

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Wednesday, May 26, 2021; 1:30 PM
Remote GotoMeeting

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Abel Russ, St. George Development Review Board; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

Absent: Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Larry Lewack, Charlotte Town Planner; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Larry Kupferman, South Burlington Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Kate Kelly, Hinesburg Conservation Commission

Meeting began at approximately 1:35 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

Changes or additions to Agenda –

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

The minutes from the April 28, 2021, were reviewed. Sarah noted that she would send Ashley some minor grammatical edits. The group accepted the minutes noting the edits Sarah was going to provide.

Partner News and/or Updates –

South Burlington reminded partners that it has a webinar on spring ephemerals this evening. There has also been work to continue planning for an extensive trail network on the Auclair property.

Jens reported that there will be an update to the Vermont Conservation Design June 22-23. It will include habitat blocks, riparian connectivity, and interior forest connectivity.

Sarah relayed that there have been ongoing CCRPC discussions related to the I-89 exit study, specifically exits 12B and 13. Multiple public listening sessions have taken place.

Project Planning –

South Burlington is going to be looking into what funding options might be available internally to match any needed grant funding to support any of these potential projects. After visiting the Auclair property, Ashley noted that it might be a good candidate for a planting project through the Audubon grant.

Jens relayed that the Fish & Wildlife Department is going to have more money than they can spend on land conservation projects that have wetlands. He suggested that if the partnership has a list of potential projects, that it might be worth it to bring the whole list to the department for consideration.

Hinesburg and Williston sent a bigger picture view of potential projects within their boundaries. Alex noted that there might be a 300-acre conservation project adjacent to the Town Forest. Ashley is going to check with Melinda to see if there is anything more specific to add to the project list in the focus area. Ashley also asked if Melanie would be able to map potential projects on our larger map. She said yes. The group decided it would make more sense to map the focus area rather than individual project sites.

The group began discussing issues around engaging with landowners to discuss land conservation. Ashley suggested that perhaps this would be a good opportunity to consider hosting a workshop(s) to engage with various private landowner to talk about land conservation and protection. The Audubon grant money would allow for something like this, and we could make it a regional initiative to prevent the targeting of specific landowners. It would also make sense to bring other land trusts into this. Ashley said she would connect with Mark and VLT to see if there might be any interest in supporting a landowner workshop.

Structure & Organization of the Partnership –

The partnership discussed some next steps to begin strategizing the structure and organization of the group. Jens suggested that the group focus on the overall vision and mission. The group was reminded that this work had begun when the original accord was agreed to.

It was suggested that we all should take another look at the accord as a reminder of the vision and mission. Ashley said she would share this document with the entire group again. After looking at it briefly, Jens suggested that we might be able to form three groupings based on the vision, including: land protection, stewardship/management, and education/outreach. This could potentially form the foundation of work groups that would report back to the steering committee (or the whole group).

Regional Stewardship Discussion –

Ashley shared that the UVM NR206 group completed their group project for the City. She noted they had created some useful messaging templates to share important park information with users. These can be used on all social media platforms, and might be useful in sharing with others in the partnership to help create consistent messaging around stewardship issues. Alex noted that Hinesburg has some useful mud season language that they put out every year. He said he would share that with the group. Other ideas for messaging included: fire season, wildlife crossings (i.e.: amphibians).

Gail mentioned that she had recently heard details around appropriate invasive plant removal strategy, and that it would be a good idea to share proper technique with others in our communities.

Abel said he thinks there might be a gypsy moth outbreak near his house. Jens suggested he get in touch with the forest health specialist in the Essex Office.

Ashley said she would work on compiling all of the outreach information shared today and disseminate it to the group.

The next meeting is currently scheduled for: June 23rd at 1:30 PM. It will be remote and Ashley will send along those details as it gets closer.

The meeting was adjourned.