

**BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING  
May 24, 2004**

**DIRECTORS, ALTERNATES & STAFF PRESENT:** Lisa Viau-Addison; Norm Roark-Bennington; Ken Gammell-Caledonia, Jim Hill-Chittenden; Dave Page -Essex; John Ross-Franklin; Bill Oakes-Grand Isle; Brian Wells-Lamoille; Larry Trottier-Orange; Brian Cook-Orleans; Barry Bradley-Rutland; Scott Stone-Washington; Roone Gibbs-Windham; Bruce Murray-Windsor; Ann Shangraw-President; Pat Poulin-Vice-President; David LaBelle-Treasurer; Bryant Watson-Executive Director, Alexis Nowalk-SSTP Trails Administrator; Bonnie Holbrook-Recording Secretary  
**GUESTS:** Mitzi Oakes, Betty Roark, Star Poulin, Jim Holbrook, Don Glover, Maridelle Tomlinson, Conrad Stewart, Sandy Woodbeck, Greg Rouleau, Tjark Aldeborgh, Dexter and Lucille Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President Ann Shangraw.

**AGENDA:** Pat Poulin moved and Dave LaBelle seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Dave LaBelle moved and Barry Bradley seconded to approve the minutes of April 19, 2004 as presented with two corrections.

Brian Wells made the motion instead of Bryant Watson to go into Executive Session.  
Mount Philo had a problem with "dogs", not "sled dogs".

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Barry Bradley moved and Norm Roark seconded to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion carried.

Lisa Viau asked to have the Craftsbury club moved to Orleans County list for number of TMAs instead of Addison. Ann Shangraw questioned the check for Polaris Ranger parts. Matt Tetrault picked up some parts for towing the trailer for the Ranger.

**CONSENT CALENDAR-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT and TRAIL ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:** Norm Roark moved and Roone Gibbs seconded to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. The motion carried. Alexis Nowalk asked to note that the Bridge policy was not in the packet but she will get that to us.

**COUNTY DIRECTORS REPORTS:** Chittenden, Windham and Franklin County have no report. Washington had their last meeting for the season. They' have a new county sheriff. Orleans County reported there is still snow on Jay Peak! Brian Cook will be picking up "NO ATV" signs tonight to put up on the snowmobile trails. Essex is doing fine. Brian Wells reported that his club in Lamoille County purchased a BR180. They had a successful land owner dinner although the band was a little loud! Orange County is fine. Caledonia County is fine. The Burke club will be grooming on the mountain. Bruce Murray wanted to note that despite the fact that Windsor County has a \$60,000 plus balance in their account, they have a \$55,000 annual budget. They had a club president that wanted to begin a club that wanted to form an ATV club and join VASA. Grand Isle is going good. Bill Oakes said that instead of a landowner's dinner, they gave a \$25 gift certificate to a local pizza joint! This worked really well. They have been getting many thanks from the landowners and how much the certificates are appreciated. It's falling in place very nicely! Bennington County is going fine. Rutland County had a landowner's dinner with the theme "Pirates of the Caribbean" and they had 180 folks show up. It was a big success. This week is the last county meeting until this fall. They are having some flea markets in the county with one being next week in Fair Haven and the following week on Barry Bradley's lawn. They even get donations from land owners! Addison County will be meeting over the summer except for July. They will be raffling off a 2005 Polaris 550 super sport.

**Vermont Tourism Discussion:** In the past we have not advertised snowmobiling in Vermont with the Vermont Tourism Department. If we do want to get in on some of the monies from Vermont Tourism, we would need to participate in their tourism campaign. It was the general consensus of the Board that we do not want to become involved in the Vermont Tourism Department and that it's not in our best interest at this time.

