

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Wednesday, September 22, 2021; 1:30 PM
Remote GotoMeeting

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Abel Russ, St. George Development Review Board; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; 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: Alex Weinhausen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Don Rendall, Shelburne 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 –

Melanie requested the addition of a discussion related to the Vermont Master Naturalist Program and budgeting reminders. The group agreed to add this after agenda item #5.

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

The meeting minutes were reviewed from August 25th. One clarification was requested on page 2 of the minutes, and Ashley noted that she would revise the sentence in question. Minutes were accepted pending the revised sentence.

Partner News and/or Updates –

Gail shared that Shelburne is still looking for a planner. Their search has now been going on for three months.

St. George shared that they are looking to facilitate a community conversation and discuss what the Town should do with 85 acres of Town forestland. They are having external stakeholders join the conversation. They are still very early in the conversation. In addition to the Town forestland, there are two lots that have already been permitted and subdivided (does not include forested land). The Town needs to figure out what their focus should be in regards to this acreage. This dialogue started at their last Town Meeting Day. There was a question of selling the two lots, and this turned into the overall discussion of what the Town is doing with its land. St. George has some money for a facilitator. This land is in the center of the partnership's focus area. The Town seems to have an interest in pulling a voice from the partnership into their discussion when they get it going.

Sarah Dopp shared that South Burlington is still very much interested in furthering ideas related to landowner outreach. The City Council is gearing up to connect with landowners associated with 25 parcels identified as potential conservation opportunities during interim zoning.

Project Discussion: Mapping Update –

Melanie shared a first draft of a map that highlights the partnership's identified focus area/area of interest to eventually be combined with an outreach piece for the group. The group discussed different ways the map could depict various elements, from existing conserved parcels to layers associated with natural resources.

The group considered whether the focus area should include or exclude Richmond since they are not an official member of the partnership. The consensus was that it is important to include them because there is a large forest parcel in Richmond that is an integral part of habitat connectivity in the region. It would be a good idea to share this map with Richmond and see if they have any interest in joining the partnership officially.

The discussion centered largely around the blue are of interest outline and how best to display it. Jens noted that the blue line was developed using Vermont Conservation Design priority area. Adjusting the line would decrease the amount of specificity related to it. The main question was whether we should leave the "squiggle lines" or create more of a general rectangle shape. One thought was that the "squiggle lines" are important because they actually indicate a sense of care that was taken in specifying this important priority area for conservation, and it might be better for future conversations with potential landowners.

There was discussion around switching the underlying data set to more clearly depict forests and other notable areas. There was also an idea to adjust the transparency associated with conserved parcels in order to show some of the underlying natural resource data.

The immediate goal for this project is to create a map that can be handed out and shared easily. There could be a future goal of making this something that could be more web-friendly.

Discussion: Regional Vermont Master Naturalist Class Funding -

Melinda wanted to remind the partners that this budget cycle should include funding for the fall 2022 Vermont Master Naturalist class. The total Alicia had quoted the group for this class was 5K. If partners could budget anything from \$1,000-1,250, that would be appreciated.

There was also an overview of the class itself and how graduates of the class have assisted partners in the past for those that were not familiar with the program.

Project Updates –

Ashley briefly updated the partners on the status of the Goodrich parcel project since the last meeting. The City is going to continue to explore wetland restoration opportunities at the site. In the meantime, Audubon has initiated conversations with the invasive plant management crew to see what their availability might be this winter. There is also a site visit with Katie Kain (USFWS) next week to discuss

whether there might be funds from the USFWS to do additional habitat management work at the parcel. This site visit will also help determine an action plan for invasive plant work at the site this year.

Discuss Concept of Regional Land Equity & Access –

Ashley noted that this item was added to see whether there was any interest in the partnership to consider this topic for future discussions and how to do that. John noted that it would be a good idea to include some of the diverse voices that would be needed to further this idea along.

The discussion turned to who might be good entities/individuals to include in further discussions. Tim mentioned that the WVPD works a lot with New Farms for New Americans. There is also an Abenaki group at Ethan Allen.

Sarah Tischler suggested consideration of a land acknowledgement state as part of the partnership agreement. Jens noted that he could share an example of what one such statement looks like.

Another member suggested connecting with the Bhutanese community. And Ashley mentioned that Duncan at the Intervale might also have additional connections to further this conversation.

Next steps for this topic include connecting with folks and working to bring them into this group for this topic to better understand how the partnership might be able to further this idea.

Other Project Considerations – Landowner Engagement –

The group briefly discussed this as time was running out. The idea was to determine how best the partnership could engage residents in land conservation and what partners might be able to assist us. The group thought that it might be best to connect with folks at the Vermont Land Trust to see how the partnership could work with them to support their ongoing landowner engagement work.

The next meeting date/time is currently scheduled for: October 27th at 1:30 PM. Ashley will send along those details as it gets closer.

The meeting was adjourned.