



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes
August 4, 2020

Commission Present: Barlow, Todd, Traverse, Hurley, Johnson and Harris

Staff Present: Wight, Cahill and Putzier

The meeting was convened at 5:35 p.m. by Traverse

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda as amended by Wight to add item IX.V. Discussion of School Use of Parks by Todd, second by Harris, motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Traverse read the agenda and the motion into the record and was moved for approval by Todd, second by Barlow, motion carried.

Open Space Climate Action Addendum

Cahill, BPRW Land Steward, introduced himself, Zoe Richards and Rebecca Roman, stated they presented before the Planning Commission last week and are very excited about the amendment. Cahill explained how his full time position with BPRW works with lands and trails on a daily basis and this amendment is very important with his work, he manages the Legacy fund to acquire land and do stewardship, and this document works with how to use and is a planning document that reflects Burlington's values. The original plan was updated in 2014 and the City has made a lot of progress in green infrastructure and natural areas. Felt for Burlington to move forward would need more investment in solutions. Cahill handed over to Roman and Richards to explain the amendment in further detail.

Roman explained that the action plan was an addition to the 2014 update and to create a lasting legacy. Does not address how to take climate action and focus on recognizing climate change and natural areas role in that. Stated that any action that conserves, improves or strengthens the ecosystem is considered a nature-based climate solution. Explained the original goal to increase the urban tree coverage and adding working collaboratively through education, volunteerism and community input and to start the framework for the next open space protection update in 2025.

Richards gave a list of efforts that are already happening in the City either actually by the City or within the city as a whole.

- Tree planting
- Restoration of wetlands
- Improving trail marking and accessibility and managing trail locations to protect sensitive areas
- Increased wildlife monitoring
- Conservation of land with legacy funds
- Managing conversion to native plant species
- Invasive species removal pilot project in the Intervale
- City-wide trail stewards pilot project



Will need to hire consultant with Conservation Legacy funds for a full scoping study and will come back to this commission at a later date for the request for funding. Will get more public outreach first and approvals from others.

Todd asked where lake water and ecology fits into the plan and if it is excluded or if another area in the plan addresses that issue. Roman said the way it will be written it does not mention all the ways it can be done so it is all inclusive, have not explicitly called out water and the lake. Have addressed areas upstream and those do support the water. Richards added that natural areas are significant and don't have just a few spots but at the delta of the Winooski river, enormously significant areas of wetlands. Inter department collaboration is part of the plan and would include storm water management work and all departments would work together. Todd would like more specific wording addressing the Lake.

Harris asked how much of the Lake would fall under a State issue versus a Local issue and Richards said she did not have a good answer, would like to add to if possible but could not answer.

Barlow thanked for presentation and was encouraged by the initiative.

Harley thanked for and felt the school districts participating as well sounded like a great educational opportunity for kids.

Traverse asked if anyone wanted to be more involved what were the next steps, was told going to City Council next for request of Legacy Funds. Cahill stated can get involved at any level always looking for volunteers in the immediacy, also couple of meetings, getting approvals, getting plan to point of RFP and once consultant is hired, the idea of how the RFP will be written and available, if background in consulting could put yourself in that ring. As well as public input process along the way. Stated any other thoughts or requests to be added to the plan could be emailed to either Richards or Roman.

The Commission moved support of the Open Space Climate Action Addendum by Todd, second by Traverse, motion carried.

Arms Forest Update

Cahill started by stating that the Arms Forest property has 5 different land owners and 30 acres are owned by the City of Burlington, made much headway on the property, did ecological assessment and a scoping study to support trails and natural areas. Found natural and wild areas were split 50 percent with 50 percent in favor of bike usage and other quiet activities. Landowners were engaged for management issues, came up with trails plan. Closed a few paths that were either going through protected species areas or unsafe, closing several social trails for revegetation. Leveraging monies to do professional building of trails, continue to launch trails stewardship program, going to NPA meetings, reaching out on Front Porch Forum and working on a trails map.

