

VAST BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

February 23, 2009

DIRECTORS, ALTERNATES, OFFICERS & STAFF PRESENT: Conrad Stewart-Addison; John Perkins-Bennington; Ken Gammell-Caledonia; Jeff Fay-Chittenden; Ray Dubriel(*absent*)-Essex; John Ross(*absent*)-Franklin; Bill Oakes-Grand Isle; Brian Currier-Lamoille; Larry Trottier-Orange; Brian Cook(*absent*)-Orleans; Merritt Budd-Rutland; John Lynds-Washington; Tom Baltrus-Windham; Bruce Murray-Windsor; Pat Poulin -President; Jim Hill-Vice-President; Mark Ellingwood-Treasurer; Bonnie Holbrook-Recording Secretary; Bryant Watson-Executive Director, Alexis Nowalk-SSTP Trails Administrator; Kent Gardner-VAST News Manager

GUESTS: Star Poulin, Mitzi Oakes, Jim Holbrook, Ed Hebebrand, Francis Pillsbury, Joe Cicia, Josh Nelson, Matt Goodyear, Mike O'Hara, Sue Trottier, Stacy Lynds, Mark Reeves, Sandy Woodbeck, Howard Smith, Ted Kenyon, Peter Kelley

The meeting was called to order at 6:11 pm by President Pat Poulin.

AGENDA: *Jim Hill moved and Jeff Fay seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried unanimously.*

14 Executive Session – Personnel Issues

SECRETARY'S REPORT: *Jim Hill moved and Larry Trottier seconded to approve the minutes of January 26, 2009 Board of Directors meeting. Motion carried unanimously.*

TREASURER'S REPORT: *Larry Trottier moved and Brian Currier seconded to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.* We had a positive cash flow last month. In general, things are looking pretty good. We had a Fiscal Committee meeting and we have an updated TMA count and we are now at 22,555. We need to have Directors encourage their clubs to please get the regular season TMAs sent in. Jeff Fay questioned the Grooming Surcharge balance on the Financial Report. Mark Ellingwood will follow up.

CONSENT CALENDAR-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT and TRAIL ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: *Bruce Murray moved and Larry Trottier seconded to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. Motion carried unanimously.* Bryant Watson distributed the latest legislative report. John Perkins questioned Bryant's report regarding the LVRT lack of final decision. There was a discussion on the lack of progress moving forward and whether we can get assistance from Governor Douglas to get this project moving.

Pat Poulin questioned bills H.260. This bill proposes to transfer jurisdiction over snowmobiles, motorboats, ATVs and the activities related to them from the Department of Public Safety and of Motor Vehicles to the Department of Fish & Wildlife. The Senate Transportation Committee will hold a couple of hearings this week related to snowmobiles. The Committee will first hear from the Secretary of Natural Resources on the use of snowmobiles and ATVs on forest highways. On the heels of that discussion will be an update on snowmobile use of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

Alexis Nowalk reported that we have received the registration report from the VT Department of Motor Vehicles for February and there are 29,109 total snowmobile registrations to date, with 21,281 Vermont registrations and 7,828 non-residents. We are currently beginning week 11 of the Grooming season. To date, the VAST Grooming fleet has groomed 99,526 miles (this includes all grooming classes and does not include third time grooming). The total (approved) grooming payments would be \$817,903, this includes weeks 1-9 of grooming. She also provided projected numbers for the grooming subsidy payments based on the season to date.

Alexis is asking each club that has not submitted their survey to please do so by next week. This is critical for data for the Trails subcommittee and will be used for determining the actual costs for grooming. She has received numerous calls for purchasing grooming equipment. This represents much more than the equipment grants received last year. The Trails Committee will be meeting in Bethel for the Annual Trails Committee Ride on Wednesday.

COUNTY REPORTS:

Champlain Valley; Addison County had a couple of slack weeks from grooming from lack to snow. They had a farmer that was going to shut his fields down if the groomer didn't stop going through when there was no snow on the field. Chittenden County has been pretty quiet. They haven't been riding because they had no snow but great news! They got snow today!

Central Vermont; Orange County had a pretty successful month. We had a Chicken BBQ in West Fairlee. The Sharon, Strafford and South Royalton clubs all had their Poker Runs. Washington County is moving along. They are working on preparing to do the suspension bridge project this summer. The county has seemed to have a few mishaps this past month from people hitting trains and automobiles. They have the Law Enforcement out patrolling and they will be writing tickets. John Perkins suggested that they have law enforcement use the cones on the corners to enforcement staying on the right side as they have found this has been effective in Bennington County. Wilkins Harley Davidson is sponsoring a Poker Ride this Saturday.

Northeast Kingdom; Caledonia County is not doing as well today as they usually are. Minnie Olsen passed away this past weekend. Marvin and Minnie Olsen are long time snowmobilers and she worked on the trails along side her husband. Clubs in the county have also had Chicken BBQs and a pancake breakfast. Essex County was not present to report. Orleans County was not present to report.

Northwest Vermont; Franklin County was not present to report. **Grand Isle County** is doing very good. They are planning to get a Poker Ride going next year. They have rerouted a section of trail to cross a body of water to bypass the golf course. **Lamoille County** reported the snowmobile they were trying to give away is going to the Waterbury Back Country Rescue. They held the Josh Perry Memorial Ride and generated over \$3,000 for the memorial ride. All five groomers in the county helped groom the trail and were present at the ride in.

Southeast Vermont; Windham County is now in decent shape. They've had a couple of successful club events. **Windsor County** is good. They lost a lot of snow but now have new snow. The Bridgewater situation is getting some activity.

Southwest Vermont; Bennington County was pretty busy. The snow is beat up and is hard to groom. They have had a lot of riders. They helped with other club groomers. **Rutland County** has some club functions coming up. They have presented their annual check for the Therapy Pool for \$4,500 which puts them over \$400,000 raised over the years. Merritt Budd had a great time on the Hartford Dice Run in Windsor County and appreciated the club making him feel very welcomed.

Bonnie Holbrook asked all Directors to please make sure they remind all clubs to turn in their report of fundraising amount raised for various organizations.

MILITARY RIDE KENYON'S FIELD, WAITSFIELD: On the 31st of January we had the first Military Ride. We had over 200 people attend. It was great. We did have a Blackhawk Helicopter that arrived and hung out for a while. This is something that we need to do again. There was one disappointment and that was that we did not have more Directors attend. When we (the Board) support an event, it would be good if we could get more participation from those Board members that support an event. We did this event for less than \$2000. Josh and Alexis did the Easter Seal Ride in New Hampshire at the Balsams and feel that it would be great if we could build our event up like that one has grown.

UPDATE ON SNOW VALLEY TRAIL: Nothing new has been heard. Everyone is waiting for the developer to reschedule the meeting.

BORDER TO BORDER RIDE: There was a written report from Marion Grey. They raised more money with fewer riders this year than they have in the past. This may be the last time that Marion will co-chair this. Mark Ellingwood found a sophisticated tracking device. If someone lost theirs, they should contact Mark and identify the one they lost.

REGISTRATION FEE INCREASE: Bryant Watson reported that the House Transportation and the House Ways and Means Committees have passed to raise the Snowmobile Registration Fee increase for \$10 with \$5 going to DMV for processing expenses and \$5 for VAST to designate to law enforcement.

BRIGHTON UPDATE: There was an update and Brighton still has not made a payment on the money they owe VAST and we have not heard from them. If we have not received the payment billed prior to their last grooming payment then the amount owed will be withheld from that payment. They had agreed to pay \$1600 a year over a ten year period when this incurred about three years ago and have not made a payment at all.

