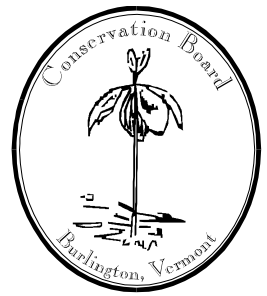


Burlington Conservation Board

645 Pine Street
Burlington, VT 05401
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Zoe Richards, Chair
Rebecca Roman
Don Meals
Ryan Crehan
Hannah Brislin
Miles Waite
Jules Lees
Caryn Connolly



Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 4, 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 Connolly (CC), Don Meals (DM), Miles Waite (MW), Hannah Brislin (HB)
- **Absent:** Jules Lees (JL)
- **Public:**
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Permitting & Inspections)

ZR, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Minutes

A MOTION was made by RC and SECONDED by MW:

Adopt the minutes of September 13 as written.

Vote: 5-0-1 (no RR yet)

Board Comment

RC said the river walk trail along the Winooski from Intervale Road to the railroad bridge has been reworked since the spring. Now, it is possible to walk up to the rail road.

ZR mentioned the improved public access to the old landfill behind Manhattan Drive. MW mentioned that, in order to maintain the integrity of that cap, large roots, such as from trees, need to be prevented. Hence the annual brush hogging.

MW asked about the status of the Open Space Addendum. SG responded that the Conservation Board approved it last month. The draft has been provided to Parks, DPW, and City Planning for review and comment. The Planning Commission will review it in early November. Following that, the City Council will review it.

Public Comment

Ella Mason appeared and spoke. She is a recent BHS graduate and Lake Semester student. She's here in support of using some conservation funds for revamping the city building at 311 North Avenue. This is an amazing opportunity from an equity standpoint and for making the space more accessible.

Sharon Bushor said she hopes the Conservation Board can insert itself into more than what its presently doing, particularly with respect to climate change. The tree ordinance is desperately in need of a reevaluation. As to 311 North Avenue, she doesn't know how much money would be left in the Legacy Fund following the present request for the property. She understands the purpose of the project. She noted the fund has dollars for acquisition as well as administration. She said that there are not many open spaces in Ward 1, except for Schmanska park. Please give a long hard look to the proposal.

Andy Simon commented as to 501 Pine Street. He has read through the draft Open Space Addendum. It seems logical to him that the Conservation Board would use all available resources to preserve the land

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at 501 Pine Street. We should allow nature to recover this property. This should include 453 Pine Street as well. He noted the email from Jess Rubin earlier today.

Kate Krusei noted the "Grow Wild" work that she's involved in. Programing is being developed to reach out to home owners. Emphasis is on Burlington's natural assets and public participation. She noted the premium location of 311 North Avenue as the center of this work, including onsite demonstrations. The proposal will result in a vibrant conservation center for the Burlington community.

Ruby Perry spoke to 501 Pine Street. She's been involved in a committee working on "green burial." As part of that, the concept of conservation burial has been discussed. Basically, it could involve using 501 Pine Street for such use. The land needn't be pristine. Composting of human bodies could improve the soils. It could be a public/private project.

Update & Discussion

1. 501 Pine Street.

Parks & Rec background/overview as to conservation of the property.

SG noted the current city policy to redevelop at least the front portion of the property with focus on conservation and access to the west. Improved access and conservation could take place even without redevelopment.

ZR mentioned the potential for private / public partnership.

MW said that the conservation process typically involves a willing and interested land owner. The email submitted suggests that the city somehow cease any sales. We're contemplating conserving it without interest from the landowner. There's a lot of liability associated with ownership of the land.

Alicia Daniel mentioned that the water table on the property is quite high and may be problematic as a site for green burials. MW mentioned an existing restriction of digging below 2' on the property. He also mentioned the need to avoid placing stress on the property and disturbing the NAPL. For brownfield sites like this, the focus is on minimizing exposure risk.

ZR, is the city-owned parcel something that could be assessed? MW, yes. Something like trails could certainly work.

Cindi Wight said that access to the property needs to be determined. There are a few potential properties. Possibly from the BCA property.

RC, is Parks the manager of the city-owned property behind 501? Ms. Wight said that there is no direct management of the property. A conversation with VT DEC is worthwhile to determine what exactly could be done there. MW suggested starting out with a site plan.

RC suggested a possible site visit by the Board to see the property firsthand. Its not a huge area to see. ZR, let's aim to visit the property as a group. Alicia Daniel said its easier to access in the winter, but November may be when we visit.

RC said an easy way to look for the property boundaries is to check out the VT ANR atlas online.

2. 311 North Avenue

Conservation Legacy Fund request.

Cindi Wight and Dan Cahill appeared.

Cindi Wight overviewed the project and reviewed the project history and funding sources. There are multiple restrictions on the property for conservation purposes. She noted renovations to the building to provide conservation info, community resources, meeting spaces, and public restrooms. She noted

interest from a donor – public library focus. We are continuing to look for additional funding sources. One of the questions is: Why the conservation legacy fund? She noted the Rock Point Project. It included 6 requests, including monies for improvements for public access. 311 North Avenue is along a major travel corridor and next to a very large development.

