Word docs, PDFs, and photos into the newsletter.
 - Discussion about switching to a new platform to allow for better formatting, while also still having good analytics - Brevo.
 - Complete a trail work day for NEK trails.
 - Determine and implement Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) equestrian trail to utilize \$10,000 USDA grant.
 - Continue pursuing parking lot funding (RTP Grant) for Mobbs Farm.
 - This goal was completed, but we did not receive the specific funding for the parking lot.
 - Assure equine voice is present within Vermont Greenways organization.
 - Maintain members' benefit private property trail access program.
 - Conduct an equine educational event per quarter, which in part supports VHC 50th Anniversary Celebration.
 - Winter – Annual meeting – Equine Gut Health;
 - Spring – Equine Spring Fling (50th Anniversary Celebration)
 - Develop a plan to gather necessary data to support equine agricultural status bill by end of Q1
 - Implement Equine Agricultural Status plan so bill is introduced into the 2025 legislative agenda
 - Solicit and train new board members and officers to assure long term viability of VHC.
 - Assure VHC financial viability through fundraising, donations, and membership growth.
 - Jeannette will do a recap of all of the donations received this year for the Q4 newsletter.
 - Continue active involvement in the American Horse Council and Coalition of State Horse Councils.
 - Assure BOD/membership meetings are held every month throughout the year with minutes reported on the VHC webpage.
 - Assure proper 501-3C and SAM filing are completed on time.
 - Assure financial documents meet all state and federal requirements.
 - Can be found in the shared drive.

- In Progress Goals (Yellow):
 - Q1 Conduct a membership survey to solicit feedback on VHC Website; Determine Website improvement plan from survey and implement improvements Q2; Q4 review website analytics for 2025 to determine effectiveness of improvements.
 - Jeannette to send everyone a copy of the survey feedback/analytics.
 - The “technology committee” - Jeannette, Paul, and Carla meet every month via Zoom to go over website information. Monica and Michelle are interested in joining these meetings.
 - Complete equestrian trails marking and parking lot design for Willoughby State Forest (WSF).
 - Assure proper liability and D&O insurance is obtained in a timely fashion.
 - D&O has been obtained, but without proper liability insurance, we can’t host any events.
- Uncompleted Goals (Red):
 - Complete a "soft opening event" or a grand opening event for WSF.
 - Complete a "soft opening event" or a grand opening event for NEK trails.
 - Map at least one equestrian trail loop for Coolidge State Park.
 - Update website information for equine camping at Coolidge State Park.
 - Host a business networking event for VHC business members.
 - Conduct an equine educational event per quarter, which in part supports VHC 50th Anniversary Celebration.
 - Summer – Marsh Billings Ride&Drive (50th Anniversary Celebration); Trailer Backing 2.0
 - Fall – Coolidge Historic Site Ride&Drive (50th Anniversary Celebration); AHC Webinar (TBD)

New Business

10:52am - Upcoming Election - Jeannette + Michelle

- New 2026 Election Candidates
 - President (2-year term) - Michelle
 - Vice President (1-year term) - Jeannette
 - Secretary (1-year term) - Emma
 - Director #1 (3-year term) - ? (Carla’s former position)
 - Director #2 (3-year term) - Robin?
- Returning 2026 Board Members
 - Treasurer - Mikayla (1 year left - 2026)
 - Mikayla is willing to step down sooner (see above).
 - Director #3 - Linsey (1 year left - 2026)
 - Director #4 - Laurie (1 year left - 2026)
 - Director #5 - Lisa (2 years left - 2027)
 - Lisa is willing to step down sooner to allow someone who may be interested in serving in an executive position to join.
 - Director #6 - Monica (2 years left - 2027)
 - Director #7 - Kerrie (2 years left - 2027)
- Vermont state law and our new bylaws dictate that executive positions must be filled by someone currently serving in a BoD position to protect the sanctity of the organization.

- Michelle will reach out to Robin about her interest in staying on the board or managing memberships only. Michelle will also reach out to another contact that might be interested in serving on the board.
- Emma will finalize the member warning notice after the December meeting and make sure it is sent out/posted 25 days before the annual meeting.

11:10am - Trail Committee 2026 Goals - Monica

- For 2025 updates and achievements, see the link below.
- Willoughby State Forest
 - Finish the map - Kerrie, Lisa, Luke
 - Grand opening event
 - Get info on the website
 - Complete signage
- Moosalamoo (GMNF)
 - Map existing trails
 - Get more info about potentially accessible trails
 - Complete work on the two campground driveways to make them safer for trailers
 - Both campgrounds are currently open to equine use, but require some maintenance work.
- Victory State Forest
 - Continue conversations with Orleans County Fairgrounds about overnight camping
 - Complete more trail mapping
 - Figure out what trails will actually be accessible (conversation with Luke)
 - Get trails on E911 site (with Luke)
- Mobbs Farm in Jericho
 - Continue looking for grant opportunities
- Jericho Research Forest
 - Get final grant approval
 - Get a bridge loan
 - Complete trail repair
 - Investigate/talk with Juniper Knoll (Becca) about potential parking and trail use (member-only benefit?)
- Gravel Road Riding
 - Continue gathering information for mud and hunting season alternatives
 - Update the website
- Merck Forest
 - No goals
- Little River State Park
 - No goals
- Member Trails
 - Promote current member benefits more
 - Look into the private land near Mikayla
 - Currently used by an ATV group (Maybe Bethel ATV Club - Laurie is a member)
 - Mikayla will send Monica a map pin to look into it further
- Legislation
 - Keep an eye out for any legislation that might impact trail usage
- Heritage Lands

- Reclaim the parking lot
- Repair bridge (with Polar Bears)

11:44am - Break for Lunch - All

12:18pm - Legislative Committee Update and Goals - Heidi

- Heidi and Mindy have been speaking with Maggie Lenz (horse person/registered lobbyist), and she has been very impressed with all of the work VHC has done on equitable taxation and equine industry recognition.
- VT Chamber of Commerce is interested in working with us, but it might be worth considering starting a separate organization as a 501c4.
 - This organization would be able to raise money and lobby specifically for equestrian interests.
 - It would be a completely different organization from VHC, but could still work closely together.
 - Heidi has reached out to the VT Law School for help on this and will be looking into other state horse councils that have done this.
 - Action would need to be taken soon.
 - Maggie is willing to help with the fundraising and getting this plan together for \$15,000 (can be paid in phases).
 - Donations to this organization could be tax-deductible (and retroactive once approval is granted).
- 2026 Goals
 - Continue learning more about the legislative process for equestrian purposes
 - Continue conversations with Maggie and the VT Chamber of Commerce
 - Continue building relationships with legislators, state officials, other organizations, etc.
 - Place more emphasis on reaching out to people in our personal networks in the coming months.
 - Get VT statutes changed to cover the definition of agriculture to include the diverse ways equine businesses bring in revenue and address equine business tax inequities.
- Maintaining current relationship with VT Farm Bureau, but not relying on them to make VHC and equestrian equity goals a priority. Instead, focus more on getting the work done ourselves versus pushing the relationship to do more.
- If any bill that is proposed doesn't make it to "cross over", that does not mean the bill is dead. There is a "back door" that would allow it to be attached to a different, but related, bill and be moved forward that way.

12:40pm - Membership and Marketing Committee Goals - Michelle

- Membership Goals
 - Review individual/business membership audit
 - Reach out to members who did not renew their membership this year, especially those who signed up at the 2024 Equine Industry Summit.
 - Review business membership tiers and changes made before Carla resigned
 - Define what membership dues bring to members (dues vs. donations) and look for ways to grow membership
 - Engage and encourage current members to be more active in VHC activities

- Marketing Goals
 - Develop a clear and concise marketing plan
 - Switch from Mailchimp to Brevo for newsletters
 - Much more Canva-friendly
 - Monica will work on creating one VHC Canva account with a shared username and password
 - Continue posting on public and members-only Facebook pages
 - Continue posting and updating the VHC website
 - Create a VHC account on Jotform platform
 - Can be used for taking payments, surveys, entry forms, medical documents, legally binding signatures, document storage, etc.
 - Can be used for the legislative survey that Kerrie made
 - May allow us to move away from Donorbox
 - Nonprofit rates are half the normal subscription rates
 - Motion approved to subscribe to Jotform on the annual Silver Level for the non-profit rate of \$234.
 - Jeannette will work on setting this up.

