

Stratford OHRV Citizens Committee (SOCC)

Meeting: Thursday, December 10, 2020, 6:30pm to 8:32pm

Location: Virtual – Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Troy Burns, Molly Carr, Gregory Lamm, Bill Noons, Jamie Sayen, Maryanne St. Jean

I. Topics

A. Mission Statement & Goals – Stratford OHRV Citizens Committee (SOCC)

- a. The Committee discussed the suggestions submitted and approved the following wording.

MISSION: The Stratford OHRV Citizen's Committee's mission is to improve the quality of life for its residents and visitors through strong community engagement and supportive input addressing the issues resulting from recreational vehicle use in the Town of Stratford.

GOALS: The Goals of the Stratford OHRV Citizen's Committee are:

- To strengthen the lines of communication between the townspeople and town government.
- To create, nurture, and maintain a respectful conversation about OHRV use.
- To develop recommendations for OHRV policies that help sustain the community.

B. Letter to the Editor

- a. Jamie drafted a letter to the editor, distributed and requested edits before the meeting. The Committee discussed and approved the letter with the addition of a mention to the Select Boards draft of the OHRV Road Use Policy.

C. The Town of Stratford OHRV Road Use Policy – Drafted November 24, 2020

- a. The Committee reviewed the feedback provided from Stratford Citizens in response to an email distribution of the draft OHRV Road Use Policy to 37 households on Tuesday, December 8, 2020. The responses mentioned a good job done, a need for more road signage, and increased enforcement.
- b. The Committee's discussion echoed the concerns from citizens regarding OHRV's regulation. The following points were raised:
 - i. The regulations are pointless without enforcement towards compliance, but they are a necessary first step for enforcement.
 - ii. The State of New Hampshire has specific guidelines for State roads and that there may be conflict and a safety concern with asking OHRVs to ride single file and at a speed of 10 mph. Molly provided RSA's for review. We agreed we need a clarification from the Select Board.
 - iii. The Select Board does have the authority to place speed limits and riding regulations for OHRV's on the town roads.

- iv. The Select Board did a good job in finding a compromise in this policy to re-open the roads, and in setting parameters to protect the Town, residents, and riders.
- v. Road signage is crucial. Bill and Troy stated that the Clubs want to post and pay for the signs. The signs would be metal and mounted to make it difficult to remove. It was suggested the Club make the offer directly to the Select Board.
- vi. Road Closure. There were questions regarding the policy to close the roads before spring road ban and hunting season. It was asked if the policy should list specific times of year such as Memorial Day to Columbus Day? If the roads should remain open during the winter months? Why are the trails open during the winter months when neighboring towns are closed? These questions will be asked at the next Select Board meeting.
- vii. The Committee agreed it would be important to raise the concerns and bring questions to the Select Board. More research may be necessary before requesting a change of speed limits or road travel requirements. Also, residents of affected roads, should be consulted before adopting these specific requirements. Jamie offered to connect with the Select Board to arrange a meeting to continue the discussion.

D. Law Enforcement

- a. It was mentioned that Town road closures are less of a concern to the ATV/Snowmobile Club. The Clubs want to continue to focus on supporting the landowners in keeping the trails open to ATV and Snow machine recreation. The Clubs do not have the means to handle or resolve complaints that should be handled by law enforcement (Fish & Game or State Police).
 - i. The Clubs are requesting the Town to consider re-establishing town enforcement based on the thought that there is a large amount of funds available in the budget because of newly built homes in Stratford.
 - 1. It was stated that the reviving of the town Police Department will be expensive, and the town is facing some serious budget challenges.
 - 2. A suggestion was made to inform and to engage the community on how best to handle OHRV complaints. Sharing scenarios and details on who to call with a listing of phone numbers. The point was made that if there is a community movement to properly report and record the complaints then those records can be shared with the State to prove the need for increased law enforcement.
- b. NHOHVA (New Hampshire Off Highway Vehicle Association) continues to press for legislation to increase funding for enforcement in the North.
- c. The Committee agrees that increased law enforcement is vital in the success of OHRV's. How to get the State of New Hampshire to recognize the need and provide the funding is the challenge. It was mentioned that joining efforts with Towns and Clubs that are experiencing issues could make us harder to ignore.

E. Next Meeting

- a. The next virtual meeting is scheduled for December 21, 2020.

