

Regional Conservation Partnership Meeting
Monday, February 4, 2019; 1:00 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Kevin Dorn, SB City Manager; Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Holly Rees, SB Director of Recreation & Parks; Richard McGuire, Manager, Town of Williston; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Gail Albert, Chair Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Sarah Tischler, St. George Selectboard

Meeting kicked off around 1:05 PM.

Introduction & welcome. Overview of why South Burlington is interested in working to form a regional conservation partnership. See “Ideas for Regional Conservation Partnership Planning Meeting” document.

Roundtable discussion of sources of funding for conservation in each municipality –

- South Burlington: 1 cent from the tax base that goes towards land acquisition and ½ cent that goes towards the land management of three identified natural areas/parks.
 - In the middle of Interim Zoning. City is interested in identifying priorities for conservation and identifying where natural resource connections are within the City how they connect with our neighbors.
 - Interested in facilitating the conservation of land, even if it’s not in South Burlington.
- Shelburne: City does not have a cent every year that would go towards conservation. The Committee has to go and request the 1 cent every year. It is usually a ballot item. Funding is not guaranteed and it is not consistent. Dollars received from this request are only for land acquisition.
 - Shelburne is not managing land extensively – there is minimal management. They do not have a dedicated person for management of natural areas.
 - Their natural areas are not used for active recreation (like playground use).
 - Had a prioritization toll for people when they were looking at conserving land. Now there’s a questionnaire to help prioritize types of land.
- Hinesburg: There is no consistent budget item for conservation. Any dollars that would come from the budget are dependent on the Conservation Commission/the Hinesburg Land Trust submitting a request.
 - They have help from their local land trust.
 - There is a lot of active “working land” (ag).
 - They have interest in a forested parcel south of Shelburne Pond that would aid in connectivity.
 - They have a Green Space Plan that was developed by their Conservation Commission.
- Williston: They have had an environmental reserve fund since 1990.
 - They have previously done a prioritization of parcels and identified important parcels.
 - Would like to re-do that prioritization so that they can understand the natural resource values within a parcel when it comes up for sale.

- St. George: Have never had an allocation of money targeted for land conservation.
 - There is an interest in land conservation. So far there is only one permanently conserved parcel in St. George.
 - There has been a desire for a Conservation Commission.

Partner Interests/Needs –

South Burlington: Mainly interested in the partnership as a whole. Would like to start with the identification of new conservation projects (regardless of where those are located), and possibly including some education/outreach with a program like Weed Warriors that would work across the partnership area.

Williston: Interested in the partnership as a whole. Has a broader interest in the opportunity to strategize with other community planners and manage land as a partnership rather than a solo entity.

We need to work on identifying the maps and information that each municipality has already. CCRPC could potentially be used to help with that gathering process. Getting a map, potentially from CCRPC, would assist the partnership in identifying conservation priorities, especially as they relate across boundaries.

St. George: Interest in having information to share with citizens on Town Meeting Day. How can we get ready for that? What information can we share then?

Shelburne: Interested in reaching out to Charlotte to determine if they are interested in participating in this partnership. They have a land trust and work regularly with the Lewis Creek Association (like Hinesburg).

Notes Moving Forward –

- It is important to understand where important natural resource connections are – both for the partnership to move forward, and for any funders or land trusts. (Hinesburg)
- Prioritize land parcels based on natural resources found within them so that a parcels value is well understood when it comes up for sale – the partnership can be proactive and not reactive.
- CCRPC has already done some mapping of conservation priorities and of natural resources. Potentially work with them to make a regional map highlighting those needs. Either through a UPWP or there is possibly a connection to Shelburne’s previous work to do this.
 - Goal would be to create a map that consistently identifies natural resources, conservation priorities, and conserved lands across the region (rather than have individual maps that can’t be used together).
- Continue discussing the possibility of expanding South Burlington’s Weed Warrior (citizen based volunteer corps for land management) across the region.
 - Could stick with invasive plants, or could target another management need that is more important to the partnership (i.e.: monitoring of small BMPs for water quality; wildlife tracking project; installation of native vegetation as part of restoration project; etc.)
 - Could be an opportunity to educate citizens with the region about the partnership and then engage them in positive land stewardship work that furthers the conservation goals of the partnership.

- South Burlington & Williston have been working with UVM class NR206 and have had interest from two students to do a senior capstone project that looks at this partnership.
 - The group felt that a community survey would really benefit the partnership, especially in identifying conservation priorities and who might be interested in volunteering and for what.
 - There was a suggestion of community meetings with the students to bring people together and begin a conversation.
- Town Meeting Day in March: Will we have information to share with community members for this? What should we share with community members?
- Hone in on language that could resemble an “accord” between municipalities. This would be something that would resemble a formal collaboration and not a contract. Draft language was provided in the “Ideas for Regional Conservation Partnership Planning Meeting” document. Ashley will work on refining that based on the meeting discussion and will send a draft around for comment.

Next Steps –

- Follow-up Meeting: **Friday, February 22, 2019; 1 PM; Champlain Room, City Hall South Burlington**
- Draft Mission/Vision and potential ‘accord’ language to be sent around to the group before then for revisions and comments.
- South Burlington to reach out to CCRPC and discuss participation in this group and the need for mapping assistance.
- Shelburne to reach out to Charlotte to determine interest in participation in this group.
- Municipalities should send out partners to add to our partner list. Goal will be to invite partners to the 3rd Meeting of this group.