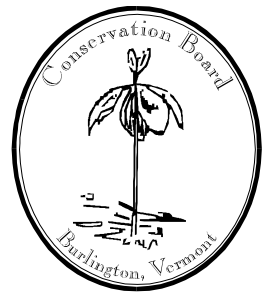


Burlington Conservation Board

645 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401
<http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPI/CB>
Telephone: (802) 865-7189

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



Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 13, 2021 – 5:30 pm

645 Pine Street, Main Conference Room and remote access

Attendance

- **Board Members:** Zoe Richards (ZR), Rebecca Roman (RR), Ryan Crehan (RC), Caryn Conolly (CC), Don Meals (DM)
- **Absent:** Jules Lees (JL) Miles Waite (MW), Hannah Brislin (HB)
- **Public:** Steve Whitman, Liz Kelly, Sharon Bushor
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Permitting & Inspections), Alicia Daniel (Parks & Rec)

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

Minutes

A MOTION was made by RC and SECONDED by DM:

Approve the meeting minutes of August 2, 2021 as written.

Vote: 5-0-0, motion carried.

Board Comment

RR said that the Association of VT Conservation Commissions is having a summit over the course of a few Wednesdays this month and next. She'll send a link with info. Alicia Daniel and Judy Dow will be presenters.

SG noted that ARAP funding request has been submitted under deadline and includes a few possibilities involving the Intervale Center, staffing, and capacity building. He also mentioned Riverside Avenue and the properties with a slide in October 2019. He's met recently with VT DEM, CCRPC, and DPW staff as to potential buy-out options for the properties to convert them to green space and mitigate future landslide possibilities. All three property owners have been contacted, and all three are open to the possibility of a buy-out. ZR suggested asking about whether additional properties should be included. SG said he'd follow up with DPW.

Public Comment

Sharon Bushor thanked us for pursuing monies for addressing the slope instability along Riverside Avenue.

Update & Discussion

1. Draft Open Space Addendum review
Work session with Resilience Planning & Design to review and comment on draft Open Space Protection Plan Addendum

The programs and services of the Dept. of Permitting & Inspections are accessible to people with disabilities. For accessibility information call 865-7188.

Steve Whitman and Liz Kelly appeared on behalf of this item.

Steve Whitman provided a brief background of work that was done over the summer months. He is looking to identify clear edits tonight.

ZR reminded the Board that this is an addendum to the plan. We are aiming for a complete update to the Open Space Protection Plan in the next couple of years.

Liz Kelly asked if there were any Board comments on CC's comments. None were noted. She asked about DM's comments. ZR asked that Board members provide their initial thoughts first before getting into the weeds.

RR said she really liked the evolution of the addendum – the layout, the green boxes, the case studies, the plans that we've identified and described. It's very accessible and readable. It's pretty with a balance of text and imagery.

DM said he agrees with RR as to the look and feel of the document. The rest of his comments are in writing.

RC said he really likes it. He'll send written comments along to SG. Overall, it really fits what we're trying to do and make stuff happen.

CC agrees with comments so far. Loves the look of the plan. She felt immersed in it and learned a lot reading it. She agrees with DM's written comments as to trees. She's concerned with implications of removing invasive tree species and having to plant more. More specification is needed to appropriately address such situations.

Alicia Daniel is impressed with how this project has kept moving in the right direction. The text is quite readable and comprehensive. She thanked Steve Whitman and Liz Kelly for being so open to suggestion. The idea of bringing nature based solutions to the forefront and noting the need for 1/3 of total investment in combating climate change is very significant.

RC, it would be helpful to have photo captions.

Liz Kelly picked up on DM's comments. She asked Board members for thoughts about DM's comments on sprawl outside of Burlington. Effective regional planning would be nice but is not present. ZR said that by some logic, we should build in our natural areas to reduce sprawl, but that's not the point here. There is a balance in here that we need to acknowledge.

