

Regional Conservation Partnership Meeting
Friday, June 7, 2019; 1:00 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Maddie Zimmerman, Conservation Intern, Town of Williston

Absent: Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission, Daryl Arminius, Town Planner, Town of Charlotte

Meeting began at 1:05 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

There was some discussion of whether the presented draft minutes from May 3rd had been altered from a previous version, and Ashley indicated that she had not altered the minutes.

There was no other discussion related to the minutes and no changes made to the minutes.

Partner News and/or Updates –

South Burlington reminded everyone about their upcoming Weed Warrior invasive plant removal events and announced two new Community Hiking events at Red Rocks Park in August. All are invited to participate in any of these. The hiking events are part of the City's efforts to engage the public in a revision/update to that park's management plan. The Chittenden County Forester, Ethan Tapper, and State Ecologist, Eric Sorenson, will be leading these events for the City.

Hinesburg reported on their events for National Trails Day. It was a good community engagement opportunity. In their Town Forest, there is a logging job related to the forest management plan. It is being led by County Forester Ethan Tapper.

Williston has been working with some boy scouts to remove garlic mustard. The Williston Master Naturalists have also created a nice list of summer and fall events that the public can participate in (invasive removals, bird walks, etc.). It was asked whether Williston provides any funding to the Master Naturalist group – they have given some money, which is compiled with the fees associated with registering for the Master Naturalist program.

Shelburne noted that the Town's Natural Resources & Conservation Committee and Trail Committee aren't always sure who should do what in Shelburne. That there is often confusion over roles. Shelburne went on to report that The Nature Conservancy portion of the Ewing Property project has closed. The third of the property that involves the farmer and the Vermont Land Trust has slowed some.

It sounds like a development component of this project has complicated it some. It was discussed that perhaps in the future, this group could help conversation revolving around conservation and development. The South Burlington Land Trust has played a role in this project and wants to see it happen. They kicked in some money and convinced the South Burlington City Council to put some City money towards the project.

The South Burlington Land Trust mentioned that they have been working with the South Burlington Master Naturalists and talked with them about the history of natural resources in South Burlington. That program has graduated its first class and is gearing up for its second class. Sarah went on to describe the South Burlington Committee experience, and roles, in response to Shelburne's Committee comment.

Partnership Agreement –

South Burlington and Shelburne have taken the agreement to their Councils and Selectboards respectively, and it has been signed by both bodies. Williston is hoping to take it to their Selectboard in mid-June, and Hinesburg is as well, though Hinesburg is concerned that it could get bumped further out.

Ashley wanted to discuss a possible PR event associated with the signing of the agreement. She recapped the discussion at the May meeting, and told partners that there was the idea of holding something at the Ewing Property to highlight the regional collaboration on the conservation of a parcel. Ashley and Dean had also discussed the possibility of holding a community engagement activity through South Burlington's Weed Warriors. TNC has been receptive to this idea and is interested in discussing it further. Ashley relayed that suggested dates for an event in July had been mid-July, with Tuesday through Thursday being the preferred time frame.

Hinesburg indicated that it was unlikely any dignitaries would make it to an event like this. Alex suggested that the group focus on a press release with a nice picture, and a gathering of the public to do an invasive event. Overall, the group discussed that getting print coverage would be more important than any TV coverage.

Since South Burlington had offered to oversee the creation of this PR event, Ashley noted that she would be taking this back to the City's public relations officer, and re-thinking the goal of the event. As the group discussed the Ewing Property as being the possible location, it was noted that any event that does happen, needs to be coordinated with Shelburne. The focus for a press release would need to be on the regional collaboration and conservation opportunities, rather than public access/use of the site. Ashley stated that once she received updates from Williston and Hinesburg regarding the agreement, she would work with staff at City Hall to choose possible event dates and send those out to the group.

Dean noted that the last local coverage for the Ewing Project was in March of 2019, and it was in regards to TNC's fundraising for the project. It would be important to coordinate any press release or event with TNC.

The group also noted that we need to get a status update from Sarah regarding St. George's interest in the group.

Discuss: Mapping by CCRPC –

The group reviewed the Vermont Protected Lands Geospatial Data Standard. Several questions were posed – How should we divide up any maps generated from this partnership? How many maps should there be? Which standards does the group feel are most important? Which standards do we want to include in our maps?

The question was posed: Do we include Charlotte? The group decided that, at this time, we would not include Charlotte since they won't be an active member in the partnership.

Melanie asked the group to provide her with any parcel information that might be missing from the regional draft she created. She indicated she would start working on a list of parcels and attributes to share with the group and get feedback. It was decided that she would create an online map that would allow each partner the opportunity to comment.

Several attributes were discussed, but the group stressed the need for any data or information to be used consistently. The group also discussed the definition of conservation and what falls into that definition. The idea that development regulations and fee ownership or no conservation status parcels could be a tool for future maps to help identify gaps and opportunities in the region. Overall, it was agreed that we need to define what conservation looks like to us so that everyone understands our objective when we present our final mapping.

The group needs to inventory and identify any development regulation/open space agreement parcels. Melanie indicated she would check with VCGI to see if they've considered those parcels and how they have worked with them on projects. The group briefly discussed active use parks. The existing data doesn't really include "use type", and the group decided we should inquire about that as well.

Next Steps: Melanie is going to create an editable map online and have it for the group in August. In the meantime, the group has been asked to send her information/date on any missing parcels from the current draft regional map.

Discuss: New Partners? –

The group decided that until we have a fully signed agreement, that we should hold off on discussing the addition of other partners until at least the fall.

Discuss Next Meeting –

The group decided to schedule two upcoming meetings, and those dates/times are:

July 25th, 2:00 PM

August 29th, 2:00 PM

Ashley said she would send out calendar invites. Both meetings will be in the Champlain Room at the South Burlington City Hall.

The meeting was adjourned.