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TO: Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington
FROM: Ashley Parker, City Project Manager *AP*
Cc: Tom Hubbard, Deputy City Manager
SUBJECT: Current Status of Open Space Projects and Funding
DATE: December 3, 2020

At the end of the fiscal year 2020, the Open Space Project Fund expenditure balance was approximately \$794,123.32 with approximately \$87,600.00 spent on improvements, land stewardship, and projects; and \$123,635.87 spent on the loan repayment.

The Open Space Task Force had created a list of Open Space Priorities that were both project specific and on-going for the following City Natural Areas: Red Rocks Park, Wheeler Nature Park, and the Underwood Parcel. Attached is that original document with an added update column indicating current project status. Below is a snap shot of which projects or related tasks have been completed to-date, as well as those projects that are underway for possible FY21 completion.

It is important to note that many projects did experience some delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic as staff was furloughed and there were conflicts with many of the consultants working with staff on projects. As a result, there are many projects that are now looking at implementation in late FY21 or FY22.

The projects/tasks completed to date are:

Red Rocks Park:

- Professional invasive plant management services throughout the growing season, including training of new City volunteers in connection with the Weed Warrior Program.
- Design and installation of new wayfinding signage in the park, including kiosks and interpretive signs.
- Consultants have completed the first phase of stormwater analysis at the park to assist us in determining permitting needs for the trail and stormwater projects.
- Continued conversation with state and local permitting authorities to discuss permitting requirements for the needed work at the park.
- Wetland delineation was completed in September. This was a requirement by the state for permitting.
- Working with consultants to continue permitting work with the goal of permitting and constructing at least two projects at the end of FY21/beginning of FY22. Projects wrapped into this permitting include: trail improvements, stormwater facilities, culvert protection at the beach, shoreline stability, and parking layout improvements.



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- Held two successful Community Hike events that were led by several representatives of the South Burlington and Williston Master Naturalist programs. More events were planned for the calendar year, but COVID cancelled many of them. These events are an effort to bring people into City Natural Areas to learn more about them and become more engaged in their management.
- Formed Management Plan Task Force and began meeting to discuss the revision/update process of the existing Red Rocks Management Plan. Project is in the update phase with the goal of presenting something to Committees in March/April 2021.

Wheeler Nature Park:

- Professional invasive plant management services throughout the growing season, including training of new City volunteers in connection with the Weed Warrior Program.
- Completed a review of existing wayfinding signage.
- Received language for five new interpretive signs created by a UVM NR206 group.
- A second UVM NR206 group completed mapping of invasive plant populations at Wheeler to upgrade the information already contained in City files.
- Working on design of all new wayfinding signs, to be installed end of FY21/early FY22.
- Received completed trail assessment report for the park, and set plan for phasing of needed trail maintenance projects.
- Completed maintenance on two trail segments – the Goldenrod Trail and the Park Road access trail. New puncheon was installed along the Goldenrod Trail, and stone stairs were installed along the access trail. Staff is planning out the implementation of additional trail projects to occur end of FY21/early FY22.
- Held two successful Community Hike events that were led by several representatives of the South Burlington Master Naturalist program. More events were planned for the calendar year, but COVID cancelled many of them. These events are an effort to bring people into City Natural Areas to learn more about them and become more engaged in their management.
- Began conversations with Audubon Vermont and US Fish & Wildlife to consider bird habitat management projects at Wheeler. Fish & Wildlife has grant money that is provided to Audubon to work on projects. Wheeler is a great site for invasive plant management that will support unique and rare bird species, and they would like to conduct this kind of work there. This work will build off the work already being done by City staff and through our Weed Warrior program via Mike Bald. Staff is working on finalizing an agreement with Audubon that would allow this work to take place over winter (during FY21).

Underwood Parcel:

- Professional invasive plant management services throughout the growing season. The Weed Warrior program was not able to kick off here this year due to COVID.



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- Staff worked with Common Roots to identify location for well and utility access and installation.
- A UVM NR206 group completed mapping of the existing trails on the Underwood parcel to aid staff in the planning of a more formal trail network. This group also identified places where wayfinding could go, as well as noting points of access throughout the property.
- Staff selected a design/engineer consultant to begin design of Phase 1 park facilities, including a proposed ~1,500 foot long shared use path connection. Plans are at 30% completion and have been presented to Committees for review and input. These plans will be going through the permitting process, with a goal of construction summer 2021.
- Staff released an RFP for the design of a viewing area, on-site parking, and pedestrian connectivity elements. These pieces were separated out from Phase 1 early on so that a more specialized consultant could be brought on to help create a more rustic feel for this element. Staff is hopeful that the construction of this element could be coordinated with the construction of the shared use path in 2021.
- Staff reviewed possibilities for on-street parking to allow for better access to the park by the public. DPW is able to stripe parking on Nowland Farm Rd. Adding markings to the street would also help slow traffic down on Nowland Farm by narrowing the lanes of traffic. Staff hopes to do this work in conjunction with the formalization of the trail network (spring 2021/early summer 2021).
- Staff engaged with a consultant to complete a trail assessment report to aid in the planning for trail formalization at the park. This work should begin fall 2020/spring 2021, with implementation planned for summer 2021.

Projects Underway for FY21 Completion:

Red Rocks Park:

- Completed permitting at the state and local level for proposed trail and stormwater projects within the park.
- Implement two priority trail improvement projects, including the formalization of a side trail, closure of CWD metal staircase and other unnecessary trails, and installation of relevant stormwater infrastructure. Plan implementation of other trail and park projects.
- Complete design work for shoreline stabilization project, to potentially include new plantings and riprap.
- Complete design work for the parking lot formalization project, to potentially include paving, striping, signage, fencing, and new gate.
- Complete design work for the beach culvert protection project, to potentially include a swale and a removal of the partially exposed pipe on the beach.
- Completion of another season of invasive plant removal work, including work by professional consultant and the City's Weed Warrior program.



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- Draft Update to the existing Red Rocks Park Management Plan prepared by the Management Plan Task Force.
- Submission of grant application(s) to supplement Open Space Funds for the trail improvement/stormwater work at the park.
- Continue Community Hike series at the park (schedule at least 3 hikes).

Wheeler Nature Park:

- Complete three additional trail maintenance projects identified in the Trail Assessment and Report (may initiate in FY21 and complete in FY22).
- Fabricate and install new wayfinding signs for the entire park.
- Completion of another season of invasive plant removal work, including work by professional consultant and the City's Weed Warrior program.
- Continue Community Hike series at the park (schedule at least 3 hikes).
- Initiate review and update of the existing Wheeler Nature Park Management Plan (work to be led by Management Plan Task Force).
- Initiate bird habitat management work in partnership with Audubon Vermont and the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Underwood Parcel:

- Complete the permitting, design and engineering, and construction of the shared use path connection, viewing area, on-site parking, and pedestrian connections as laid out in Phase 1 and Phase 1.2.
- Continue and expand upon the invasive plant removal work begun in FY 20, including work by professional consultant and the City's Weed Warrior program.
- Initiate Community Hike series at the park (schedule at least 3 hikes).
- Begin the design of wayfinding signage – identify the location of all signs and begin design of what information we need to display.
- Complete formalization of trail network on the property that will improve public access, including the identification of meadow and wood loops that clearly connect to each other.
- Upon completion of the Phase 1 and Phase 1.2 park elements, begin drafting park management plan in coordination with the Management Plan Task Force.