Public Forum (Time Certain 6:00PM)

Public forum opened at 6:02 p.m. by Traverse.

Mullowney spoke regarding Leddy Park with what he said were dozens of people at the park every night, lighting fireworks, having bonfires and waking residents up at all hours of the night. He explained how he had called the police but they had said it is difficult to catch the individuals. Mullowney feels we are



on the cusp of something bad happening in that location. Stated some residents are planning to move and have pleaded with the individuals to not light any fireworks. Said lots of dogs on the beach and not a lot of staff presence and does not want to see a dog park on Leddy Beach. Suggested ticketing cars after hours, putting up a gate, asked to work with police and start enforcing the rules down at Leddy.

Bill Keaton, professor at UVM said that he appreciates all that BPRW is doing on climate action and working with the college and offered couple of ideas for frameworks, mitigation and adapt to also general strategy that has three specifics to follow and answer; resisting, resilience and transition, he offered to help answer and work through these with staff.

Public forum closed at 6:06 p.m.

Beach Closures & Proactive Measures

Todd said about a year ago she remembered going to the beach being a problem, having activities when the water is not usable or closed and she wanted to have further discussion and see how others felt regarding the issue. She did say there had been limited closures this year and as the City of Burlington, BPRW does an amazing job monitoring and notifying when a beach is closed and wanted to know if any long or short term plans were in place if a beach closes.

Harris agreed and felt a serious problem, last year it was a problem, he stated he is signed up for text updates when closed but not usually the entire Burlington beaches are closed. Suggested getting information out to all.

Barlow asked when a beach is closed does the beach get blocked and closed and Wight said no, only the beach because other park areas other than swimming are used. Unfortunately can't repurpose lifeguards as they are making sure people do not go into the water. Working on a map so that people can see not only what is closed but what is open.

Wight encouraged all to go on the City Facebook page to see the fountain that was tested at City Hall Park.

Todd asked if there was a reason that a hose and sprinkler could not be hooked up at the beach and Wight said then it would create more of a challenge and liability, potentially it could be done but a lot of other issues around turf, puddling and other issues. Todd asked if could look at other options moving forward into the future to see if there is a backup plan if beaches are closed. Ultimately it was said that it was not a big priority and generally other beaches are open. Todd also asked about what the interest of looking at different systems to combating the bacteria in the lake are and Wight said the Lake is too large for the City of Burlington to take on.

Barlow suggested having someone from the State come and speak to the issue at a future meeting.

Leddy Park Beach Parking Fees

Wight stated this came up to the Commission a few years ago and the commission was not interested at that time and currently getting a lot of people using the beach, could work around Arena use and other specific seasons and how they use the beach portion of the current park pass. Reminded folks that it is only for parking that all walking or biking into the park is free. Some will park down the road and walk in and have to keep that in mind.



Wight said different issues around having a gate but the main issue was the impact to police and fire having access. The reality is that even if you have a gate you can still bike or walk to get in. Also concerned with who would close the gate.

Barlow said there used to be a gate at the top of Leddy Road years ago and it might help to alleviate a lot of the current problems and felt the staff, police and fire could have keys to access. Charging for parking he felt was totally acceptable and having a kiosk would help keep track of number of cars and control some of the crowding. Supports gate, charging to park and felt it would solve a lot of problems.

Todd supports charging for parking, suggested charging COVID rates, but questioned when the charging would begin and Wight said not until next season and would have to go through pricing policy and other specifics.

Harris asked what the police enforcement is like and was told by Wight that they have no enforcement and it is very frustrating. Wight said the signs are very visible as to what the rules are and having multiple signs all over with every issue is not going to correct the issue.

Barlow said that the police department said they were not going to come because they were busy with other issues and when they can't enforce it really emboldens people to continue.

Harley said since an income base is needed to help with the issues, thus charging for parking, and as this develops there is a way to increase the knowledge as to where to park, asked if there was a way to avoid off street parking in neighborhoods and Barlow added that he knew what streets they would park on as they already do since it is closer and it would likely not make a difference.

