



Vermont Musher's Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 8232 🐾 Essex, Vermont 05451

Meeting Minutes May 3, 2012

Attendance

Board of Directors: Kathy Bennett, Jay Coffey, Jean Coffey, Judy Gilmore, Red Goodman, Ken Haggett, Allan Tschorn

VTMA Members: Jeremy Bedortha,

Guests: Adam Barsky, Jonit Barsky, Rob Farley, Skylar Litchfield

Meeting called to order at 6:40 p.m.

Introductions made.

Presidents Comments

President Allan Tschorn opened with a summary of activities since last meeting (calendar, newsletter, legislative updates) and comment re the good feasibility of building a mushing community in a state with long driving distances by using technology.

Executive Committee Reports

Recording Secretary:

- Minutes from last meeting approved as posted on website.
- At each meeting, minutes will go out to the Board within a week. After a one week review/comment period by Board members, they will then be posted on the website as non-approved minutes. They will be approved at the subsequent meeting.

Treasurer:

- Financial Report through 4/1/13 approved.
- Minimal income through membership growth despite e-mail contact with all previous, and now lapsed, members.
- When do most memberships come in? Should there be a push for new members in the fall as September is end of VTMA's fiscal year? Is there/should there be an annual calendar for other organizations who become members of VTMA?
- New members who join part way through the fiscal year could be given a membership cost break and would be a member in good standing for the duration of the current year and all of the following year. \$20 discussed as the possible fee.
- Agreement that contributions by Board members should be recorded as donations and expenses in order to keep accurate records for long term financial planning
- Motion made and approved to contribute \$25 to VT Federation of Dog Clubs and to VT Traditions Coalition, \$50 total to be contributed.

- Contribution already made to VT Trails and Greenways as a donation by Ken Hagget, which will now be recorded as such.

- Join VOGA? VTMA currently listed for free as an association on VOGA website. General agreement that VOGA is an excellent organization, but too expensive to join currently relative to the number of VTMA members needed to fund the membership fee, and that VOGA may or may not represent the issues of VT mushers

Corresponding Secretary:

- Emails sent to all previous members from past lists

- Minimal response to membership drive. Membership drive during mushing season probably was not a conducive time as everyone busy

- Personal contact most likely more effective. Current members/mushers could reach out to fellow mushers and to others when see them; important to have a card or other literature to hand out.

- How to attract new members? Need to address question of “what is VTMA going to do for me?” Membership quantity is important for members to have a more effective voice; this underscores the value of a membership community; an organization is the best vehicle for facilitating change; for example trail usage.

- VTMA is enjoined from lobbying, but we can be a talking point; individual members can be poised to give information (vs. VTMA as an organization)

- Better that VTMA be a voice, a venue, a place where people/the public can get information, ask questions, express, concerns, make suggestions

- At this moment in time, a new member primarily gets a community of like-minded people passionate about mushing and who would like to see mushing supported in VT, and who would like communication with other mushers on topics such as trail availability and conditions; if mushing is your passion, VTMA needs your help! This community will take time to build.

- Social activities and events might be a draw; get a meal, participate in an activity, become a member. Include dog powered sports for one dog or a kennel of dogs; mushing as well as ski-joring, bike-joring, scootering, etc.

Committee Reports

Bylaws:

- Allan has written a draft; needs to be proofread; Jean will do this if Allan can forward the file in Word to her.

Communications:

- Develop brochure; some printed to laminate for trailhead kiosks, but mostly electronic to link to other websites; use grant money for this project

- Judy shared a mock up newsletter she created; Board unanimously stated “2 thumbs up”; will be produced/published between meetings; will need to maintain it once start it; include membership form; PDF format via email; when send Judy info. to include, keep document under 10 MB; Judy will send list of potential topics to those attending the meeting

Judy generated a calendar; include only events in New England; Allan and Judy will finalize

Legislative:

- Gail Breslauer has kept the Board up to date thoroughly and effectively through e-mail

Trails:

- Ken provided updated information on the Lamoille Valley Tail Trail
- Ken will be attending the May 22, 2013 annual meeting of the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council to be held at the Seyon Ranch in Groton, VT at 9 a.m.
- VT ATV Sportsman Assoc. maps handed out; believed that these trails are mostly over private land
- Rob reported on status of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that is due July 1, 2013. This document is VT's overall outdoor recreation plan. It will affect the issue of access for mushers on state owned lands; state has requested what trail design needed by mushers
- Jeremy reported that current language in the plan for National Forest lands allows dog sledding only on designated trails. At this point there are no "designated trails" and discussion with NF staff has no clear direction on getting trails designated.
- Web Site:
 - Discussion of whether or not to have a separate Facebook page for VTMA vs. using the current VT Mushers page that has been used for announcing VTMA meetings; agreed that FB is a quick and easy way for people to share information such as trail conditions; tabled for further discussion at next meeting
 - Ken has been updating website; Ken will archive news when there is new news, which will be the newsletter; will need a link to VTMA newsletter
 - Discussion as to whether or not VTMA should get outside help to design and maintain website; important to keep it fresh; will need a new host and a new VTMA account as it is currently part of Red's account, who absorbs a nominal annual cost (should be counted as a donation and expense)
 - Kathy will ask her website designer if he can offer pro-bono services

Social Events Planning

- Hulbert Outdoor Center event cancelled because could not meet their minimum requirement of attendees; consider again in the future
- Summertime social ideas: sponsor kennel tours, one in the south, one in the north; Rob and the Coffey's volunteered; open to the public as informative and fun gatherings; coordinate them with the newsletter

Other Business

- Add a social element to Board meetings such as guest speakers and round table discussions; Dr. Jonit Barsky will present on first aid for the trail at June 14, 2013 meeting
- Discussion about hosting a breakfast at the New England Sled Dog Trade Fair in Hopkinton, NH October, 2013; to be discussed further at next meeting
- Discussion about finding a free Board meeting location as current location is costing 5 memberships (at \$10 each); Kathy will research finding a place that might be 20-30 minutes from the 89/91 intersection

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Bennett