

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Wednesday, January 22, 2020; 2:30 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department; Lena Swishoki, Burlington resident (Master Naturalist Program?)

Absent: Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning ; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Kate Kelly, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington

Meeting began at approximately 2:35 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

Changes or additions to Agenda –

The group added a call to Mike Brouillette, VCGI, a call to walk through the state's protection standards and discuss applying them to our mapping project.

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

The minutes from the November 20, 2019, meeting were reviewed. There was a correction to the NR206 presentation notes. The changes were made and the minutes were accepted as amended.

Partner News and/or Updates –

Jens announced that Biofinder 3.0 was released today. It includes the newest Vermont Conservation Design community and species scale elements as well as fixes to the riparian wildlife connectivity component and separation of physical landscape diversity to include physical landscape blocks.

Sarah Dopp gave an update on the South Burlington Land Trust proposal Cents for Conservation. The Council has decided not to put anything on the ballot this March (not to compete with the school vote). The land trust has not dropped the idea. The City's IZ report has been released. Sarah has a copy of the 'short version'. It was presented to Council Tuesday night and there will be a public information meeting next Thursday. Sarah noted that the City's Natural Resources Committee chair has changed, and wanted to make sure that the next chair is invited to participate in the partnership. Ashley indicated that she is the liaison for the Committee and noted that it is going through a rough patch and does not have consistent Chair to invite to these meetings. When the Committee stabilizes, she will invite the new Chair to attend these meetings.

Gail talked about Shelburne's budget process and that there is a line item for open Space. Sean has been updating their mapping. Dean is working to consolidate language as it relates to conserved lands.

Hinesburg is going through a similar budget situation. There may be no funding for open space. They have started their natural resources inventory.

Mapping Project: Work Session –

The group called Mike Brouillette with VCGI to discuss Ptypes and how they were defined. He went through an overview of how the data was originally reviewed and created. They are currently going through and updating data standards to help their partners have more control over the data they edit/add. He then went through the current Ptype standards. Ptypes 1-5 mirror Pagency 1-5.

The group raised the question of: If there's an open space area conserved as a result of a DRB, should the partnership create a new Ptype or use one of the existing? It was noted that a lot of restrictions aren't always in the deeds, i.e.: Act 250. Mike noted that the standards are part of an evolving document. The group noted that we don't want to add too many fields that actually mean the same thing. There may also be cases where we don't want to put land in a protected lands database that only falls in a "Natural Resource Protection" are.

The group asked who else is utilizing the standards so that we can see how they're using the ptypes to describe parcels of land.

The group also asked if there is a process for providing feedback on using the standards. Mike indicated that they are considering a process to add/alter Ptypes to make sure datasets have continuity.

VCGI's recommended next steps: Mike will provide us with a blank template and we provide the standards based on the Ptype table initially provided. This would be in an attempt to import town data. Having a Town look at this data and interpret Ptype is a new thing. VCGI hasn't had Towns use this data yet. Mike will be updating the geodatabase template so he's asking us to wait a little.

Other questions: How to define fee owned properties that shouldn't be coded as protected? Can we get rid of deed restriction #23 (set aside area of development deed restriction)? Nobody is using that. Use that field and pave new ground for removing terms 'deed restriction'. Can we expand the use types to include those we think are missing or would be more valuable? We want to make sure that the data we input gets us to where we want to go.

The group agreed that any progress we can make on improving the data standards so that other municipalities can use them in an effort to further conservation priorities across boundaries would be great. It could be considered a second project, in addition to the mapping of our own region.

The group decided to continue chugging along on the mapping project. Make notes as needed and keep track of possible proposed changes to the data standards. Jens is offering to get new use codes in (send any possible use codes to Jens). It might be possible to merge Town zoning and cross that with conservation districts. Melanie has it at the City level, and will send it to Jens. This is not currently in the protected lands, but it could be a useful tool.

The group then viewed Melinda's attempts to display Williston's data in a story board.

St. George might need some assistance looking at their parcels to see what levels of protection are out there. Melinda offered to provide Sarah with some potential resources.

Melanie asked if we could send her a note when we've completed a bunch of edits so that she knows to download some new data.

Update: Spring NR206 Project –

Melinda submitted a project proposal focused on furthering the work related to goats and invasive plant management. This time the students are going to be working directly with the farmers. They will likely conduct a survey and maybe select pilot sites to try this effort out throughout the region. The goat farmers are currently applying for a grant to help fund equipment purchases for this endeavor. Melinda asked if the partnership would be willing to write a letter of support, and the group agreed that this was something we could do. Melinda was going to draft something for this.

The next meeting will be: February 26th 2:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned.