

Joint Selectboards Rasputitsa Event Meeting
Monday, January 29, 2024
Westfield Community Center
Minutes

Board Members Present:

Jay: Dave Sanders, Le-Ann Tetrault, Tara Morse
Troy: Gaston Bathalon, Anne Quirion, Robert Langlands
North Troy: Terri Medley, Holly Ross
Westfield: Richard Degre, Dennis Vincent, Jacques Couture (Zoom)
Lowell: Wayne Richardson, Jennifer Blay (Zoom)
Newport Town: Steve Barrup, Rick Gosselin

Others Present: Pat Sanders (Jay Selectboard Clerk), LaDonna Dunn (Westfield Town Clerk),
Heidi Meyers & Anthony Moccia (Raspititsa Organizers) Andy Stenger (Jay Peak),
Ted Fleischer (Lowell FD /Jay Peak), Calvin Allen (Lowell Road Commissioner & FD Cheif

- I. Gaston called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.
- II. Discussion of Joint Selectboard Requirements for Rasputitsa Bike Tour: Comments from organizers
 - A. Anthony thanked Gaston for helping to organize the joint committee which makes it so much easier to contact all the interested parties.
 - B. Anthony and Heidi acknowledged the accident that occurred in last year's event and feel it is unfortunate that it has tarnished their reputation even though they were found to be not at fault for the situation. They have conducted this event for over 10 years with no negative feedback from any of the communities they worked with. They assured everyone present that they do everything they can to avoid accidents from happening.
 - C. The organizers goal is to have a good working relationship with the Towns and the surrounding communities whose roads they are using. They do not want to create any additional work for the road crews and as such do all they can to help mitigate any damage to the roads and help keep the roads clean. After the last participants go through the course, they have crews that follow them and clean up any garbage that has been left by the participants or spectators.
 - D. They put up signs a day or two before the event and they take all signs down once the event is over. Participants are not given the course route until late the night before the event so they cannot preview the course ahead of time.
 - E. Heidi briefly described their organization and mentioned that they are among the top ten bike events in the country and have been featured in many national publications. They try to support the community and work with local businesses where possible to purchase meals for the workers, gifts for the participants/workers, they donate to many non-profit organizations in the community and also hopefully help boost the economy in the area during the time they are here. Both Heidi and Anthony are local to the area, graduating from Lake Region and North Country respectively and do not want to do anything to create hard feelings or problems for their local communities.
 - F. The following information regarding the event was submitted by Anthony:
The Rasputitsa Bike Race, a prominent event in our town's calendar, is scheduled to take place on April 20th this year. Cyclists from across the region and beyond will converge to participate in this challenging race, covering a course that spans approximately 53 miles through the picturesque countrysides of Jay, Troy, Village of North Troy, Newport Center, Westfield, and Lowell. The route includes gravel roads, challenging ascents, and sections susceptible to the unpredictable weather of early spring. Pre and post event festivities will take place at the Jay Peak Ski Resort and include two nights of live music. More information: www.rasputitsagravel.com

- G. They were totally in agreement with almost all of the Requirements set forth by the Joint Boards but had concerns and reservations about the \$50,000 Escrow Account that would be held for damages to the roads. They asked if that requirement could be reduced or if they could be billed for payment after the event is over and any damages have been assessed. Their concerns were as follows:
1. That amount is over one half of their operating budget which is used to hire the necessary workers & emergency services. Having that much money tied up precludes them from working with local businesses prior to the event as well as making it difficult to pay many other pre-event expenses. Putting that much aside especially so early before the event, would severely limit their ability or conduct the event as planned.
 2. There are no guidelines stipulated on what constitutes damages and they questioned how it could be established or proved that the damage was caused by their event and not by other vehicles using the roads. They also questioned who would be assessing the damage and how the amounts for repairs would be verified. They emphasized that they are willing to go on ride-arounds with the road commissioners to identify problem areas on the roads a day or two prior to the event and establish alternative routes or detours to avoid those areas. They are very willing to work with all of the road commissioners and road crews prior to the event to help mitigate damages and reimburse the towns for the road commissioners' time.
- H. Both Ted and Andrew spoke on behalf of the race organizers and encouraged the Boards to be supportive of the event. While he was not speaking for Jay Peak, even though he is their event manager, Ted did mention the economic boost this event will bring to the community. Jay Peak is normally winding down its season in April and this event is providing extended work time for local employees who normally might be laid off. Also the event is bringing a large number of people to the area for more than just one day who will patronize other local businesses besides Jay Peak. Hopefully the event would be an annual event bringing a larger number of people to the area, who may choose to revisit the area.