Traverse agreed with the low income being more known to people as well as agreed with idea that it would help with some of the problems that are currently happening down at Leddy.

Municipal Violations

Wight said she had given a memo to all ahead of time and came to the realization that the department has enforcement capabilities in BPRW. The Arborist can write a ticket if you tie a horse to a tree, however not as easy as giving staff a ticket book, they must have training, if appealed you would have to go to White River Junction. Basically facing enforcement issues, the issues that the police should not have to deal with typically that make sense for staff to handle. Looking to advocate for having a park ranger type program, that can carry guns and so on and trained for tickets and the like but do not have to carry guns. Would not have individuals that are changing bathrooms and picking up garbage currently but rather a new position and asked for thoughts on taking over the parks patrol program. Wight liked having park rangers as it changes the type of job and enforcement.

Barlow asked if it would be a day job or seasonal and shifts and Wight said it would have to be nights as well as days and not sure of the final logistics. Barlow really liked the idea and Todd agreed fully with the idea and not taxing the people that are already working in other areas but adding a separate enforcement group within the department that were trained and hired within BPRW.

Todd said she worked with restorative justice and suggested speaking with them for help with citations and community service versus having to be law enforced.



Harley felt an excellent idea and liked the idea of integrating options to pay off work.

Traverse asked if Wight had any thoughts of what could be done now in terms of Leddy and all the other issues that have come up and Wight said working on short term as well as long term solutions. Feels important to reflect on who is complaining as the loudest voice being someone that lives right on the water and right near the park. Don't want to forget that the vast majority of people do not have direct access to a beach and have to be considerate of all people.

Barlow asked about a congregate group of people gathering and the concern of COVID and spreading infection. Wight said the college student is a challenge, as they are all in the same dorm, are they all in the same household, not monitoring that currently, have not restricted in many ways. Stated she felt Oakledge Park self-monitors due to parking availability and not having a choice.

Increasing Community Engagement for Commission Meetings

Postponed to September Meeting

Schools Use of Parks

Most parks do not need to be approved but Ethan Allen Park requires permission for the Schools to use, Wight asked if a blanket approval for the Schools to have access to utilize parks for potential outdoor spaces could be approved, and the department would work with them on the outdoor spaces and the logistics.

Wight said likely would be using indoor space at Miller for afterschool as well and would like it to be run by School department. Does not anticipate the use of outside parks being a problem but didn't want them to be stuck if necessary. They would be using larger parks not community small parks. That could be stated in the motion if it was the commission's desire.

Hurley made a motion to approve the use all city parks during the school day for the 20-21 school year, second by Barlow, motion carried.

Fall Retreat, Goal Setting

About two hours, not full one like before, look at what done and setting new goals and suggested setting the final date at the September meeting.

The commission wanted to have the retreat and will choose the date at the September meeting.

Commission Topics on Hold, Priorities

Wight said making good progress on addressing the issues that were discussed at the last retreat until COVID hit, wanted to remind all of what was still pending and how all felt about getting to and the priority. Wight went over the list of topics that were on the list with the commission and asked to remind her of any items that the commission would like to get into.

Report from Commission on Volunteer Hours

Putzier asked the Commission if they had any additional hours for the month of May, Traverse and Johnson each had an additional hour.

**Director's Items**

Wight said August 13th doing press event at Roundhouse Point Path, 1pm hoping to do in depth tours, reaching out to invited list and attendees will be able to sign up for a time slot. Encouraged everyone to check out Parks Facebook page to see the new fountain going off in City Hall Park. Champlain Senior Center started some on site programming, very controlled and lots of handwashing, with support of State, will be awarding Bikepath contracts at City Council to Harrison Avenue and construction to realignment of Maple to College. End of August will be final piece Proctor Place to Flynn and then Harrison to Lakeside bridge new pavement, but not full width of path.

Commissioner's Items

No comments.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:48 p.m. by Harris, second by Johnson, motion carried.

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