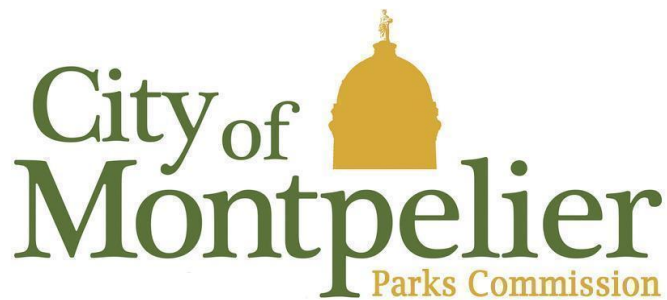




Parks Commissioners:
Emily Donaldson (2027)
Andrew Brewer (2028)
Kassia Randzio, Chair (2029)
Jessa Barnard (2030)
Rebecca Copans (2031)

Alec Ellsworth (Parks Director)

Parks Commission
Tuesday, May 12th, 2026 / 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: Kassia, Emily, Rebecca, Jessa, Andrew

Staff: Alec, Keir

Public: Linda, Arthur Foelsche, Bob, Annie Limoge, Izik Currier and Dad

Meeting Minutes

6:01 Commissioner Introductions

6:02 May 12th Agenda, March 17th Minutes. Rebecca moves, Emily seconds. Passes unanimously.

6:03 Public Comment for items not on the agenda

- Izik Currier – wrap-up of his time supporting Parks Commission. Gathered materials, built benches, installed at Stonewall Meadow Park. Congratulations on a job well done!
- Annie Limoge – Challenge of dogs coming out of Hubbard Park and onto her lawn. 69 Clarendon Ave. Dogs cross through the open meadow and into Annie's yard. Wouldn't mind natural vegetation, but also appreciate view of meadow. Challenge of people keeping their dogs off leash beyond the park boundaries, even when they're in the street. People (mostly adults) frequently ride bicycles even though it's signed no bikes.
 - Alec: Put up "you are entering on leash area" on the Park side of the bridge.

6:20 Staff update, Review of Incident Reports, Birdland 5k event request, "Lost Finn" project (Alec)

- Spring ephemerals are blooming
- About 10 or more encampment cleanups
- Volunteer day with Black River Design
- Three days cleanup along the bike path
- All Species Day
- Trail counters are going out
- Two new AmeriCorps members
- Meeting with Home Farm Way easement holders – VHCB conservation easement and Preservation Trust of Vermont historic preservation easement where the house was. Both supportive of a park. Would like to see the footprint of the house remain open with some adjacent amenities. National Park Service landscape architects are helping with design.
- Onion River reached out about the Birdland Race. May 30th. Alec has approved this.

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- Presentation to City Council about the outdoor recreation economy.
- Event with Vermont River Conservancy and Commission for Resilient Montpelier to share dam removal and future recreation riverfront opportunities
- Emerald Ash Borer grant was not successful
- Question of when to open the connector trail to bikes. Need to build a boardwalk from Seven Fireplaces to Clarendon (June/July). Need to build boardwalk from Seven Fireplaces to North Park Drive (August).
 - Jess: Challenge to open part and not another part. Could be hard to expect people to follow the rules.
 - Kassia: Currently bikes riding where they're not supposed to on many trails. The intersections Seven Fireplaces to North Park are confusing because the old trail still exists.
 - Arthur: Would be better to have clear guidelines for consistency rather than open early and risk engraining behavior we don't want.
 - Alec: Could open the southern portion. Would need very clear signage to keep people on the park road.
 - Will discuss at June meeting. Alec will bring a plan to June meeting.
- Ramp picking is happening in the park. Challenge that signing off limits could encourage use. No harvesting is already on kiosk signs.

6:57 Mud Season update/check-in (Jessa)

- Check-in on how road and trails closing were going this year – especially Hemlock Hill, new trail, etc.
- Alec: Most people close their trails during mud season, get traffic because of that. If expectations are to not have muddy trails, we can't achieve that. Observations: road, accessible trail, connector trail, Hubbard Tower Path were all in good condition. Hemlock Hill needs some drainage work. The Connector Trail was better than expected.
- Jessa would like to see the Ballfield Trail off leash year-round, but especially during mud season
- Rebecca would like to make a motion to change dog use in the ballfield area
- Linda: Sensitive to the need to keep high use areas like sledding hill, pavilion, etc. closed to off leash dogs
- Jessa would like to ensure this is addressed in the fall. It's a challenge that's exacerbated during mud season, but is a challenge that exists year-round.
- Jessa motions that the ballfield to fitness trail be piloted as an off leash trail through the fall dog leash feedback period. Rebecca seconds. Discussion:
 - Preference to wait until the fall and address dog issues at the same time.
 - Possibility to delay until next month.
 - Observations of more car traffic in the park. Possibly due to people driving to access off leash areas. Also possibly a sign of increased use of the park.
 - Doesn't feel like an urgent need because mud season has come and gone.
- Jessa modifies the motion to add a change to the ballfield to fitness trail change to the June agenda. Then drops motion.