RC said that if we consider impervious surface along Church Street and Hannaford's, they are probably similar but have very different characteristics and community benefits.

RR fears that our emphasis on protection of natural areas may sway people to not build housing in the city. The intention is to center the balance of resources and development in the city. Mr. Whitman, we should probably de-emphasize the sprawl component of the paragraph subject to DM's comments.

ZR, maybe as we move towards the comprehensive open space plan update, we should consider the scale of values of natural areas and open spaces within the city.

Alicia Daniels commented that we'd like development to more thoroughly consider NBCS as we move forward.

Liz Kelly asked Board members if they concur with DM's suggestion to move pg. 11 earlier. ZR said she'd be fine with the move. Alicia Daniels commented that it's one of the strongest sections of the document.

Liz Kelly noted that they will reference the source for DM's comment about mowing lawns and carbon release on pg. 37. DM said that the details behind the statistic are needed (i.e. gas powered lawn mowers). RC said he likes the local examples to demonstrate points in the document, such as those with established low mow zones. Mr. Whitman asked if Board members have specific examples. RC said the city probably has good documentation for the Urban Reserve before and after.

Ms. Kelly asked if anyone had comments as to the implementation recommendations.

RC said there could be something more along the lakeshore itself. The city has done a bunch of rip rap in recent years that we should push back on. The idea of a floating wetland is not where he would focus resources. They would be better used to naturalize these rip rap areas.

Mr. Whitman said the issue of tree canopy cover is that we don't want to see a reduction, but understand that it may move around. We don't need to leave problem or dangerous trees in place. Details can be teased out in an updated tree ordinance, not necessarily in this document. He asked about DM's comment as to better understanding deer issues. DM said the deer issue that the Board has heard about a few times is the depredation on crops in the Intervale. We need to recognize the conflict between the deer herd and urban agriculture. CC said that part of the problem is that our city and surrounding development has encroached into where they live. ZR said that warmer weather and lack of natural predators has contributed to an increasing deer herd that will cause problems in the long room.

DM said that perhaps spaying or neutering deer could be effective. RC said we should pursue adaptive management strategists for forest regeneration. RC agrees and noted that public education should be part of the solution.

RR, signage and communication should be part of most actions. ZR said that Alicia Daniel has been working on educational signage with Parks.

RC asked about prioritizing protection of unprotected parcels south of Main Street and Appletree Point – how where those called out? Mr. Whitman said that the south end was driven by the lack of conserved lands currently in the city.

RR said that she felt like the equity section could be condensed a bit – made more direct. She'll offer follow up comments. CC, maybe there's a way to more specifically call out the sections coming from the city's Racial Equity Strategic Roadmap.

Public Comment:

Sharon Bushor – Said that an executive summary would be helpful. The document is lengthy, and such a summary would be helpful for Planning Commissioners and City Councilors. This document speaks to smart development and is right for today. She's concerned that incentives can be successful – she feels that regulation is more effective. She also mentioned the current zoning standards for tree clearing. The 2-acre minimum is too large. She supports the language about no-till gardening and mentioned the city's current pesticide ordinance. She supports small, low maintenance pocket parks. She also reiterated that we're dealing with a climate crisis.

Continued Board Comment:

ZR asked about next steps. SG noted that the addendum is an action item tonight or next month. Planning Commission review will occur after this, and City Council after that. ZR suggested sharing the draft with Parks and DPW. DM said that we could share it with them but not request approval. RR said perhaps we could highlight specific areas we'd like feedback on.

A MOTION was made by RR and SECONDED by DM:

Approve the draft Addendum with comments as noted and move ahead. Solicit comments from Parks & Rec and DPW by mid-October and go to Planning Commission the 1st meeting in November.

Vote: 5-0-0, motion carried

2. Visioning the future of the Conservation Board

ZR said that we can take this up more substantively next month. Let's ask folks to talk to the board about things like the city's tree ordinance and phosphorous in the lake. What sorts of things would other board members like to learn about?

Adjournment

6:56 PM.