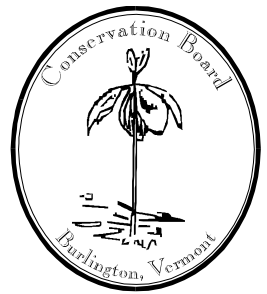


## Burlington Conservation Board

645 Pine Street  
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*Miles Waite, Chair  
Zoe Richards  
Don Meals  
Ryan Crehan  
Hannah Brislin  
Rebecca Roman  
Jules Lees  
Caryn Connolly*



## Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 2, 2021 – 5:30 pm  
645 Pine Street, Main Conference Room

### Attendance

- **Board Members:** Zoe Richards (ZR), Miles Waite (MW), Rebecca Roman (RR), Ryan Crehan (RC), Caryn Connolly (CC), Don Meals (DM)
- **Absent:** Hannah Brislin (HB), Jules Lees (JL)
- **Public:** Sharon Bushor, Nora Laymon, Marjorie McWilliams, Libby Rhodes
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Permitting & Inspections), Cindi Wight, Dan Cahill, Alicia Daniel (Parks & Rec)

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

### Minutes

CC noted that her last name has two n's.

A MOTION was made by MW and SECONDED by RR:

Approve the meeting minutes of July 12, 2021 as corrected.

Vote: 8-0-0, motion carried.

### Board Comment

ZR requested that Board members introduce themselves for the benefit of our new Board member, Caryn Connolly.

RR asked about the remaining board vacancy. SG suggested letting folks who might be interested know about the vacancy.

RC said he's been involved with pollinator work and establishing plantings at the old landfill along Manhattan Drive. A walking path has recently been made for folks to access the area. Mowing has been delayed to allow plants to reach maturity.

MW noted 453 Pine Street and Andy Simon's participation at last month's meeting. SG said that, as requested, Parks staff will meet with the BCB in September as a next step to talk about Parks' history with the property – what's been considered and discussed already. MW noted the BERA funds that are available for development of the property. ZR asked if the monies available are near what it would take to remediate this property. MW, not sure. DM said that most of the past proposals involve leaving the contaminants in place and minimizing disturbance.

### Public Comment

Sharon Bushor said that she's is very interested in the Open Space Addendum. One of her first priorities as a councilor was to generate funding for open space conservation. She still cares deeply about open space and how it dovetails with the environmental crisis the world is facing. She said that some folks are reckless with removing trees. She'd like to see a draft and to be able to comment. She also mentioned

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the steep slopes discussion. She's very interested in seeing this item through. We lack protections presently along these areas in the city. MW said that her comments are welcome. Tonight is a brainstorming session about what standards might include and look like. ZR thanked Ms. Bushor for the city's original Open Space Protection Plan.

### **Update & Discussion**

#### 1. Invasive species management in the Intervale:

Interns Nora Laymon, Marjorie McWilliams, Libby Rhodes appeared on behalf of this item.

ZR asked Dan Cahill what the perennial internship is. Mr. Cahill said UVM's Rubenstein School has a perennial internship program. It involves articulation of a project with solicitation of applicants to work on it. McKenzie Park is a perennial internship site for working on knotweed. We've got a great group working in the Intervale this year on invasives management.

Interns presented their slides as to project background and a variety of methods that have been employed to manage invasive species in the Intervale. Methods spanned traditional weeding to use of goats to gleaning and use of invasives as food.

DM noted prior efforts to use goats to manage kudzu in the southeast.

Interns note future projects include making knotweed paper.

#### 2. 311 North Ave – Stone Cottage Project preview

Cindi Wight appeared on behalf of this application.

Cindi Wight noted that this is a preliminary informative presentation. 311 North Ave has become Parks' conservation space. The park will be named later this summer. She overviewed the history of the land purchase. The city, VHCB, LWCF, private donation and other monies were used to acquire it. The land is under a conservation easement, and the building under an historic preservation easement. The land and building are tied to outdoor recreation and conservation in perpetuity.

Ms. Wight noted the multiple moving parts in the Rock Point conservation easement. There's more than just buying the land. Monies are sometimes needed to bring the land up to standard for public access and recreation. She noted the trail work that has been done at Rock Point and new bike racks. The River's Edge Marina conservation project was similar – including structure demo and re-naturalization of the property. About 12% of the overall budget was used for demo and site work.

Ms. Wight reviewed the proposed renovations to the building at 311 North Avenue, including the site plan and building rehabilitation. She overviewed the grading plan and the planting plan for the path connection to the waterfront bike path.

ZR said that if we want to conserve properties and have them be publicly accessible, we need to account for what might need to be done to bring them up to an acceptable standard. Ms. Wight, speaking about the connection to the bike path, said there will be a lot of disturbance to this land. ZR pointed out that the land was purchased as an urban wild.

Ms. Wight said 31% would become 29% of the overall project funded by the Legacy Fund, including the proposed work. She noted that the fund presently has \$590K available.

