



VERMONT MOUNTAIN BIKE ASSOC.
SINCE  1997

VMBA Board Orientation Packet

Mission Statement: To ensure the sustainable future of mountain biking in Vermont.

Vision Statement: To inspire a Vermont filled with individuals reinvigorated by the beauty and challenges found in natural places in a manner that promotes community, ecological awareness and transcends the distractions of our time.

Cause: To connect Vermonters to the value of thoughtfully planning for the future of outdoor recreation and to strengthen the relationships that can be realized our collective potential.

How:

- Developing key relationships
- Advocacy/lobbying
- Collaborating with chapters & their boards of directors
- Growing and actively engaging the membership
- Developing and effectively utilizing the VMBA Board of Directors
- Supporting the executive director & office staff
- Creating strategic partnerships & sponsorship
- Innovating programming
- Fuel an environment of innovation

What:

- Trails
- Experiences
- Events
- Relationships
- Measurable community outcomes

Why:

VMBA creates and develops vibrant communities that are emboldened by

outdoor recreation and a connection to natural environments in support of outcomes that benefit the world:

- Access to family recreation
- Help to ensure physically and emotionally healthy individuals
- Dedicate resources to diversifying mountain biking participation
- Illustrate the need to lift up the value of volunteerism
- Build grit, character and focus through spending time in the woods
- Embolden Vermont's business and entrepreneurial opportunities

Guiding Values:

- Sustainably constructed, open access trails
- Playing a key role in stewarding Vermont's active landscape through building an aware and connected riding community
- Maintaining excellent working relationships with riders, chapters, sponsors and partners
- Representing the interests of riders through effective advocacy

Historical Perspectives:

VMBA was founded in 1997, but mountain biking predated the creation of VMBA by many years. For decades riding in Vermont was characterized by a combination of rogue building and limited connection to public land managers. The riding culture in Vermont is deeply rooted and among the very best in the country.

VMBA hired its first executive director in 2007, which marked the first time that riders had a voice of advocacy. At that time, VMBA was developing relationships with public land managers and involving more chapters. From 1997 to 2013, chapters were not collectively represented and operated in isolation. The board of directors was comprised of all the chapters' presidents and membership hovered around 1,200 riders.

In 2014, VMBA launched the statewide membership model, which included the add-on platform. This shift has meant amazing things for the association:

- Membership reached 5,300+ in 2018
- The number of chapters has doubled since 2013
- Add-ons grew from 78 in 2015 to 1,260 in 2018
- VMBA has developed multiple programs ([VOICe](#), [DH in VT](#), [Regional Alliance](#), [VT Bike Shop Alliance](#) and a stellar set of [member benefits](#))
- Umbrella 501c3 status & insurance for chapters and their directors
- Membership services including: customer service, member materials packing/mailing, which included chapters' letters, stickers, etc.

- Postage for membership materials, database management, tax reporting and event support for chapters

VMBA at a Glance:

- Founded in 1997
- **Impact:**
 - 100+ new miles of trails constructed since 2013
 - 35,000 hours of logged volunteerism annually connecting people to place throughout VT
 - 380% increase in membership since 2013
 - Chapter trail grant increased from \$6,000 in 2013 to \$72,500 in 2018
 - Family memberships have increased 45% over the past four years
 - United 30+ VT businesses around the [member benefits](#) program
 - United 33 bike shops through the [Bike Shop Alliance](#) program
 - Developed the [Regional Alliance](#) with seven other MTB orgs
 - Innovated a successful commercial business partnership model - [VOICe](#)
- **Position in the competitive landscape** - VMBA views other trail-based nonprofits in Vermont and beyond as allies in advocacy. The largest source of competition is the fever pitch over sponsorship and grant dollars in Vermont.
- **Key Staff:**
 - Tom Stuessy, Executive Director, hired in 2012
 - State advocacy
 - Grants
 - VOICe
 - Trails & Greenways Council
 - Vermont Trails Alliance
 - VOREC
 - Internal financial controls
 - Chapters
 - Sponsorship
 - Contracts/MOUs
 - Allison Martanuik – Database, chapter program & office, hired in 2016 (part-time)
 - Member database
 - Chapter program
 - Member services
 - Daily finances

- Office management
- Jacob Grossi – Events & Outreach, hired in 2015 (part-time)
 - Raffle
 - Events
 - Member benefits
 - Sponsorship
 - Social media
 - Grants
- Financial data and board meeting minutes can be found on the [Association Documents Page](#).