**ATV Survey Request:** Barry Bradley moved and Dave Page seconded to remove the ATV Survey off the table. Lisa Viau reported that Addison County voted to not support the ATV survey because only the responsible snowmobilers would respond. Essex and Windham County were in support of the survey. Essex felt that it is in their county's best interest to know if the majority of our snowmobilers have ATVs. Roone Gibbs said Mike Bernhardt really wants the survey done. At the time Roone Gibbs presented the issue to his county he thought the official statistical survey was about \$4,000 and that it would be valuable. He felt that we need to know what we are dealing with and where they (ATVers) are headed. Lisa Viau asked to note that Addison is mostly farm country and will not allow ATVs on their land. Rutland County noted that they have a problem with VAST paying for all these surveys. When other groups in the state are asked to do a survey, the state provides the funds for the survey. We would have to borrow from a lot of areas to come up with the money for this study. Bryant Watson has a meeting with Mike Bernhardt this Thursday and will be asked if VAST will be moving on this request. Jim Hill noted that he was not in favor of VAST paying for the survey because he thinks this will let Montpelier push the ATV trails off onto VAST. Roone Gibbs moved and David Page that we have Bryant Watson ask Mike Bernhardt to share half the cost of the statistically valid survey or we would not do it. David LaBelle moved to amend the motion to not exceed \$1325. Brian Cook seconded the amended motion. Motion stayed as moved. Norm Roark moved and Dave Page seconded the motion to amend the motion for 50% not to exceed \$4,000. Amended motion passed. Motion with amendment passed 10 in favor and 7 against.

**Annual Meeting:** John Ross reported that all arrangements are set for the VAST Annual meeting on September 18 in St. Albans.

**H.397 - As passed by Both Houses:** The H.397 has passed. It will be detailed in VAST News for all to see.

## **New Business**

**Legislative Information Specialist:** Pat Poulin, Bryant Watson and Ann Shangraw met and made a lot of projections for directions for the next year. Bryant Watson included a copy of the suggested description for a legislative information specialist. Ann Shangraw asked for approval to send this out for bid. **Bruce Murray moved and Lisa Viau seconded that we put out for bid for a legislative information specialist.** This will give us more information to present to the membership at the Annual Meeting. Bryant Watson asked that each board member state why they are or are not in support of hiring a lobbyist. Brian Wells thinks it's a good idea to hire a lobbyist. We won't know unless we try. Dave Page said basically what Brian said. Most of clubs in Essex County weren't in favor at first. We need to be as on top of everything we need to know in Montpelier so legislation hurting us doesn't slide through. Brian Cook is still undecided whether we need a lobbyist. He's concerned with not getting more money from Montpelier from our summer study. His county is open-minded. Scott Stone thinks we should proceed with the bid but we definitely need to present this to the general membership. They feel it's too much to do for our Executive Director to handle both duties of Executive Director in the office and lobbying in Montpelier. They think it will take 4-5 years to really see the benefit. John Ross said their clubs are in support of a lobbyist. Boone Gives has reservations. He feels that this person should not be able to make deals and that this person will have to contact Bryant Watson and get direction from him. Boone Gibbs is not sure if we need a lobbyist down there all the time. He does agree that it would have been good to have a lobbyist down there for the summer study. Jim Hill said Chittenden County is in favor of a lobbyist. There is too much at stake not to. It would also free up Bryant Watson to take care of more executive director duties. Dave LaBelle is personally against hiring a lobbyist. He thinks he not only lobbies the senate and reps but he meets year round with department heads too. He is concerned with how much time that it would take to bring a lobbyist up to speed. He thinks that Bryant Watson has been doing a good job in Montpelier. Dave LaBelle suggested that we should spend the money to free up Bryant Watson's time here in the office. Pat Poulin said that he does agree with Dave LaBelle that Bryant Watson has been doing a good job. He thinks that we really need to have more voices in Montpelier. Bonnie Holbrook is in favor of hiring a professional lobbyist. She agrees with Pat Poulin that Bryant Watson has been doing a good job but we really need more voices in Montpelier. Lisa and Addison County are in favor of hiring a lobbyist. Bryant Watson can not be in two places at all times. They felt that it is long over due to get another person in Montpelier. Barry Bradley wanted to repeat what Dave LaBelle said. Norm Roark has about the same feelings that Dave LaBelle said. Bennington County feels that we should have Bryant Watson be the lobbyist and hire someone here in the office to relieve Bryant Watson of some of his duties. Bill Oakes said he's probably been here too long! He hired Carmi Duso to be the Executive Director. Everyone knew who he was. As we moved on, we did have a lobbyist in Montpelier. Having a lobbyist is not a new idea and he didn't think that there were a lot of issues at that time. Bill Oakes thinks that we should consider having Bryant Watson's duties freed up to get him more time and exposure in Montpelier. Bruce Murray said that simply said, he agrees with Dave LaBelle. His concern is that Bryant Watson has a lot on his plate. He thinks that if he had an assistant that it would free up his time. Ken Gammell agreed with Bruce Murray and he'd like to see Bryant Watson down there more and that we have an assistant executive director. Larry Trotter agreed with Bruce Murray. **Bonnie Holbrook moved to move the question. Lisa Viau seconded. Motion carried. Norm Roark moved and Dave Page seconded that we progress with the alternative with hiring an assistant for Bryant Watson and free him up to be the full time lobbyist. Motion carried.**

**Proposed FY 2005 Budget:** David LaBelle provided a brief synopsis. The budget committee is proposing the budget on an additional 2,000 members over last year. We are not proposing a TMA increase, however, we have to consider that with a perfect world and we have the same amount of members and we had a great winter that we would be dipping into reserves. Some of the line items have been moved to make the reading of the budget easier. As of May 24, 2004, we have 38,347 TMAs. This breaks down to Resident TMAs of 25,140, Non-Resident were 11,985, Commercial TMAs were 154 and Volunteers TMAs of 1,068. Bryant Watson reviewed the membership totals from last year. This year, we had over 40,000 snowmobiles registered in Vermont. The concern with this is that some people registered their snowmobiles but did not purchase TMAs. Normally we have more TMAs sold than snowmobiles registered. Bryant Watson also presented the Board with a list of outstanding TMAs from clubs around the state. The Director's are asked to go back to those clubs and ask them to clear these up. It's not clear how much the liability insurance impacted the sales of TMAs. It's probably a combination of liability insurance, the lack of snow and the month of January being unseasonably cold. The ski areas were down this year too. We had registration income from Vermont of \$671,500. This was for resident and non-resident snowmobile registrations, Fines & Penalties, and additional state revenues reported. Basically for income coming in from registrations and fines and fees, we have the proposed budget will be \$907,100. Bryant Watson reviewed the line item changes. Most of the salaries are now showing in one part of the budget. Half of Kathy Dupree's and all of Alexis' salary comes out of the SSTP fund and must show under the SSTP budget as required by the State of Vermont. There are some areas that costs are up some. Some of the increases are actual cost increases and some are showing higher in one line item and then a lower amount in the line item that was moved. There is an International Snowmobile Media Association and so Bryant Watson has added a budget for sending the VAST News Editor to Congress. Bryant Watson went through the proposed FY 2005 General Budget line item by line item adding additional comments on various items. Based on that, about \$12.50 from each TMA goes towards this part of the budget. Next, Bryant Watson went through each line item of the proposed FY 2005 Trails Fund budget. For 2004 the income was 2,740,500 and the proposed income for 2005 is 2,992,380. He said the Public Relations/External Image budget may need to be increased by about \$5,000. The grooming budget needs to be increased because some clubs will be going from leased groomer rates to club owned rates. The budget also includes the amount for year two of the leased groomer buyout program. We will be offsetting some of the funds for the trails fund with the leased groomer buyout program. We need to set aside funds now for the buyout program. Some of the money going towards the leased groomer buyout program will be coming back to us when clubs purchase the leased groomers from us. It was suggested that we should ask for a little increase at each year if needed. It was also suggested that we not ask for an increase this year. We can also not increase equipment grants and construction grants if needed to keep from raising the TMA now. Barry Bradley has been asked if we are going to increase the cap for the equipment grants now that we are phasing out the leased groomer program. Dave Page stated that it's better to ask for a little increase each year that hit the membership with a \$10 increase at a later date. Ken Gammell said that we really need to ask for an increase and get set the TMAs at the price we really need to fund all the programs. Dave LaBelle reminded us that he and his committee have been charged with presenting the budget in a way that the membership can understand the budget. He suggested that we eliminate columns G, H, I and J and just use Column E & F. The columns being: Proposed 2005 Budget (e), Actual 2004 budget (f), Actual YTD (g), % to date (h), Adjusted FY 04 (i), % year end projected (j). Details will follow at June's meeting.

**Forest Plan Revision Meetings – Alternatives:** Ann Shangraw asked everyone to make sure that we have coverage at the meetings. Pat Poulin suggested that all Board members should try to make at least one of the meetings.

**Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP):** There is a series of meetings around the state that will affect the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. We need to get coverage from snowmobilers at these meetings.

**Caledonia Record News Article – Lancaster NH Snowmobile Issue:** Bryant Watson put this in the packet so that we can see we are not the only ones facing problems. The article is about an issue in Lancaster, NH.

**IRS Ruling on Landowner Donations of Land for Trails:** The IRS has determined that unless a landowner gives us a physical worth, i.e., easement on their land, it is not a tangible worth for the landowner.

