

Regional Conservation Partnership Meeting
Friday, May 3, 2019; 9:00 AM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Daryl Arminius, Town Planner, Town of Charlotte; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission

Absent: Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Commission

Meeting began at 9:05 AM.

Round of introductions.

Discussed modifications to the agenda based on absences. Item number 6 was amended and noted as needing to be discussed at a later meeting due to CCRPC not being present. The group decided to expand the orientation discussion to gather feedback from Charlotte as this was their first meeting. Partner News/Updates was moved to the end.

There were a few minor changes to the Minutes.

Discussion regarding Charlotte's Interest in RCP & Needs (Extension of RCP Overview Conversation) –

Bob reiterated Hinesburg's concerns related to involvement in the RCP being amount of participation and time commitments. They want to be on the same page with other municipalities. Suggestion of including whether a parcel has a management plan in the mapping conversation; and we discussed that perhaps consistent management plans for conserved properties is something that comes out of this RCP.

Charlotte began the discussion by indicating an interest in bringing the RCP idea and the agreement to their Planning Commission, and that they feel the Planning Commission should be the body signing off on any agreement. Having the Planning Commission involved may mean the RCP would be more applicable. In Charlotte, conservation is always at the forefront of the Planning Commission's mind.

Shelburne originally thought the Selectboard would sign off. Should the Council/Selectboards designate a signatory? The legislative bodies should vote on it. Maybe South Burlington should be the first municipality to vote and sign to encourage the signage of the agreement by other Selectboard Chairs.

Charlotte feels that the RCP initiative should be included somehow in municipal plans. Their Planning Commission is involved in conservation projects. Their development regulations are also focused around conservation. They have put language into their municipal plan related to Act 171. Charlotte

could use help with park planning and management, which they feel South Burlington does well. They also utilize Open Space Agreements, and suggested that these might be of use in other partnership municipalities. Daryl offered to share an example of this agreement with others in the group.

It was discussed that whoever does sign the agreement should do so with the consent of the Town/City and be comfortable signing it as a representative of the whole Town/City. It was suggested that partners take the agreement back to their Boards and have this conversation.

Revised Partnership Agreement (see draft accord document) –

The agreement conversation began in the previous section and spilled over into the originally bulleted agenda item.

Discussion around partnership meeting times came up. It was discussed that eventually these meetings would move to quarterly; prior to that they may be monthly; and for now, they will be more regular until the group gets settled.

Before officially finalizing the agreement as presented at this meeting, Charlotte still needs to take it and the RCP idea to their Planning Commission. Daryl is hoping to get it on the next agenda, which is May 16th. South Burlington indicated that the hope was to get this item on the Council's May 20th agenda, but that could get pushed back depending on what happens with Charlotte. Ashley will be discussing this with Kevin.

The group then discussed PR Event details for announcing the partnership and officially signing the agreement. Ideally, there would be an outside event. Maybe the agreement would already be signed, and we could have a "large check-type" document that folks could sign for picture purposes. It was also suggested that this be a "planting" event. Any other fun takes on an event like this?

Shelburne suggested conducting the event at the Ewing property to highlight a more recent conservation project that crosses boundaries. The project should close in June, and there are opportunities for a nice picture that's easily accessible. This would be a very positive location for this type of event.

The group discussed a possible name for the RCP. Alex had sent Ashley a name suggestion and the group seemed to like it: Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership. This name would allow for potential future expansion of the group to include other municipalities. Ashley made note of it and indicated she would run it by others that weren't present at the meeting.

The group discussed the original timeline that South Burlington had discussed for a possible PR event related to the signing of the agreement. It had been suggested that the week of June 17th might be ideal, and preferably sometime between the 17-19, mid-morning (11 AM). The group felt that decisions should be made after hearing how things go with Charlotte's Planning Commission. Shelburne indicated the only conflict date-wise was the 19th. Ashley stated she would also check on dates/times with the rest of the group.

Ashley asked for folks to send her names and contact information for any individual that should be added to a contact list for this event.

The group also discussed possibly having a map for the event. It was decided that it was still premature to have a map, even just a simple map. That the group does not want to share information that may not be 100% accurate.

South Burlington indicated they would be able to host an area on its website to place information relevant to the partnership. Folks generally thought this was ok, especially in the sense of sharing meeting agendas, minutes, and other basic information. Eventually, a website would be a good place to share maps.

Ashley also asked for individuals to share municipal logos that could go on invitations related to a PR event.

Discuss: Mapping by CCRPC –

The group briefly discussed this item. It was suggested that maybe the partnership conservation parcels as short and long-term conservation parcels. This may help depict what is more vulnerable and help the group set priorities.

Ashley said she would resend the latest CCRPC map to Daryl.

Presentation: UVM NR206 Project –

Mike Perrin and Phoebe Paron presented their NR206 project to the group. They provided a final report which included a discussion of the identification of various community conservation commonalities and potential future NR206 projects that would help the RCP.

The students discussed their realization that an RCP is really a long-term process. They stated they would provide Ashley with contact information for Bill Labich from the Highstead Foundation, a group involved in helping RCPs form.

They suggested that RCP partners should look at the future listing of projects to get ideas and targets and review Next Steps.

Some common themes they noted were the mention of water connection, riparian and waterway buffers, incorporating wetlands, and forest block connectivity. Overall, connectivity was incredibly important to each municipality.

They suggested a survey of Town Planners and communities to help determine priorities. They also pushed for the group to continue working on mapping out priorities, and highlighting connections. It might be a good idea to consider mapping wetland and vernal pool protections (map of natural features). There did seem to be a gap with inconsistencies of municipalities having management plans and mapping.

All communities were interested in maintaining their rural character. There is an opportunity for education and outreach, and for the RCP to create events and programming to engage. Another idea was expressed related to the creation of a regional map showing safe trail connections. This could be a future NR 206 project where students could develop routes, do the GPS work, and cross-promote healthy lifestyles and natural areas.

Ashley indicated she would make sure the entire group receives a copy of the student's final report.

The RCP's summer task could be to determine project ideas for the fall NR 206 class.

Partner News &/or Updates –

South Burlington handed out flyers for their upcoming summer Weed Warrior invasive removal events. They also let the group know that they are updating their process for creating and reviewing management plans on City-owned land. The City's NRC is also looking at how to get management plans included in development regulations for long-term plans. Shelburne noted that they have interim management plans for projects.

Charlotte is improving their open space agreement template. It was designed around a Planning Commission decision.

Someone suggested installing wildlife cameras to document presence of wildlife and to share those images and information with the general public. The NR 206 students also indicated this would be a possible NR 206 class project. UVM already has wildlife cameras that could be used.

Next Steps –

It was decided that the next meeting would be scheduled based on Charlotte's decision related to the RCP and the agreement.