RECENT PR RIDES: Bryant Watson reported on some recent PR Rides. One was with Lt. Governor Brian Dubie for a day where they rode for the day the northern part of Vermont. Another ride was done with Jason Gibbs with WCAX meeting them at the Seyon Ranch for an interview.

ANNUAL MEETING: The County has the caterer online for the food. They are going to try to keep the tickets very economical as possible so it will be afforded. Next month they will have more information to share.

GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST: Bryant Watson reported on a meeting with the Green Mountain National Forest. This was a meeting to discuss recreational activities within the National Forest and it included other groups like the Center for Biological Diversity, Conservation Law Foundation and the Sierra Club, who are all very against snowmobiling. There will be another meeting sometime in Mid April to discuss trails currently in place. Meg Mitchell, GMNF Supervisor, has requested that we work to identify possible trails that could be closed. Ken Gammell asked that we invite Meg Mitchell to our next Board meeting to discuss with her how much snowmobiling impacts Vermont with the economic impact and the thousands and thousands of dollars that we raise for organizations like the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Vermont, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and other groups. Losing trails impacts the amount of money that is brought into the state and so it's important to keep trails open and not close them because of select groups don't want snowmobiling around.

LVRT UPDATE: Bryant Watson will be meeting with the Cole Pond Sledgers tomorrow night. We have finally received two checks from VTRANS for about \$180,000. So far, the commitments that have been received through fundraising will not be seen until the work is done.

INCIDENTS INVOLVING SNOWMOBILES: Bryant Watson reported about two incidents. There was one incident in Franklin County where a snowmobiler hit a landowner's dog and didn't stop to help the dog or notify anyone. The landowner is asking for reimbursement for the vet bills of \$3,000. The second issue is where two individuals that were using a town road to access their house. Allegedly the snowmobilers went by a barn yard and scared a cow who then fell. The farmer values the cow at about \$1,500 and would like to be paid for it. As of the meeting the cow has not been put down.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: The **Land Owner Appreciation Committee** is waiting for survey cards to come back. The **Fiscal Committee** met this afternoon to review the budget to access where we are at and how we want to move forward with the FY2010. We heard from Alexis on where she thinks we stand with grooming and how it is looking for projections for grooming. On March 9th at 5 pm there will be **Personnel Committee** meeting. Bonnie Holbrook report that the **Scholarship and Recognition Committee** met prior to this meeting and drew the names for the Volunteer Weekend. We had all but one county participating this year! Bonnie will make be sending a letter from the committee to the winners and they will also be receiving a letter from Kathy Duprey with instructions. The committee will be meeting in March to select the Scholarship winners. The **Safety and Responsibility Committee** met. Because of complaints received, the committee discussed the use of Safety Inspection stickers and how some agencies were not participating. The committee is discussing the possibility of having wording to their contracts with VAST to participate with the inspection sticker in order to receive funding. The committee is working on training for enforcement officers to identify after market pipes which are illegal in Vermont. Bob Stebbins from Chittenden County Sheriff's department thanked Jim Hill for getting the free sets of studs from Woody's (they have a program for law enforcement) and Jim installed them. Chittenden County Sheriff's Department has also linked Woody's to their website. At Bob Stebbins request, Jeff Fay designed a card for him that groomer operators and special riders could use to write up information with TMA and/or Registration numbers and sled info on snowmobilers that are seen committing infractions and then give to a law enforcement officer who would then follow up with contact and discuss it. The next meeting will be in April. The **Trails Committee** has a meeting scheduled in March.

The next Director's Meeting is March 23rd, 2009 at 6:00 PM with refreshments provided by Windsor County.

John Perkins moved and Jeff Fay seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:30 PM to discuss Personnel issues and include only the Directors, Officers and Bryant Watson. Motion carried unanimously.

Jim Hill moved and John Perkins seconded to come out of Executive Session at 8:58 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Mark Ellingwood moved and Bruce Murray seconded to adjourn at 9:00 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,
Bonnie Holbrook
VAST Recording Secretary