



Kassia Rando, Chair
Andrew Brewer
Lincoln Frasca
Emily Donaldson
Jessa Barnard

Alec Chisworth, Parks Director

Parks Commission
Tuesday, November 18th, 2025 / 6:00 PM
Location: City Hall and Zoom

***Mission:** The Parks Commission advances a long-term vision to ensure that parks, gardens, greenways, and natural areas are vital to Montpelier's community identity and are forever available for the enjoyment of all.*

Commissioners: Emily, Lincoln, Jessa, Kassia

Staff: Keir, Alec

Public: Colleen Kieran, Susan Ritz, Linda Young, Rebecca Copans, Greg Azzaretti, Emily Seifert,

Meeting Agenda

6:05 Commissioner Introductions

6:06 November 18th Agenda, October 21st Minutes. Lincoln moves, Emily seconds. Passes unanimously.

6:07 Public Comment for items not on the agenda. None

6:08 Abenaki Land Use Agreement Discussion (Emily)

- Emily incorporated edits from our last meeting.
- Emily reached out to both the Odanak and the Vermont Abenaki. The Odanak chose not to participate. Once the agreement is finalized, Emily will again reach out to the Odanak to ask if they'd like to work on a separate agreement.
- Jessa suggests: "...with any one of the Chiefs..."
- Emily motions to adopt the Abenaki Land Acknowledgement and Land Use Rights. Lincoln seconds. Passes unanimously.

6:14 Staff Update, Review Incident Reports (Alec)

- Two incident reports this month.
- Question about fat bike access for the winter from Seven Fireplaces to North Park Dr:
 - Won't close old sections of trail until the new trail is fully finished because the contractor will need to use the old trail in order to construct the next sections.
 - Will need additional signage to make it clear which trail is open
 - Not hearing objections to fat bike access
- Additional question of when to open the new trail to regular bikes next spring.
 - Park West: trail is functionally complete. Alec would feel comfortable opening this to fat bikes.
 - Seven Fireplaces to North Park: Connects into the old fall line, which isn't beginner friendly and follows the old fall line. This doesn't need to be decided tonight because based on the discussion above, it would be open to fat bikes.

- Lincoln moves to open the new multi-use from Windham Dr. to North Park Dr. to fat bikes for this winter season. Jessa seconds. Passes unanimously.

6:20 Hubbard Park Dog Rules 1-year temperature check. Listening Session, review survey data. (All)

- **Colleen Kieran:** It's been going fairly well. Curious to hear what the responses are from the survey, how people were feeling.
- **Susan Ritz:** It's been going pretty well. What you've set-up in the off-leash area is great, plenty of room. There haven't been any problems. The only problems I've had are that people in the area with dogs on leash get upset with dogs off-leash. I don't know if people understand there's an on-leash part. Susan feels people whose dogs need to be on-leash should go to the on-leash area. Heard there are people with off-leash dogs in the on-leash area. Wish people would follow the rules. It seems like a good solution at the moment.
- **Linda Young:** Echo Susan's comments. Seems there are fewer people walking in the park than before, may be partly because the trails are muddy, so people have headed for the Country Club property. Appreciate how clear the rules are. I've had a few similar experiences of people with an on-leash dog being upset that there were off-leash dogs, and I've had to explain to them that they have the other half of Hubbard to use. I had family visiting with people who were nervous about dogs, and I was glad to have an on-leash area that I could take them to. I see both sides of it.
- **Rebecca Copans:** I have a singularly really bad experience with the new rules. It feels unfortunate that the Commission went against the will of voters and decided to change how people access the park. Now the north side is the only place to walk with dogs off leash. I see a lot more traffic in my neighborhood as a result. There are no hill sections to be able to walk directly from our side of town into the park – you need to drive or walk on the flat spots, and it doesn't feel like the same experience. It also feels unfortunate that the off leash parts are the edge of town. The places you can walk off leash aren't as nice as the places you can walk on leash. I see fewer people in the park, and I don't see the people we used to walk with every day. People are more aggressive in the park now, which is unfortunate.
- **Greg Azzaretti:** I walk my dog in the park multiple times a day, multiple times a week, with my dog off leash. My dog is mostly good off leash, but there are times when I recognize that I need to have him on leash. I was supportive of the new rules, but a couple observations I wanted to share – I've definitely noticed a difference in traffic patterns. It seems there aren't a lot of cars parked by the frog pond or sledding hill. There are an abundance of cars parked up by the new shelter or the dog field, and cars overflowing into the road. I appreciate that parking was just expanded at the new shelter. I've noticed a decrease in the number of dog walkers in the park, and people in general. I don't know if it might be that I'm just noticing less people. The multi-use trail is an area of the park I used to go to a lot because it was desolate has a lot more people using it. I'm curious about the current situation with dogs in the park. My everyday use has changed where I don't go to the tower anymore so that I can keep my dog off leash, so I haven't accessed that area of the park.
 - I'd be curious if there might be opportunities to change sides on/off leash to mix that up.
 - Also, with the multi-use trail increasing the number of people using it, I'm wondering how that will work with dogs being off-leash in that area having people on bikes riding through there.