**Willoughby State Forest Management Plan:** VAST Corridor 5 through Willoughby State Land is on a special use permit since 1996. This trail was not intended to be a permanent trail. We need to get this trail moved. The deeds that were given to the State of Vermont were stated for quiet recreation which excludes motorized recreation. If we were to keep the trail open, we'd have to get the deed changed. Ann Shangraw asked Bryant Watson two things. One, Dave Willard is retiring in the next two years and what's to say that the next person won't be pro-snowmobiling? Second, why would the State think that private landowners would take over snowmobile trails when the State wants us off state land? Bryant Watson said that Dave Willard has stated that he will try to help us reroute the trail.

**DC Fly-in:** Bryant Watson provided a detailed report on the DC Fly-in in his report. Brian Wells shared that he felt it was good. We did get more out of our meetings with Representatives Sanders and Senator Leahy than Senator Jeffords. David LaBelle recommended that any board member that has not attended the fly-in should. Scott Stone pointed out that there are Aids at every forest meeting! Pat Poulin pointed out that we are starting to see some pretty senior staff because we are building on our image. While we were in Senator Leahy's office, Channel 3 was there. Senator Leahy did make a nice speech on snowmobiling. Bonnie Holbrook shared that she made a lot of connections that will help us with the 2006 ISC. It was also a good learning experience.

**Other:** Ken Gammell reported that Caledonia County asked him if the Board will entertain a request for the Board to apologize to Ross Page and reinstate him as Trails Coordinator. This will be discussed in Executive Session.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Board Resources** is looking at proposing round robin sessions at the annual meeting next year in Caledonia. They also want to know if the Board is interested in going on a group Board trip to NH Annual Grass Drag Races in Epping. Lisa Viau suggested maybe a trip to a casino. The Board Resources Committee is looking at ways to bring the Board members closer together and get to know each better so we can be a stronger Board.

**ISC 2006 Planning** – Bonnie Holbrook made contacts at the DC Fly-in and will have a couple of meetings at ISC in Sioux Falls.

**Lamoille Valley Rail Trail** – The rails will not be put back once they are taken up. There is work being done on the trail. The contractor that pulled the ties will be advertising them in the paper for two weeks. There may be problems with federal funding if we allow ATVs on the trail. We are using Vermont funds right now for the trail work that is being funded by Vermont.

**Pat Poulin moved and Brian Wells seconded to extend meeting by 20 minutes. Motion carried.**

**Recognition, Scholarship, Landowner Appreciation & Volunteerism** – Star Poulin gave a report on the awards. All but one category has been decided. The committee will be proposing some policy changes. None of the VAST scholarships recipients were awarded the ASCA Northeast scholarship.

**Responsible Riding and Safety Education** – Mitzi Oakes presented a copy of the minutes for a report. She has received replies for the safety equipment survey from 92 clubs out of 114 clubs. She is learning Excel to create the database for the booklet. We have authorized Jere Johnson to purchase shirts for the instructors and the committee will pay for them out of the committee's budget. Wayne Pelky has joined the safety committee and is leading the way on reactivating a courtesy patrol although Bryant Watson has some concerns with legal issues. We have pencils and book marks for safety classes. Greg Rouleau has presented the idea to the safety committee to investigate the possibility of introducing the requirement that if someone violates the rules and laws of the trail system to have it mandatory that they take the safety course even if they already have in the past. Scott Stone thanked Mitzi for all of her hard work on the safety committee.

**Trails Committee** - Dave LaBelle reported the trails committee met with nine clubs requesting increasing miles in the grooming contract. We will need at least 30 minutes next month to discuss the requests.

**Lisa Viau moved and Bonnie Holbrook seconded to go into Executive Session to discuss the Caledonia County issue, Vermont Dairy Farmers and Sno-Karr, Inc. Alternate Directors are included in the session. Dexter Wilson asked to be included in the Executive Session. Motion carried.**

**Brian Wells moved and Lisa Viau seconded to come out of executive session. Motion carried.**

**Dave LaBelle moved and Roone Gibbs seconded that we help pay the legal fees for the club officers named in the lawsuit by Sno-Kar. Motion defeated unanimously.**

Windham County will provide the refreshments next month. The next Director's Meeting is June 28, 2004.

**David Labelle moved and Lisa Viau seconded to table the request from Caledonia County to reconsider accepting Ross Page's reinstatement of his resignation. Motion carried.**

**Scott Stone moved and John Ross seconded to adjourn at 9:50 PM. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Bonnie Holbrook  
Recording Secretary