

**Parks & Trails Advisory Board  
June 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes  
6:00pm**

Present: *Charlotte Lomino III, Mary Thill, Colleen O' Neil, Ashley Garwood, Ezra Schwartzberg, Stephen Langdon, Jimmy Cunningham, Aurora White (Saranac Lake Trustee), Bachana Tsiklauri (Village Manager) (Present for part of meeting), a member of the public (Ren Davidson)*

Approval of meeting minutes: *Charlotte Lomino III, Ashley Garwood*

Minutes:

1. Special Guest speaker Rachel Child from the Adirondack Frontier gave a presentation regarding a funding source for businesses who capitalize on the opening of the rail trail, the “Rail Trail Small Business” fund. Some of the qualifications are: 5 or less employees, in the towns of Harrietstown or Tupper Lake, cannot be used for construction. More information can be found [here](#).
2. Updates:
  - a. Between meetings, the VSL Community Development Director sent out the summary of the Rail Trail Signage that was sent to ROOST for ordering.
  - b. The downtown bike rack plan is finished and ready to present to the Village and the DPW. Some additional action items here:
    - i. **Charlotte to reach out to the VSLPD about removing some bikes from a bike rack that seem to be abandoned.**
    - ii. While the immediate implementation does not require any permanent infrastructure, **Charlotte should reach out to the owner of the ArtRise parking lot regarding permanent improvements in the form of a covered bike rack.** This is one of two locations being considered, the other being next to the bathroom at Berkeley Green.
  - c. Community Enhancement Committee
    - i. Colleen discussed the funding gap. Currently, the Community Enhancement Committee has \$10k to work with. This is not even enough money to paint all of the concrete. They are looking at strategically painting some spots.
    - ii. **Colleen and Stacey to continue to work on the CEC.**
  - d. Still awaiting AES rail trail crossing study
    - i. **Charlotte to get an update on this from the village**
  - e. Fowler’s Crossing DOT letter response.
    - i. The DOT rejected the idea of lowering the speed limit here primarily for two reasons:
      1. Speed limit does not dictate actual driving speeds, and the design of the road would need to match the speed limit
      2. There were no fatalities on this portion of the road between 2020 and 2023
        - a. Notably, [there was a fatality here in 2017.](#)

- ii. Rich Shapiro plans on giving his own response. Charlotte will draft up a response to the DOT using a more engineer-focused response including line-of-sight and pedestrian crossing speeds outlined in the MUTCD. PTAB can sign off on it during the next meeting.
  - f. Mary and Charlotte have connected the village with a freelance grant writer
- 3. Some other things (brought up during updates, but not updates nor discussion items)
  - a. Steve Langdon went to Montreal recently and reported back on some things he saw:
    - i. Outdoor concrete ping pong tables. Potentially would be good at Ward Plumadore?
    - ii. He saw a lot of Silver Maple trees in Montreal, and thinks they are an excellent choice for street tree.
  - b. Ezra had an epiphany about Ward Plumadore Park
    - i. He thinks a good trim on the concrete buttresses would improve the aesthetic of the park immensely, like it does at the adjacent Bitters & Bones. He proposed barnwood caps on the concrete walls. This would be a very cheap solution.
  - c. Communication between PTAB and the Village needs to be improved. Bachana suggested that we should hound him with questions.
  - d. It seems that Jeremy Evans has had good luck in getting responses from DOT and getting things to happen. Charlotte to reach out to Jeremy and ask for advice. This could also be huge for the current pending items regarding sand on the shoulder and crosswalk timing at Church and River.
  - e. Between meetings, Leigh (who was not present) suggested conducting a needs assessment. He conducted an informal one which counted the pickleball courts around town.
- 4. Discussion items
  - a. Sidewalk study
    - i. Some of the people who have volunteered to do the sidewalk study expressed a difference in understanding of the level-of-effort required.
    - ii. Bottom line: we need a decent understanding of the condition of the sidewalks throughout the village, not just the bad ones.
    - iii. Steve brought up the idea of using students from local universities working in mapping and GIS to help.
    - iv. Ezra presented [this application](#) which would geolocate photos and information of sidewalks.
    - v. The present volunteers agreed that taking walks and taking geolocated pictures of sidewalks and giving a basic score on their condition is a reasonable amount of effort.
    - vi. Charlotte and Ezra to collaborate to ensure that the application is set up to send all information to the same place
    - vii. Charlotte and Stephen to collaborate to find a student opportunity to compile this information. The VSL Community Development Assistant went to PSC and may be able to provide some contacts.

1. One option is also to reach out to GIS professor Bill Olsen at Clarkson University
- viii. *Charlotte, Ezra, Ashley, Jimmy, Leigh, Stacey, and Mary to complete their assessments after confirmation from Charlotte.*
- b. Baldwin Park
- i. NYS has denied the use of state funds on an impervious surface such as a pickleball or tennis court
  - ii. NYS has accepted the use of state funds for playground equipment as long as the surface around it is pervious. This pervious playground surface requires a lot of maintenance. Most PTAB members think a playground here is a non-starter.
  - iii. *Public Comment (Ren Davidson):* Discussed her “disappointment” regarding how the VSL Community Development Director seemed to be advocating for “abandoning” the grant project at the most recent board meeting. Ren lives across the street, mentioned many things she sees at the park as well as her ideas for improvements, such as having a skating rink here in the winter. She thinks the existing project would create a place for all people together instead of a limited use for a limited group of people, which is how she feels about the pickleball courts.
    1. *Steve and Colleen (and maybe Charlotte?) to meet with Ren to discuss her ideas in-person and on-site prior to the Working Session with the Village Board.*
  - iv. We think having a working meeting with the Village Board, on-site if possible, is the best path to a solution. *Charlotte to reach out to the village clerk and Mayor Williams about this possibility.*
  - v. The majority of the board believes in continuing with the current design, sans-boardwalks, with a focus on the following elements:
    1. An ADA-accessible kayak/canoe launch and access to water (must be less than 100sqft)
    2. A pavilion that will be very functional and aesthetically pleasing, since this will be a place where folks who live on this side of town, and visitors in the nearby hotels, can gather. Maybe we can use the money from the boardwalk to improve the pavilion.
    3. Proper sidewalks to convince the DOT to install crosswalks.
  - vi. Ezra mentioned we could fight the boardwalk battle another time.
  - vii. Bottom line:
    1. Establish a need
    2. Establish how to address that need
- c. Park Maintenance
- i. Ashley brought in some photos and specific concerns about William Morris and Garwood parks. She has maintenance concerns.
  - ii. Jimmy mentioned that PTAB used to do annual “inspections” of all village parks to develop a list of maintenance action-items, which was then sent to the DPW to take care of. We immediately and unanimously decided to continue this tradition,

and assigned people to different parks. The spreadsheet can be found [here](#). Let Charlotte know if you cannot get access to it.

- iii. Assignments are as follows:
  1. Ashley to inspect William Morris and Garwood Parks (this is already completed and her maintenance notes have been sent to the DPW)
  2. **Charlotte to inspect the Riverwalk**
  3. **Steve to inspect the Skate Park and Lake Colby Beach**
  4. **Ezra to inspect Riverside, Riverfront, and Prescott parks**
  5. **Colleen to inspect Ward Plumadore Park and Berkeley Green**
  6. **Jimmy to inspect Pisgah**

5. Motion to Adjourn: *Motion Charlotte Lomino III, Seconded Steve Langdon*