DM is there any consideration of making some of the pavement pervious? Ms. Wight said it's anticipated in the walkway design. DM asked about the parking lot. Ms. Wight said she's is not sure, but it may be possible. RR recommended more pervious surface now versus waiting to replace traditional impervious

surface with pervious surface later. DM noted the concept of stormwater parks to demonstrate various stormwater improvements.

ZR asked Dan Cahill to talk about some of the public facing improvements at the property now. Mr. Cahill said a number of transition zones have been pointed out showing how plantings can change and evolve over time. Food security is integrated as well. Signage has been installed for folks to learn about the plants. We are considering a conservation mix for the meadow that involves edible plants. This site gives us an opportunity to think about urban wilds next to VT's largest development. Alicia Daniel said this property can provide similar services to a ranger station in a national park. Mr. Cahill also said there have been monthly listening sessions with former residents of the orphanage with the intent to include an interpretative space at the property.

Sharon Bushor asked if clear cutting is needed as described. Mr. Cahill said yes, in order to meet ADA grades. Ms. Bushor said a serpentine path was installed at Salmon Run to limit disturbance. She said that some folks may be shocked at the level of disturbance when the path is installed. Mr. Cahill said some community events are planned for folks to come and learn more about the site.

DM mentioned the recent experience on his street when it was torn up to replace the water lines. The project included a dedicated person to listen to resident concerns and to mitigate them.

Ms. Wight said there is an anticipated \$250K ask for additional legacy funds. \$136K per year goes into the fund. \$40K of the \$590K is already dedicated to a different project.

CC asked about timelines. DM said he wants to avoid completely depleting the fund. He said he's enthusiastic about this project. MW noted that this project will end up receiving the largest amount of legacy funds. RC said the big question is whether this project lines up with the intent of the fund.

ZR said that a reevaluation of the legacy fund is warranted as part of a rewrite of the Open Space Protection Plan. We need to give consideration to public accessibility of our conserved lands.

MW, have different funding scenarios been considered? Has the mayor been consulted? Ms. Wight said the mayor is supportive. Multiple different sources and funding methods have been considered.

Ms. Bushor asked if Parks has approached Eric Farrell about contributing to the effort. Ms. Wight said he'll help with the path work.

RC said it would be helpful to itemize the costs associated with the anticipated Legacy Fund ask. Alicia Daniel said this is a unique opportunity for conservation education in Burlington. Mr. Cahill said we could host a Conservation Board meeting at the property in the coming months.

### 3. Discussion of proposed steep slopes standards

SG overviewed this item. Riverside Avenue is driving the discussion. Presently, the CDO contains limited steep slope standards, but they do not address review or performance criteria. They are simply discounted from buildable area calculations in the RL, RM, and RCO zones. At a minimum, we need a standard to require geotechnical analysis of a slope to determine whether it can safely accommodate a proposed development. Rather than go in a case-by-case basis, he suggested use of a citywide steep slopes map, similar to the wetlands map. He showed a draft map of 15% + slopes citywide that had been put together by Gustave Sexauer.

DM cited a slope area reference for erosion control – the universal soil laws equations. DM, we should not necessarily use an average slope over a minimum span metric. We don't want to include a flat area in the average. CC, we need to cite a certain setback distance from the slope.

DM, is it possible to reasonably stabilize the rest of the slope not being built upon? Is there a tradeoff to allowing construction on a steep section if the rest is stabilized?

RC, Riverside has pretty modest structures as contrasted with what Redstone built at the top of Depot Street.

Sharon Bushor said what can be done appropriately depends on what the slope consists of. Along Riverside, much of the slope is fill. It really does matter what the soil borings show. Developing to the edge of the slope is dangerous.

MW, we need to make sure the soil borings have been done and that a geotechnical assessment has been done to determine suitability of development. We need to define standards.

RC, maybe we should prioritize certain areas like Riverside for assessment.

RR clarified that this discussion is about the points to incorporate into steep slopes ordinance language. She said an ordinance with flexibility is preferable to one that is uniformly applied everywhere.

MW said that first thing to do is determine if there's a risk. RR said there should be minimum standard for review and also to specify for review by whom (like BCB).

### **Open Space Subcommittee**

#### 1. Discussion of Potential Open Space Projects:

ZR said this is a follow up discussion of what might be shovel-ready projects for nature based climate solutions. Federal funds are anticipated in the coming months for implementation work. ZR said we don't know details yet, but if folks have ideas, let us know to see if we can get things funded.

DM, something bold and new that would not ordinarily be funded should be done. ZR mentioned the trees that came out of 311 North Ave that are now at Champlain Elementary School. There's huge potential on school district property to do less mowing and to plant more trees with public involvement. Can we have localized nurseries? Can we use school children to collect seeds and plant them? Utilize existing oversight and structure.

RC said some of the biggest climate challenges we've got are the large storm events. Can we do more to keep inputs out of our CSO's? Maybe we could provide a funding source for more pervious paving.

### **Adjournment**

7:42 PM.