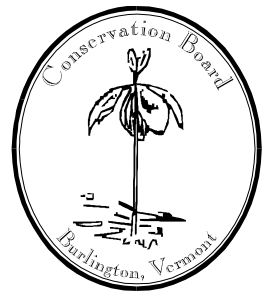


## Burlington Conservation Board

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



## Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 3, 2022 – 5:30 pm

645 Pine Street, Main Conference Room and remote access

### Attendance

- **Board Members:** Zoe Richards (ZR), Ryan Crehan (RC), Miles Waite (MW), Elizabeth Cunningham (EC), Caryn Connolly (CC), Don Meals (DM)
- **Absent:** Rebecca Roman (RR), Hannah Brislin (HB)
- **Public:** Sharon Bushor, Kate Kruesi,
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Permitting & Inspections), Sophie Sauve, VJ Comai, Cindi Wight (Parks & Rec)

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

### Minutes

A MOTION was made by DM and SECONDED by MW:

Adopt the minutes of December 6 as written.

Vote: 6-0-0, motion carried.

### Board Comment

DM said he was contacted by a UVM grad student looking for him to speak to the Pine Street Barge Canal. Given this matter's recent history with the Board he referred her to the BCB minutes from prior meetings.

MW, was that specific to future use? DM, she wanted to talk about the development issue.

CC, would that be a situation appropriate to invite public comment? ZR, yes, in our standing public comment agenda item.

MW said there was a second article in the Free Press about it.

ZR mentioned RC's best practices email. RC said that VT DEC is working on standards for greener lakeshore stabilization measures. Looking at things differently than traditional rip rap. ZR, what does bio-engineering refer to? The concept is about living shorelines rather than sheet piling or other hard edges that still achieves desired stability.

DM, is this something that could be posted online? SG said that its possible and also noted the NR 206 students' lakeshore guidelines on the website.

SG noted that VT DEM did not award funding for the potential buy-out of several Riverside Avenue properties for conversion to green space. This is not entirely unexpected. The next steps involve slope assessment by the state geologist and a follow up application for funding through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

### Public Comment

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

Sharon Bushor asked about the intent of the Trees discussion tonight and the draft implementation matrix. In the past when the city looked at trees, it wasn't in the same context as today with climate change and the emerald ash borer. There's a real need to do an inventory. She'd like to see a permit requirement introduced into the Tree Ordinance as to removing trees. She hates to see trees with value cut down without forethought. A permit process may invite more thoughtfulness prior to clearing trees.

Kate Kruesi agreed with Sharon Bushor's comments. We can't just plant birches and crab apples and think we're combating climate change. She noted that with tree planting, its not just about planting them. It involves ongoing maintenance and care. Are there ways to introduce more trees on private property, especially within our densely developed neighborhoods?

## **Update & Discussion**

### **1. Tree Discussion in regards to the Open Space Addendum**

Discussion with Parks' staff as to trees as nature based climate solutions

VJ Comai, Sophie Sauve, and Cindi Wight from Parks appeared.

ZR overviewed the draft implementation matrix as to trees and nature based climate solutions. It's intended to articulate goals, how we can obtain them, and who would be involved. ZR asked Sophie Sauve and Cindi Wight about the status of the Urban Forest Master Plan. Is this something we can/should work collaboratively on?

Ms. Suave said that the plan was started before she started. Efforts have been focused on how to move it forward. Any suggestions would be appreciated as would offers of assistance to help move it forward.

VJ Comai said when he started about 4 years ago, the Parks Master Plan spoke to the need to update the Urban Forestry Master Plan. He took a stab at an initial draft to update the plan. He sees the plan as his blueprint as to where we are, where we're going, and how we get there. Its been set aside temporarily. He'd like to see a simplified and visually appealing plan to present to the public. He is not the one to make this document – it will likely involve working with a consultant. The existing plan does not tie together with the Climate Action Plan and the Open Space Protection Plan. The work he has done so far guides his work presently.

ZR said its useful to have these plans in place to guide us and help us along to where we are going in the city. We have lots of plans. It would be great if they all pointed in the same direction. ZR, when considering the Urban Forestry Master Plan, are you looking beyond Parks' properties? Ms. Wight said they are and noted some 43% of the city's canopy is on private property. In updating the plan, part of the discussion needs to be about what people can do with trees on their property. Are different standards needed? Mr. Comai, there's not much in the present plan that speaks to unmanaged city forestland. ZR, how does this plan differ from the Open Space Protection Plan? Should they be combined into one plan? CC, does the plan get into details such as species preference and invasive management? Mr. Comai, the plan doesn't take a broad view of citywide canopy. CC, that's where the Open Space Plan comes into play. DM, much of the canopy is in people's backyard. That argues for keeping the Open Space and Urban Forestry Master Plans separate but in agreement.

ZR, maybe its worth using the Addendum as an overarching guide for managing tree canopy. Are you looking to work with this Board in moving the urban forestry master plan? Ms. Wight, we'd like to be collaborative. Its on hold, not due to a lack of interest, but due to limited capacity.

Mr. Comai advised against a long drawn out process with the Urban Forestry Master Plan. The ordinance is what drives what happens. The current ordinance is far out of date. SG noted that plans need to be in place prior to ordinance.

ZR, maybe there are a couple of parts to consider. We need to update the tree ordinance. Some of the other, more advanced ordinance provisions that get to tree cutting and species need a more holistic vision in place.

SG said we can make substantial progress in updating the tree ordinance, even with a 20-year old plan. Or update the master plan first in the next few years, and then comprehensively update the tree ordinance.

Mr. Comai spoke to specific items he addressed such as responding to storm events like ice storms and street tree maintenance. There's money in his budget for professional services to make the master plan visually appealing and easily understandable. Ms. Wight noted the need to obtain more funding and to involve public outreach for a broad selection of voices.

ZR, per MW's suggestion, let's look at the current master plan document and tree ordinance and discuss potential action items at a future meeting.

SG noted the process moving ahead and need for ongoing collaboration with Parks.

MW asked if the Vegetation Ordinance should be renamed Tree Ordinance. Mr. Comai said that most cities have a Tree Ordinance. He noted the standards in the zoning code as to tree cutting. We don't need to replicate those in the tree ordinance.

RC, for the Conservation Board, we don't necessarily need to jump into the Urban Forestry Master Plan. There are a variety of ways to reach our goals.

ZR, let's plan to follow up and consider how we can accomplish our goals.

## **2. Conservation Board Bylaws**

Proposed amendment as to meeting attendance

SG noted the proposed language and why. The Conservation Board's bylaws currently lack attendance standards. Bylaws for other boards do include such standards. The amendment would incorporate a clear attendance standard for Board members and provides a means to remove members if they fail to attend meetings over an extended period of time.

MW, "Chair" should be capitalized. DM, is this a real problem? SG said it's not been frequent. Attendance has been a real issue only once, and the individual resigned upon request following months of effort. MW, said he sees value in codifying an expectation for participation.

CC, thinks it makes sense to have expectations in writing so there's no confusion if it comes up. It seems like a reasonable threshold.

A MOTION was made by MW and SECONDED by CC:

Adopt the bylaw amendment as drafted.

Vote: 6-0-0

## **Adjournment**

6:39 PM.