

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Wednesday, September 25, 2019; 2:30 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning ; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Kate Kelly, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department; Kaylie Haberstroh, UVM, NR206; Kylie Hanley, UVM, NR206; Sydney Pleasic, UVM, NR206; Jillian Scannell, UVM, NR206

Absent: Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission

Meeting began at 2:35 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

Changes or additions to Agenda –

It was discussed that agenda item #7 (Update: NR206 Project Selection) be moved up to allow the students an opportunity to leave before the end of the meeting. All agreed.

Update: NR206 Project Selection –

It was announced that the UVM NR206 project selection was the “Rent-a-Goats” project, and the group of students was at the meeting to present their scope of work for the project.

The students provided an overview of the NR206 class, and reviewed the next steps for them. They put together a project proposal for review by the partnership. They went over the project goals and objectives for the group’s comment and feedback. They are interested in coming to the partnership’s November meeting to provide a final presentation to the partnership.

Melinda suggested the students look at the pros and cons of having a program like this. Ashley suggested that maybe they look at state and local regulations for permitting that may be required if doing this kind of project. The students are considering reaching out to Town Managers to discuss whether there would be any budget constraints to consider. Sarah asked if they could look into whether there are any concerns utilizing goats around solar panels and their related infrastructure. Additional feedback included research on what plants goats will eat, sites to consider using them on? Dean suggested the students focus on how this program would be more beneficial to the partnership, rather than the general public. Another question was how a program like this could spread throughout Vermont and possibly help Vermont farmers.

Ashley reminded the students to check in with her if they run into questions or have problems moving forward. She will also send them an invite to the November meeting.

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

There was no discussion and the August minutes were accepted.

Update: PR/engagement event –

Ashley reviewed the date and time of the engagement event at the Ewing Parcel on October 19th, from 9 am – 11 am. The group also reviewed the recent draft of the press release, with Dean's comments.

The group suggested some changes to the recent press release, focusing on Dean's comments and improving some of the language throughout. Ashley indicated that she would work on revising the language in the press release, and get the City's Public Information Officer to finalize and put out. Once there is a final press release, Ashley will send that around to the partners.

There was a brief discussion of the event waiver. In regard to the event parking, Ashley noted that she was trying to work with The Nature Conservancy representative on finalizing where folks can park. Dean suggested that he could connect with his contact at Bread & Butter Farm, but he should do that soon. Ashley would connect with Dean after reaching out to TNC to finalize parking.

In regards to parking, there was some discussion related to suggesting that individuals car pool from the different Towns, and the idea of having folks meet at City Hall and then park along the main lane.

Mapping Project –

Melinda led this conversation for Melanie. She noted that the online map viewer is not quite ready yet. She had questions about what was being displayed and what was not. Her recommendation is to wait for Melanie to get back before getting to work on the map.

She initiated a conversation about the Vermont data standards. What level of p-type does the partnership need to get to? For example: Is fee ownership enough, or do we need to state what kind of fee ownership it is? It was suggested that it would be easier to enter the most detail about a parcel now rather than having to re-open this project and re-enter data later.

Another question that came up was where open space agreements fit in? Should the partnership have a conversation with folks that maintain the database? It was discussed that we should start this conversation with Melanie, and ask if we could add data.

Someone asked about whether there is a way to sort data so that the most frequently used data shows up first.

To end the discussion, it was noted that we need to reconnect with Melanie to get the map working. It might be useful to send the cheat sheet and guide around to partners again once it's time to get working on the viewer.

Discuss: Additional Partners –

Does the partnership want to discuss a strategy for connecting with and attracting new partners?

There was a brief discussion of where to best use the land trusts, like VLT & TNC. They may have information about conservation strategies and identifying conservation opportunities that could be useful information for our mapping project. Jens suggested that their work might be too reactive for the purpose of our project. That it might be better to engage with the land trust(s) after we have identified the actual projects to work on.

The basic strategy all agreed on at this point is to connect with partners when we have specific projects in mind.

Discuss Next Meeting Date/Time/Location –

It was decided that our November meeting (11/20 at 2:30 pm) should be kept in place, but that the December meeting should be canceled. We will get back together in January.

Partner News and/or Updates –

Shelburne mentioned that they are dealing with a beaver problem. There are beavers building dams around bridge infrastructure. They have been wondering how to best handle these incidents. Is the best method to capture and kill the beavers? Who are the right entities to be involved with making these decisions? The Town of Stowe recently adopted a beaver policy, which enforces the consideration of management options before moving forward with killing the nuisance animals. Williston has dealt with this question in the past but does not have a policy due to controversy in the community. Jens stated that it is really important messaging the options for beaver management is really important. Shelburne is currently scoping how to best deal with beaver in their community.

Ashley announced that there is a Regional Conservation Partnership Network Gathering on November 13th, in Massachusetts. She also announced that the South Burlington Weed Warrior program was completed for the season.

Hinesburg is wrapping up their work on the natural resources inventory mapping contract.

The next meeting will be: October 23rd, 2:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned.