

## Burlington Conservation Board

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*Matt Moore, Chair  
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Scott Mapes  
Don Meals  
Jeff Severson  
Miles Waite  
Damon Lane  
Zoe Richards*



## Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 1, 2013 – 5:30 pm  
Planning & Zoning Conference Room – City Hall Lower Level  
149 Church Street

### Attendance

- **Board Members:** Miles Waite (MW), Damon Lane (DL), Don Meals (DM), Will Flender (WF), Zoe Richards (ZR), Matt Moore (MM), Scott Mapes (SM), Jeff Severson (JS)
- **Absent:** None
- **Public:** Joan White, Joanne Gardner (UVM students), Amy Sheldon (consultant)
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Planning & Zoning), Jesse Bridges, Dan Cahill (Parks & Recreation)

MM, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

### Minutes

Minutes of March 4, 2013

DL noted on pg. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> heading should read "Open Space Subcommittee" rather than "Public Comment."

A MOTION was made by DM and SECONDED by MW

Accept the minutes of March 4 as corrected.

Vote: 6-0-2

### Board Comment

SG noted the City Council resolution pertaining to the Urban Reserve.

DL addressed his draft resolution to the Council supporting the downtown parking amendment. SG noted that the amendment is awaiting review by the Council's Ordinance Committee. SM suggested noting the Board's support of shared parking, particularly public/private shared use.

MW suggested putting the communication on Board letterhead.

A MOTION was made by MW and SECONDED by DM

Support the proposed communication in letter format and to incorporate shared parking.

Vote: 8-0-0

### Public Comment

None.

### Open Space Subcommittee

WF noted today's meeting. The focus was on trails between Arms, Rock Point, and BHS. He also noted progress with the VNA's Archibald Street community garden property.

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## **Update & Discussion**

### **1. Ecological Assessment of the Urban Reserve**

Joan White & Joanne Gardner appeared on behalf of this item.

Joan White said she's considering an assessment of ecosystem services, particularly recreational and anticipated future benefits. There has been a focus on the wetland in the former tank farm. Joanne Gardner has done much of the assessment of the wetland. She's referred to the Vermont wetland rules as the basis for an assessment of its functions and values. The wetland doesn't rate well under the criteria. It mostly provides water storage. It is very close to Lake Champlain and is largely filled with phragmites and appears to be drying out. Conversely, it's better than impervious surface for dealing with runoff. It does have educational value and potentially recreational value too. Is there potential to reinvigorate the wetland, or does that open a can of worms? MW said that reinvigorating it as a ground-water based wetland is probably not feasible. It would need a consistent source of surface water. JS agreed but said that the fill was originally placed in marsh or shallow shoreline. Actual restoration would involve lowering grade down to lake level. There are several areas within the UR where such an exercise might be undertaken. Ms. Gardner reiterated that the wetland is frequently dry. MW said that it tends to be wet when the lake level is high, but dry when it is lower. Ms. White noted the potential for a wind-driven pump to supply the wetland with water. Additional biomass within the wetland could contribute to natural remediation of soil contaminants. Ms. White went on to note that a significant area of the UR is either impervious surface or used for snow storage or as a dog park. Where is it possible to conserve 50% of the area? Jesse Bridges noted that these uses are temporary only.

DM asked if there was consideration of valuing the ecosystem services in dollars. Ms. White said it's been considered but has not been done given the wide variety of values that may result depending on the valuation system used. SM encouraged trying to develop some sort of valuation to help people understand the significance of this area.

SM suggested that as Burlington continues to maintain areas such as this, it is an asset to its livability among other cities. ZR noted the significant swath of open space among various properties in this area.

MW asked if any wildlife tracks were found onsite since the March BCB meeting. Ms. White said there's only been one good snowfall since then. Not many wildlife tracks were found, but there was evidence of significant pedestrian use. She noted that there's evidence of significant mink use.

Ms. White asked if a larger public meeting would be useful – possibly Thursday May 2<sup>nd</sup> in the evening. Board members concurred that it would likely be useful.

ZR asked about naturalization of the shoreline. Ms. Gardner said they are scheduled to do an assessment later this week. MW noted that the recent Stone report postulated that the sheet pilings are holding contaminants in place and out of the lake.

### **2. Urban Reserve Interim Management Plan & PIAP**

Jesse Bridges appeared on behalf of this item.

Jesse Bridges stated that the City Council recently passed an Urban Reserve Planning resolution. Board members received copies. It reaffirmed ongoing efforts and laid the ground work for long term planning efforts.