- If data is important, we need to more actively collect data. There is some trail counter baseline data, and considerable other survey data that establishes a baseline.
- Suggestion for June agenda: to discuss what information needs to be gathered this summer in order to inform the fall dog policy assessment.
- Linda: Public outreach is important. The idea of thinking about how we're going to get the information we need in October is extremely valuable. If this was easy it would be solved already. I'm someone who drives from the Meadow into the Park to walk my dog. I also have friends and family who weren't using the park because of dogs, and they now use the park. I've been watching this process unfold for years, listening carefully, and I think the process that was outlined at the outset is fair. The work now is to see what work needs to be done to inform the process. Also consider tradeoffs: If considerable time is spent doing this in June, then what are we *not* talking about during summer prime park season.
- June meeting: Discuss what information needs to be gathered this summer in order to inform the fall dog policy assessment.

6:37 Dog waste check-in (Rebecca)

- Rebecca would like to see more accessible dog waste receptacles. Volunteers could rotate weekly responsibility for the dog waste stations. Suggestion that people don't pick up poop because waste stations aren't close enough.
- Alec: has collected photos of all dog poop within 100 feet of waste stations, and there were dozens right near the waste stations. Suggestion that waste bins don't seem to be the challenge, but rather waste pickup.
- One of the barriers is staff being able to drive to the dog waste stations.
- Rebecca suggests a 5-gallon bucket with a lid, smaller, easier for a volunteer to carry.
- Rebecca will put together a plan of locations, signage, coordinate with Alec and Keir, and will recruit volunteers to do this.

7:47 Cummings St. Pump Track Update (MAMBA)

- Electric Motorcycles: Number of people are riding electric motorcycles. MAMBA is trying to educate them about where it's appropriate to ride and where it's not. Will be an ongoing challenge, need to talk about signage and messaging to address this.
- North Branch Trails:
 - Trails are open, have been for about 2 weeks. 80 hours volunteer time, 3 volunteer nights. Trails were in ok shape this spring.
 - Started adaptive work to make sure all trails are accessible to an adaptive bike with support from VMBA.
- Pump Track:
 - Goal to expand the pump track, make it 2 ¼ times larger than it is currently. Would like it to attract younger kids as it does currently, but also make it more engaging and challenging for middle school and high school riders. Design intends to accomplish both these things.
 - Incorporates picnic table where it is now, and also a gathering area closer to the river.

- Along the bike path there are scrub trees. Want to build a screen of trees to give separation between the houses and the pump track.
- Permitting steps are complicated, discussions underway to figure out what's possible.
- Discussion:
 - Rebecca: Likes to see offerings for all ages.
 - Kassia: Clarification – is the vegetative screen to block residents' views? Or for shade? Would want to ensure open sight lines for safety. And how would it impact the residents' current view of wetlands, which is an asset?
 - Kassia: Adding material on the floodplain would also require removing material. Arthur: Currently some asphalt on the surface, so could remove some material and use to build some of the features. Kassia: shared location of a nearby berm that could possibly be removed to restore some of the floodplain.
 - Jessa: How much parking is planned? Arthur: Parking would allow for two cars, and possibly three. People can also park on Cummings Street.
- Next steps: Permits, then Conservation Commission, then Development and Review Board
- Arthur would like to hear from us that we're conceptually supportive.
- Jessa motions to support the conceptual plans and support MAMBA moving forward with next steps, with the understanding that MAMBA will return to the Parks Commission to review and approve final plans prior to implementation. Rebecca seconds. Passes unanimously.
- Total cost is approximately \$40,000. Final cost partially depends how much material is being brought in.

8:09 Review Outline and Schedule for Small Parks Management Plans (Emily)

- Emily is working closely with Linda on a Summer Street Park management plan. Linda is helping with historical information.
- General consensus to keep the momentum behind the Summer Street Park and see if we can have a draft in 2-3 months, then do public engagement. After completed, can revisit next park for a next management plan.

8:18 Review field season priorities and funding opportunities (Alec, Kassia)

- No current funding for 127 Elm
- Review of list of season's priorities – request to do Hemlock Hill Trail earlier in the season if possible
- Shared designs for interpretive trail signage

N/A Ongoing Projects Quick Updates – addressed earlier

- EAB Biocontrol
- Hubbard Park Multi-Use Trail
- 5 Home Farm Way



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8:25 Agenda items, date, and location for next month's meeting.

- Agenda:
 - Staff update
 - Discuss what information needs to be gathered this summer in order to inform the fall dog policy assessment.
- Date: Monday, June 15, 6:00pm

8:33 Adjourned by unanimous consent