VMBA Board of Director Governance:

The association has matured a great deal over the past five years. This growth can be attributed to the level of dedication among the chapters and the unrelenting effort of passionate board members.

Primary VMBA Board Responsibilities:

1. In concert with the executive director, develop organizational purpose, mission and vision
2. Annually review key staff and board of director performance through self and peer evaluations
3. Play a measurable role in securing financial support for the organization
4. Be accountable to peer board members by actively engaging and measurably progressing the goals of key board committees
5. Work with the executive director to approve and monitor programs
6. Engage regularly in strategic planning

Board Diversity:

VMBA is committed to building a diverse board of directors in both demographics and expertise. Board participation isn't attached to riding ability in any way. VMBA is eager to build a board that shares a passion for the grand outcomes that accompany collective achievement.

Board Terms:

Board terms are three years and service is capped at two consecutive terms. The executive team consisting of the chair, vice chair, treasurer and secretary may not be first year board members. Information about these roles can be found in VMBA's [Bylaws](#)

Meetings:

1. Prepare for and participate in no less than 80% of director meetings each year – we have 11 scheduled meetings annually plus one annual meeting
2. Propose agenda items in a timely manner – roughly a week in advance to give the chair time for follow up and to prepare and distribute the agenda document
3. Actively engage, ask questions that move the conversations/agenda forward, be willing to engage other board members

Committees:

Serve on at least one committee. A member of the board will lead each committee. In coordination with the executive director, each committee will generate annual goals, provide meeting inputs and seek support from the office in a manner that matches available bandwidth for the following key areas of operations or as others become necessary:

- a. Marketing and public relations
- b. Government policy
- c. Chapter relations
- d. Finance
- e. Development
- f. Ambassadors
- g. Annual evaluations
 - i. Key staff
 - ii. Board of directors - self & peer

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest:

1. Serve the organization as a whole rather than any special interest of isolated individual(s), groups or constituency
2. Maintain confidentiality of the board's executive sessions and speak for the board only when authorized to do so through a united decision of the executive team
3. Disclose any potential conflicts of interests in a timely manner
4. Never accept or offer gifts to anyone or entities that do business with VMBA

Development/Relationship Building:

1. As a team of directors, participate in the annual fund by:
 - a. Establishing an annual fundraising goal as a board and creating a plan to achieve desired outcomes
 - b. Gifting cash or non-cash donations according to personal means – pursue a matching gift from employer when available
2. Work with board peers to augment the annual fund list of contacts each year

3. Agree to authentically engage, recognize and thank current and potential supporters in acts of “outgiving our givers” on an ongoing basis – defined as:
 - a. Sharing names of potential new donors with the executive director on an ongoing basis to continually build the annual fund list
 - b. Writing and sending personalized notes of appreciation to current and potential supporters in our community each month
 - c. Share innovative ideas to thank our supportive stakeholder groups
 - d. Inviting those in your own contact list to attend special VMBA events and to give to the annual fund

The following links are excellent resources to learn more about the legal and ethical duties of a board member:

- The National Council of Nonprofits provides this rubric for [How to be a Great Nonprofit Board Member](#) plus a guide for self-evaluation.
- [Performance Expectations for board members](#) as outlined by nonprofit board development consultant, Simone Joyaux.
- [Thoughts on Fundraising and Development](#) by Common Good Vermont, the state’s resource for nonprofit organizations.
- [Legal Requirements of Boards of nonprofit organizations](#) as outlined by the National Council for Voluntary Organizations.
- [Nonprofit board governance as outlined by the Vermont Secretary of State](#) and a direct link to the [Vermont Statutes Title 11B on Nonprofit Corporations](#)
- The Vermont Attorney General’s guide for new board members, [Understand your responsibilities: Guidelines for board members of charitable nonprofit organizations in Vermont.](#)
- An interesting guide for [Building an Effective Nonprofit Board](#) and establishing mutually agreed upon expectations.
- The [IRS Federal Compliance Guide for 501\(c\)\(3\) Public Charities](#) and [VMBA’s previous year’s Form 990 Income Tax Exemption Returns.](#)

Thank you for your interest in joining the VMBA Board of Directors. To set up a meeting with a board member to discuss your interest and candidacy, please send an email to Tom at: tom@vmba.org and insert, "VMBA BOD Candidate" in the subject line.

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