III. Questions and responses from the group.

- A. Calvin stated that he is not as concerned about damage from the bikes on the road as he is about the vehicles following the participants. He also stated that he will be closing his roads to through traffic the day of the event to help avoid more traffic than necessary.
1. Anthony explained that they designate places along the route for spectators to watch and do not allow them to follow the participant around the course. The organizers do have about 5 vehicles and / or 4 wheelers that follow the participants for clean-up and emergency purposes but that would be the total of other vehicles from their event on the course. They also educate and stress to their riders that they need to be totally independent and carry all their own supplies and nourishment and not to depend on anyone for help.
- B. Richard Degre as well as the Lowell Selectboard is most concerned with the liability for the Towns if something should happen. They are also concerned about the cost of repairing roads if damage does occur. Once the race is over they have no assurance or guarantee that the event organizers will pay for any damages caused because of the race.
1. Tara stressed that it will be very difficult to prove if the event caused damages or were they caused by other traffic using the roads. She mentioned that it is taking place during sugaring season and because of that there are a lot of sap trucks on the roads as well as increased local traffic.
 2. Pat noted that a few weeks before the event is the full eclipse and there is expected to be a huge increase in traffic in our towns that no one seems to be concerned about and that is unfair to assume damages from this event would be greater than during other events such as the eclipse viewing. That point was also voiced later by Jacques.
 3. Dave did not feel that we could single out this event as being any more dangerous than other events that happen on our town roads such as bicycle tours and especially the four wheeler rides

that are now being allowed to use our roads. He mentioned that there was a four wheeler accident with a fatality recently in Lowell, so how can we assume this event is any more dangerous than what already occurs on our roads on a daily basis.

4. Steve mentioned that possibly a video of the roads before the event and directly after the event could help establish damage. Again the question arose of how can you prove who caused the damage especially if roads are open the through traffic. Ted volunteered to drive the roads and use his dash cam to video the road conditions if needed.

C. Gaston felt it is important for everyone to be able to communicate with each other both before the event and during it, especially the event coordinators and the road crews. He will create a master list with current contact information. He also feels that it will be important to set up a meeting with the road commissioners and the organizers so that everyone is on the same page. All agreed this is a good idea.

IV. Executive Session

A. Steve made a motion seconded by Dave to find that the body would be placed at a substantial disadvantage if they were to discuss contract elements in a public forum. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Richard made a motion seconded by Dave to enter into executive session to discuss the Rasputitsa contract and to invite Pat and LaDonna to attend. Motion passed unanimously and the Boards entered into executive session at 7:18 p.m.

C. Boards returned from executive session at 7:41 p.m.

V. Next steps – next meeting

A. Robert made a motion seconded by Steve to drop the \$50,000 escrow requirement for road repairs, to increase the escrow account which will be managed by Gaston and Anne for town expenses from \$7,500 to \$10,000 and to have the organizers increase their insurance to 4-7 million dollars. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Discussion followed on how the Town should pay for the lawyer. It was determined that the Town of Troy will pay for the contract initially and will bill the other towns for reimbursement. Towns will then be reimbursed from the escrow account.

C. The next meeting will be after the contract is drafted. Gaston will contact Anthony with the results of the meeting and the new stipulations. He will also contact VLCT to see if there is any insurance for risk management of property with regards to damage to the roads.

VI. To adjourn

Gaston made a motion seconded by Le-Ann to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Sanders

Signed 2/12/24
Westfield Select Board
Jacques Couture
Robert Ogger
Jim Vint