

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Wednesday, August 25, 2021; 1:30 PM
Remote GotoMeeting

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department; John Bossange, South Burlington Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Mark LaBarr, Audubon VT; Tim Larned, Winooski Valley Park District

Absent: Abel Russ, St. George Development Review Board; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; 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 –

Melanie asked if we could add a mapping update after agenda item #6. The group agreed.

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

There were no changes to the June 23rd minutes, and the minutes were accepted as-is.

Partner News and/or Updates –

Gail relayed that Shelburne is in the middle of filling vacancies in the planning office and they're having a little bit of trouble doing that.

Sarah noted that the SB Land Trust has an interest in any initiative working to connect with other landowners on conservation. There is an increased discussion on this topic in South Burlington. Gail asked how we would/could do that considering the sensitive nature of land conservation and maintaining landowner privacy.

Alex shared that Hinesburg is working with VLT and the Hinesburg Land Trust on a conservation opportunity adjacent to the Town Forest. The landowners are working to make available a 291-acre parcel for purchase. There will be trail access. It will likely be funded through the Vermont Housing Conservation Board. The Town is also interested in permanently conserving the existing 800 acres.

Project Discussion: South Burlington Goodrich Parcel –

Ashley provided an overview of the potential conservation projects associated with the Goodrich Parcel in South Burlington. This is a parcel that is adjacent to WVPD property. There is trail access, with potential to expand this access to the north. The City does not own the property, but it has a permanent easement on the property to allow for conservation, restoration, public access via trails, etc.

There had been a natural resource assessment and report completed to assist the City in considering this parcel for mitigation purposes, but mitigation was never pursued.

The City visited the parcel with Mark LaBarr, Audubon VT, and Nick Warner, WVPD, to discuss potential projects and partnership opportunities. Mark confirmed that it is a prime candidate for habitat restoration for golden winged warblers and woodcocks. He suggested it as the site where the RCP grant funds could be used to conduct invasive plant removal. Nick was also very supportive as any restoration work at the property would benefit theirs, and he even noted there may be future funds available for post-invasive removal plantings.

Mark recommended doing a site visit with Katie Kain to discuss additional habitat restoration work that the US Fish & Wildlife Service might be interested in and having funding for. There is a site visit scheduled with these parties in late September.

The City is also interested in looking into whether there are additional wetland restoration opportunities at the parcel. These could be similar to the recommendations proposed in the original mitigation report. Ashley is going to be working with the City's Natural Resources & Conservation Committee and the City Council to determine whether Open Space Project funds could be dedicated to pursue this.

Ashley is asking the partnership to support using the RCP funding from Audubon in the invasive removal effort at this parcel. The group has had a tough time determining other parcels that might be primed for this kind of work, and this parcel is ready to go. If the partnership chooses to support this effort, Ashley will then go on to request support from the City's Natural Resources & Conservation Committee.

The partnership discussed the recommendation and decided to support the use of the Audubon funds at the South Burlington Goodrich parcel.

Audubon VT & VLT Landowner Engagement Workshop: Nordic Farms -

Mark LaBarr was present to provide an overview of the upcoming workshop for potential conservation landowners at Nordic Farms in Charlotte.

Discuss & Develop Conservation Priorities –

In order to consider projects moving forward, the group discussed bringing in additional partners sooner rather than later to assist in project prioritization and facilitation. Land protection and land management/stewardship were the two most valued project types. There was some discussion around having a policy that structures how the group might pursue a potential project. At the end of the day, it was agreed that it may not make sense to have the partnership pursue specific projects – that it might not be the right entity to do so.

The conversation turned towards turning the selected focus area into a map and then developing an outreach piece that will tell the partnership's story, including how we selected the focus area and what conservation projects we are supportive of in this area. This story could be shared on a website, in community newsletters, newspapers, at events the partnership participates in, etc. Melanie could also produce a map that highlights the focus area in the region for incorporation into a narrative. The map

would contain municipal boundaries, the area of interest, and parcels of land that are owned or conserved. Ashley, Sarah, Jens (with a focus on articulating the natural resources values), and maybe Alex, agreed to begin the work of drafting a narrative. The goal is to have something for the group to review at the September meeting, with the hopes of finalizing in October.

As time was running out, the group reviewed the next meeting date/time, which is currently scheduled for: September 23rd at 1:30 PM. Ashley will send along those details as it gets closer.

The meeting was adjourned.