

Governor's Snowmobile Council June 7, 2023

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee
Jacob Metayer, VT State Police
Gary Nolan, VAST LE Committee Chair
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee
Michael Smith, Vermont DMV Coordinator
Claire Polfus, Forest Parks & Recreation
Stan Choiniere, Governor Appointee
Mike Mustachio, Governor Appointee
Mark Poulin, Vermont Sheriff's Association
Matt Walker, Vermont State Representative

VAST Staff Present:

Cindy Locke, Executive Director
Ken Brown, Trails Manager/LVRT
Mandy Dwinell, Office & Programs Manager
Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator

The meeting was convened at 3:11PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Jeff Halpin moved to approve the April minutes as presented; Star Poulin seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Financial Report: SSTP FY23 Year End Projections, Matt Tetreault

Approval of SSTP Financial Report April 2023

Star Poulin moved to approve the SSTP Financial Report for April and May 2023 as presented; Gary Nolan seconded. MOTION CARRIED

FY 23 Yr End Projections, Matt

We are going to fall short of the FY 23 budget for income by about \$15,000. This is due to fewer registrations.

On the expense side, we have some line items projected to be over budget a little while others are under budget.

We do expect expenses to be around \$12,000 more than revenue for FY 23, resulting in the use of some carry-forward funds to cover this shortfall.

On the Law Enforcement side, we never used the \$50,000 in carry-forward funds we set aside and we underspent on the Law Enforcement line item and the Law Enforcement equipment

line item resulting in \$28,000 in carry-forward funds. This was mostly in part due to a poor winter from December through February.

There is a good possibility that the \$8,000 projected to be spent on Law Enforcement Equipment for FY 23 will not actually be spent.

We spent \$115,517 of the \$148,000 in Gas Tax on equipment grant in aid. There is a good possibility the remaining \$32,000 will be spent on equipment, but I have yet to figure this out. We have a number of equipment grants submitted for FY 24 and I am hopeful I can decipher which of those 41 submitted I can fund from this remaining funding in FY 23. This is not reflected in this budget as I am unsure of a number of things right now but wanted to note this as a likely possibility.

FY24 SSTP Budget, Matt

SSTP Total FY24 Budget Financial Reports were included in the email to the Governor's Council.

Income is based on 20,200 registrations, which is fewer than usual, and actually fewer than what we sold in FY 23.

As you can see there will be \$11,000 needed from carry-forward funds in order to balance the budget.

Most expenses remained the same in FY 24 as what was budgeted in FY 23 with a few small adjustments of a few hundred dollars or less.

We will ask for \$80,000 from carry forward for use on Law Enforcement and \$30,000 from carry forward for use on Law Enforcement Equipment. This will help us sign contracts with more departments and put more tracks on the trails with law enforcement atop the sleds, which we also hope to help fund with the \$30,000 for equipment. We continue to build this program up. These funds would be taken out of the law enforcement carry forward.

We will use the \$148,000 from gas tax to fund the equipment grant in aid program once again and will use \$100,000 in carry forward from the gas tax funds as well for a total of \$248,000. This is a small amount based on the number of requests.

The carry-forward amounts at the bottom are accurate. We are working with FPR to verify this and balance with their records but are very certain these numbers are correct.

41 Grant in Aid Applications have been received. With \$32k from carryover from FY24, the Vermont state gas tax fund will help pay for the capital grants as long as checks are issued before July 1st. Matt to review the applications and prioritize applications based on need. Matt to follow up on the clubs selected.

Approval of FY24 SSTP Financial Budget Approval

Pat Poulin moved to approve the FY24 SSTP Financial Budget as presented; unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police, Jacob Metayer

The new Vermont State Police building anticipating completion in October.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Not Present.

Sheriff's Association, Marc Poulin –VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff

The biggest challenge with the Sheriff's Association is with staffing. Some southern counties have limited auxiliaries available. Chittenden County is downsizing. In Washington County, Marc is among one of the four qualified Sheriff's for snowmobile patrol.

Washington County will need to evaluate its dated equipment. Marc requested more information on the Law Enforcement grant applications.

Discussion on grant applications and the payment percentages available to the Law Enforcement Agencies who have previously participated in the Law Enforcement program. Currently, 80% VAST reimbursement and 20% agency responsibility for new agencies, for existing agencies is a 50% VAST reimbursement and 50% agency responsibility for existing agencies.

Discussion on if the Governor's Council can make changes or vote on variations for the Law Enforcement equipment agencies.