1:03pm - Safety Committee - Jeannette

- The safety committee has been inactive since Lisa stepped down as committee chair. Most recently, Lisa worked on the road riding PSA, highway safety, and 4-H safety posters.
- Reach out to any members who may have an extra interest in safety (previous 4-H members?)
- There has been a lot of confusion about DMV's new right-of-way diagram in the driver's education manual.
- Jeannette has a contact at highway safety who may be willing to speak at the annual meeting.

1:06pm - Executive Committee - Jeannette

- No new changes need to be made to the bylaws.
- Emma and Jeannette will work on finalizing 2026 goals.

1:08pm - Annual Meeting - Jeannette

- The annual meeting and election will be held on January 17th, 2026, from 10am (9:30am meet and greet) to 2pm at the Monkton Town Hall.
- Interest in inviting a guest speaker who can give a presentation on equine-specific zoonotic diseases, tick-borne diseases, emerging diseases in the US, etc.
 - Emma will ask Dr. Jenny Wilkinson (UVM) if she would be willing/interested in this. Emma can also reach out to Chrissy Rohan (UVM) if needed.
- Free admission with door prizes and a raffle (fundraiser) to help encourage in-person attendance.
 - Michelle is willing to donate a homemade quilt and/or her quilting services (personalized) as the raffle prize(s).
 - Door prizes/drawing could include VHC 50th anniversary pens, items from the swag store, sponsored merch, etc.
 - Jeannette will work on contacting Smartpak
 - Require tickets/sign up for in-person attendance (25-30 people).

- Sell raffle tickets online prior to the event, and then announce the winner(s) at the meeting.
- Food will be done by BoD members who are able to prepare/bring a dish to keep costs down versus catering (soups, veggie platter, cheese & crackers, etc.).
- Jeannette will write Marilyn (Lisa's friend) a thank-you note for all of her help with the trails this year (volunteer of the year).

1:30pm - Quarterly Educational Event Ideas - Jeannette

- Quarter 1
 - Annual meeting - equine diseases presentation
- Quarter 2
 - BoD guided group trail rides (May/June)
 - BoD members could host a limited number of people (members only) at their preferred spot and show other members the trails.
 - May need permission from each specific spot
 - Could encourage more membership and engagement.
 - More interest means we could host more of these events.
 - Groton - collaborative ride with Dog River? (Laurie is a member)
 - Brewster Uplands - Monica
- Quarter 3
 - Trailer backing clinic (summer)
 - Monica will reach out to Tim
 - BoD guided group trail rides (July/August)
 - Willoughby - Lisa
 - Silver Lake - Laurie
 - Host a ride and paid lunch at the campground
 - Limited parking
 - Volunteer trail days
 - Try to get more people interested in trail maintenance with the guided trail rides, and then host work days later on in the season.
- Quarter 4
 - Zoom educational events (winter/spring)
 - AllTrails demo
 - Monica
 - Braiding demo
 - Michelle can reach out to a contact
 - Basic blanket care and maintenance
 - Michelle
 - Archived recordings could be used as a member benefit

1:57pm - Adjournment

Links:

- Trail Committee Updates:
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1yVZ51qfSAff0zUI8vXURzwMPedH_lhhS/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102194311649719574085&rtpof=true&sd=true

Parking Lot:

- Paul recommends transitioning from his platform to our own VHC DreamHost web platform
- Make sure “spare” domain/URL links to the main VHC website

Proposed Minute Corrections:

Name	Date/Time	Change	Vote