- **Emily Seifert:** I really appreciate having an ON leash section of the park. I do not want to interact with unleashed dogs when I am in the park. I don't have a dog and my child is very afraid of dogs, so we do not want to be approached by loose dogs. Compliance varies.
- **Colleen Kieran:** Circling back to Rebecca and Greg. I agree there are fewer people, and a lot of the dog walkers don't feel welcome there anymore. I do think some people have gone elsewhere or they don't go as much. It may be worth looking into other options in the future that allow for various days or times. I was in favor of this, but it gets boring to walk the same trail over and over again, and the off leash trails aren't as nice as the Tower Trail. Could also consider seasons since there are generally fewer people there in the winter.
- **Susan Ritz:** I left the park for a long time. I've been walking there for 31 years and felt like the community disappeared. But the park is much better, and most people are coming back to the park who were at the country club. I think we'll be seeing more people in the park again.
- **Linda Young:** On the multi-use trail, I'm concerned about what's going to happen with bikes in the area. I appreciate the clarity of the new rules. Drawing a boundary line was helpful because it's really clear. Having one trail through the off-leash area with bikes on it – if that turns into a conflict and it means that area becomes on leash, I think that's going to be challenging.
- **Lincoln:** Appreciate everyone filling out the survey, helpful to get a glance of what's on peoples' minds. I liked seeing that we have a majority of people who understand what the new rules area, which speaks to the success of the education that we had around the rollout and signs. I'm concerned about the compliance issues being brought up, especially when interacting with Parks staff. I would like to keep monitoring and see what happens in another year.
- **Jessa:** Hard to pick out takeaways. I want to keep thinking about the issue of access from The Meadows side of town, especially when the road is closed during mud season, and how we balance increased driving from people in that part of town. I think we should keep an eye on the multi-use trail. I think it could work seamlessly with bikes and dogs, or it may not.
- **Emily:** 70% are using it less often or a lot less often, 70% using it the same, 40% using it more. Seeing less people in certain parts of the park – may be a delayed effect of people realizing they can now go to the park and not worry about dogs. The car traffic is one of the things we anticipated, and would like to address that.
- **Keir:** I've seen mostly compliance, but it is frustrating that there are some people who know the new rules, but continue to clearly and outwardly not comply, which is frustrating. Like Greg mentioned, it's impacting the people who are really excited to be off leash and complying.
- **Rebecca:** Also need to acknowledge how many people feel less welcome in the park. I feel unwelcome and judged when I'm in the park. Whenever I walk anywhere in the park, I feel that it's no longer a peaceful place for me. It's a crushing change for a lot of people.
- **Emily:** Regarding Rebecca's comment: It's also not fair to make dogs' presence equal in importance to human presence.

7:30 Ongoing Projects Quick Updates

- **Alec:** We were planning to do a capital campaign through the end of the year, have material to put out via social media, Front Porch Forum, etc. This would support our AmeriCorps positions for this fiscal year, to finish the outhouse, and _____. It won't raise all the money needed for these projects, but will increase community awareness about these projects, and would like help from Commissioners to share the fundraising with their networks.

- “It will be a great day when our schools have all the money they need, and the military needs to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber.”
- Hubbard Park Multi-Use Trail: trail construction complete for the year, one last bridge to complete on the northern end. Alec has requested funds in the budget, but didn’t make it into the Capital Improvement Budget. Will continue looking for additional funds to complete the trail. Alec is working on the RTP pre-application. Jessa – I was under the impression that there were funds existing to complete the trail all the way to the boardwalk. Alec – Ended up completing some more technical sections around the route, which lowered the total amount of feet we would be able to do.
- FEMA Projects – Complete as of 10/31
- EAB Biocontrol - Kassia shared update from conversation with Joanne Garten
 - Emily: How many ash do we have in the park? Alec: We have several hundred trees in the city right of way, many more on private land. Plus ash trees in the park. What we’re seeing is that we’re right at the beginning of the steep uphill part of a bell curve. Many ash trees are showing signs of infestation, and those signs don’t show up until a tree has been infested for 3-5 years, so we’re expecting to see more mortality in the next 3-5 years.
 - Emily: Buyout more time to manage street trees could be a reason to do it. Alec: My take is that it won’t necessarily help our street tree program. If we want to do this, we should see it as adding information to science as a service to the scientific community to see if this is effective, that would be the value.
 - Jessa: Has the Tree Board talked about this? Linda: It’s come up, but we haven’t gotten into it yet.
 - Lincoln: Seems like a good opportunity to engage in a science project, conduct outreach, gauge community response. Conservation Commission should also be involved. Would like to sign-on along with other Commissions as well.
 - Kassia: Conversation with Joanne alleviated some concerns, but still concerned with the idea of biocontrol. Will need strong public engagement before and during any treatments. Want to be sure this doesn’t detract staff time from other priorities. Alec: Joseph our arborist could be a great ally. Jessa: Would like to see the state help with community engagement and communications.
 - Jessa motions that the Parks Commission supports being a site on the list for the December application with the understanding that we would like the state’s assistance with community engagement, and our support is contingent upon the support of the Tree Board, Conservation Commission, and City Council, and that the Parks Commission will make a final decision after the site is selected and before the biocontrols are released. Lincoln seconds. Passes unanimously.
- Cumming St. Pump Track – MAMBA is working on securing a pump track designer
- FY27 Budget – Asking to restore AmeriCorps funding. Would like to work back to having a Youth Conservation Corps, but can’t do that without AmeriCorps members.

7:37 Agenda items, date, and location for next month’s meeting.

- Tuesday, December 16th
- Agenda topics:

- Release Stonewall
- Sign Charette

7:44 Incident Reports

- Kassia will call the person who submitted an incident report on 10/23
- Need to make incident reports more visible so that people know there's an opportunity to report these types of incidents. Parks staff will post to social more frequently.
- 10/31 report from a staff person of an incident with a park neighbor. Kassia will connect with the neighbor.

7:59 Adjourned by unanimous consent