CC asked if a loan is an option now so as to avoid fund depletion. ZR, like for Parks to take out a loan? Ms. Wight mentioned the loan that was part of the initial acquisition. That was done knowing that the public funding was coming. CC said if the expense was over 2 years, it would be less draining. Ms. Wight said \$575K is in the fund now and it increases quarterly. ZR noted the funding mechanism for the fund. Will the fund increase more with the recent reassessment? Ms. Wight said that all dedicated funds will be fully increased, this and penny for parks.

MW, some of the space is for city staff and maintenance. At what point does it come out of the city budget? Ms. Wight said the city has \$80M in needs right now with \$40M going out for bond.

ZR said that we spent the first 10 years accruing the fund and have spent the most recent 10 using it. The educational piece is very clear in the intent of the fund as it was created. 311 North Avenue is a hub for conservation activities. Because of the controls on the building, the request seems reasonable. It cannot be used for non-conservation purposes. MW agreed.

Alicia Daniel said it is the conservation team of the city working here. She said that there's no easy place to tell the story of Burlington. The Intervale barn is the closest thing. It would be very nice to have a dedicated place for the city to do these things.

DM said he initially had a lot of skepticism, but he feels it's a great project. He is concerned about the repetitive ask. The Legacy Fund is not to be the primary funding source. The conservation legacy fund seems now to be the first place people look for funding. Can we ensure that it's just a component of any given project? He's uneasy about taking half of the fund for this project.

RC agreed. We're talking about half of the current funding. It will take about 2 years to replenish. Taking on another building will entail ongoing maintenance responsibilities. The building itself is not why the city does good stewardship.

RR said that the goal is acquisition, stewardship, and conservation education. She read the provision from the initial resolution. We don't have other pending requests right now. Sitting on the money now seems like gate keeping. The project is consistent with the express intent of the Legacy Fund.

CC, is the renovation timeline more than one year? Ms. Wight, we can't go out to bid until we've got the funding in place. The roof is good for perhaps another year before replacement is needed. The project would be put out as a whole as opposed to piecemeal. CC, is there a way to pledge the money but disburse it incrementally as its replenished? MW, it would be nice to see the monies broken down by what's included in the project. Can the education expenses be specified? Ms. Wight, all of the project is itemized. She said the project functions as a whole. MW, if education is half of the overall cost, that would be \$250K. Dan Cahill said all aspects are educationally related. He challenges his team that every plant going in the ground has a community connection. The entire project is directed at conservation education and community access.

ZR, how do we succeed in conservation in the long run? We have to welcome more people into it. Its really a limitation not to have a place to invite people to. We need a supportive facility. If we don't do this, we are not doing our best for conservation in the city. TPL has recommended that conservation funds not be overly restrictive so that conservation efforts in the future are not hamstrung. The intent statement seems to be broadly construed and inclusive.

Alicia Daniel said that much of our work and strategy starts in an office. It works well to have a place to start.

RC, in terms of work paid for with other funds, what project aspects have the most funding? Ms. Wight, the paved trail is paid for already. Penny for parks and historic preservation funding are part of the mix as well.

ZR pointed out that more Legacy Fund monies were requested and approved than were ultimately needed to conserve the property initially.

DM said that gate keeping of the Legacy Fund is an important function of the Board. This proposal is a righteous use of the fund. He does not want to cut off future conservation opportunities.

A MOTION was made by CC and SECONDED by HB:

Approve the requested funds from the Conservation Legacy Fund.

Discussion: MW, any contingencies? CC, likes the idea of using the CLF after use of other funds up to \$250K.

Vote: 7-0-0

Project Review

1. ZP-21-648; 702 Lake Street (Ward 3C, UR) City of Burlington

Re-application for area to be used for storage of snow removed from the Marketplace and the streets of Burlington.

Lee Perry appeared on behalf of this application.

SG noted that this activity requires a new zoning permit every two years, as it is located in the Urban Reserve. He noted the most recent Conservation Board action was to recommend approval with a condition that the site be monitored to prevent surface flow discharge of meltwater from the site.

A MOTION was made by MW and SECONDED by RR:

Recommend approval of the application.

Discussion: DM, if we included this condition, what were the results?

Lee Perry said that in 2015 a sediment settling area was installed off to the western side of the entry road. The site is contained by banks and a berm, plus the sediment settling area. There has been no erosion on the property.

DM that's not really adequate monitoring of runoff from the site. Someone needs to check where runoff is going during snowmelt. Assessment during the spring can be done. He said we're talking about a large stockpile of snow with a variety of pollutants. It behooves us to understand where the meltwater goes.

MW, there is a sediment control pond in place. The meltwater is directed towards the pond. We could approve it contingent on stormwater management practices being maintained.

DM, the next time this application comes before the board, a better site plan is needed.

MW amended the motion to recommend approval contingent on stormwater management practices being maintained.

RR seconded.

Vote: 7-0-0

Update & Discussion (Cont.)

3. Visioning the future of the Conservation Board

DM left at 7:07 PM.

ZR is curious about what other kinds of things Board members are interested in and would like to hear more about. She encourages folks to give it some thought and share now or at our next meeting. ZR asked a guest who works to TPL to come speak about ecosystem services at the next meeting.

RC said it would be great to brainstorm on our own and have some dedicated time to discuss.

MW mentioned Riverside Ave and the steep slopes ordinance and related property acquisitions. Let's keep Riverside Avenue on the radar.

Adjournment

7:10 PM.