Cindy is researching insurance options for Law Enforcement.

Discussion for the Law Enforcement Committee to review and discuss the specifications of the Law Enforcement equipment grant and potential modifications.

Discussion for the current percentage was originally established as an incentive program for new agencies.

Law Enforcement equipment grants and percentages will be discussed at next week's Law Enforcement meeting.

Police Chiefs & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue, Paul Doucette

Department of Motor Vehicles, Mike Smith

Registrations for 2023 are 20,162.

DMV bill has passed.

Discussion on the clarification of snowmobile decal changes. The white registration renewal stickers have been omitted; the decal will remain active.

Mike clarified the white registration renewal stickers are omitted for all motorized vehicles as of FY24.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

RTP program is being reviewed this summer for assessment and changes, Matt to partner with FRP on the RTP review.

Sherry Whinny with Recreation Grants Administration retired June 7, 2023. Her position is now posted on the State of Vermont recruitment website.

Undergoing process improvements and consulting with VAST regarding snowmobiles on state land. More information to come.

VAST

State Funded Equipment Grant Program, Cindy

VAST has received an update from AOT on the \$750k Equipment Grant In Aid funding details. Cindy will forward the email.

- Currently working on the VAST budget for next fiscal year (Oct).
- Wrapped up the legislative session.
- Meeting regarding Law Enforcement Committee soon regarding fines

Judicial Bureau Waiver Penalties

The biggest question is, is it more expensive to buy a TMA or get a ticket?
320B5 Fine states operating with No TMA to be a \$398 fine (Waiver fee)

The most common violation is for not displaying TMA, which is a \$88 fine.

Discussion of variances with fines and amounts.

Discussion on the Judicial Bureau process. Discussion with a hefty fine, someone may be more apt to act recklessly to avoid being caught.

Operating with No TMA, No insurance and No Registration fines would total close to \$1,000.

Very common in Vermont, for riders to not have their safety course certificate.

Directly after a snowstorm is when riders are more apt to not be in compliance.

Discussion of the use of social media for Law Enforcement awareness and compliance.
Recommendation to increase Law Enforcement presence on trails vs increasing fines.

Discussion with fines being higher than the TMA to incentivize the importance of valid TMA.

Discussion of warnings for not registering or insurance vs a fine.

Discussion on the demographic of riders not in compliance.

Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Gary Nolan

Sent equipment contracts out to agencies that have asked so far. Met with the Sheriff's Association. Hoping to meet about fines ASAP.

VAST Safety Committee, Stan

Met last month, and have a list of potential videos for the Safety Committee to create. A list of video topics was sent to the committee for script ideas for the next meeting in July.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt Tetreault

Equipment grants due 6/1 and received 41 applications.
Construction and debrushing grant applications are due 6/30.
Currently, reviewing and processing grant applications.

Legislative Report

House Report, Matt Walker

Nothing to report.

Senate Report, Jane Kitchel

Not Present.

Annual Funding for Southern Vermont Wilderness Search and Rescue

Not Present.

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Star

Chittenden County held a Landowner Dinner that was well received.

Pretty much closed up for the summer and will reconnect in the Fall.

Northeast, Mike

Not Present

Central, Jeff

Clubs submitted equipment grants and are working on equipment grants.

Washington County had 100% completion for the Spring Construction course.

A recent meeting was held for the VAST Annual Meeting, and planning going well. The next planning meeting is on June 21st. VAST Annual Meeting is Saturday, Sept. 9th held at Kenyon's Field all clubs and agencies are welcome to attend.

South, Stan

Reached out to directors and trial coordinators from a variety of counties on issues they would like addressed at the Governor's Council. Will hopefully some updates at the next meeting.

Two smaller clubs are working on merging in Windsor County.

Almost full compliance for Windsor County for the Spring Construction Course.

Chester Snowmobile Club is hosting Landowner Dinner on Saturday 6/24, open to the public.

Discussion If updates are available on the 710 trail, more updates to come. Within the next week or 2 there will be a _____. Mediation between the club and town has been consistent. There was a discussion with the club regarding possible ACT 250 regulations. Evaluation by Forestry Services on trail looks as though most of the vegetation will be replenished. Suspect the trail will remain closed for the 2024 season.

Next meeting is Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 3pm via Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn:

Star Poulin moved to close the meeting at 4:19pm; Jeff Halpin seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Mandy Dwinell
VAST Office & Programs Manager