Mr. Bridges noted the PIAP process and interim management efforts. The city has received 60+ comments via the PIAP process. The PIAP is tied to expenditure of TIF dollars and does extend into the Urban Reserve. Anything done within the Urban Reserve will be limited by existing property constraints.

DM, if I advanced a proposal, am I expected to execute it? Mr. Bridges responded that an ability to make it happen is preferred, whether individually or in concert among others.

Mr. Bridges noted the timeline for expenditure of the TIF dollars between now and December 2014. Trail improvements, removal of oil bollard piping, and removal of contaminated soils are under consideration for short term activities. The entirety of the bike path in the TIF district is slated to be improved. He said that VHCB (that holds the conservation easement) has been brought into the loop. Ideally, we will have a conserved place that is also user friendly and safe.

SM, where does resurfacing of the access road come into play? Mr. Bridges said that it would be part of the bike path upgrades. It will not be paved. It will be graded to direct water away from the bike path. SM noted that dust control needs to be considered.

Mr. Bridges noted the upcoming feasibility study for improving the entire length of the bike path. Improved connectivity to and amongst the recreational trail system is a primary concern as well.

JS said that there are a number of rare plants along the waterfront. Most of them have a disturbance-related ecology. That's not to say they will simply move aside for proposed construction. We'd like to see an assessment of what's here now. Mr. Bridges noted that an assessment was done for bike path work along Northshore. Plants were identified and protected during construction.

ZR noted the possibility for a summertime ecological assessment with graduate students.

### **3. Open Space Protection Plan update**

Amy Sheldon, Scott Gustin, and Dan Cahill appeared on behalf of this item.

SG overviewed the initial round of public outreach with all of the city's NPAs, the Planning Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, and other stakeholders. Most comments related to management of existing public lands. Other significant categories included potential parkland, waterfront access, LID/green infrastructure, bike path improvements, and urban agriculture. Where should we focus as we move ahead and distill all of the comments received into open space policy goals?

Amy Sheldon addressed the process summary. Initial ideas, outreach efforts, and public input. She noted that public input called for bike path connectivity between the waterfront path and the 127 path.

Public input has guided the process as it relates to priorities of the Conservation Board. She's especially interested in updating the inventory within the urban core. She noted that the original inventory was basically a land use map layer. She also stated that there are significant tracts of connected open space in the NNE that were not incorporated into the original inventory.

SM said he had a difficult time correlating the comments to the maps. Can they be made interactive online, click on the point and see the comment? SG said that the online public input tool reflects the comments received so far. We could conceivably modify it to include public meeting comments and the open space inventory as well.

Ms. Sheldon stated that we need to stick with the larger parcels within the city. Many are already on the city's radar. She noted that a wide variety of comments have been received. She'd like Board guidance on priorities.

DM suggested perhaps deleting superfluous comments in an effort to better distill policy goals.

DL said delineating green belts is probably not a priority. WF said that they would not be targets for acquisition. Ms. Sheldon noted some large contiguous lawn areas. It may have significance for urban agriculture. It could be used as a basis for wildlife-friendly back yards. DM said he has difficulty classifying contiguous backyards as open space. Ditto green roofs. SM said that open space does not inherently invite public access. If a green roof is installed and replaces a function that was initially lost by an asphalt roof, that has value.

SG noted the potential significance of contiguous backyards for urban agricultural purposes. At least insofar as there is overlap between such green spaces and prime agricultural soils, providing this information would be useful.

ZR, what about the urban forest? Ms. Sheldon noted the Urban Forestry Master Plan and its implementation by the City Arborist. Dan Cahill noted the interconnectivity between the urban forest and permaculture food production.

JS said that a list of items that would not be priorities for acquisition would be useful in refining input received. They may be useful as a basis for future studies but not priorities for this update of the Open Space Protection Plan.

Ms. Sheldon said that her analysis can focus on proximity to underserved neighborhoods and other items related to acquisition potential.

Dan Cahill stated that it is important to inventory items not necessarily related to acquisition. Things like edible food forests and community gardens can be drivers behind acquisitions. The same holds true for trails.

Ms. Sheldon said that characteristics could be developed and weighted for consideration in land acquisition.

JS said that he envisioned incorporation of potential pocket parks in the inventory update.

WF reiterated compiling acquisition related comments and separating others.

Ms. Sheldon noted the UVM student assessment of wildlife corridors being done this semester.

Ms. Sheldon asked Board members for their priorities. She's heard that they are interested in proximity. DM suggested going with the significant items depicted in the comments chart.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.