

Burlington Conservation Board

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DRAFT

Annual Report of the Burlington Conservation Board **Fiscal Year 2016: June 30, 2015 – July 1, 2016**

The Burlington Conservation Board (BCB) acts as the primary entity within the City for comprehensive environmental planning and review. Conservation Board members provide volunteer services in their areas of environmental expertise, which include wetland biology, engineering, water quality, stormwater management, energy efficiency, transportation planning, land conservation and management, and the law. The Board provides thoughtful comment and guidance on all major impact development projects and conducts field observations when appropriate. We strive to develop and sustain effective communication with the Planning Commission, Development Review Board, and other City departments. The BCB has partnered with the Department of Parks and Recreation on open space management and planning through the Conservation Legacy Program. The BCB has also worked with personnel from the Department of Public Works on stormwater management matters in the city. The work of the Conservation Board relies upon the support of the Department of Planning and Zoning, which provides staffing, development review coordination, and planning expertise crucial to Board function.

As in past years, the Board has continued to focus on three primary areas: (1) development review, (2) implementation of Chapter 26: Wastewater, Stormwater, & Pollution Control, and (3) open space planning. Some of our achievements during the last year are described below.

FOCUS AREAS:

1) DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

The BCB reviewed 8 projects this year as opposed to 15 last year. In FY 2016, the BCB evaluated the following development proposals and gave advice and specific recommendations to the Development Review Board, Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Department of Public Works:

- **8 College St** Review of bike path rehabilitation project (skate park to North Beach)
- **351 North Ave** Review of conversion of former orphanage building into 65 apartments
- **38 Wright Ave** Review of seawall construction
- **311-329 North Ave** Review of tree maintenance plan
- **85 North Ave** Sketch plan review of 56-unit apartment building
- **435 & 501 Pine St** Sketch plan review of 100,000 sf commercial building
- **451 Ethan Allen Pkwy** Preliminary plat review of 9-unit residential development
- **0 Sunset Cliff Rd** Review & comment relative to PSB permit application for solar array

In review of these projects, the BCB made specific recommendations pertaining to stormwater management and maintenance and to the minimization of wetland and riparian buffer impacts.

The programs and services of the Dept. of Planning and Zoning are accessible to people with disabilities. For accessibility information call 865-7188 (865-7142 TTY).

The Board also made recommendations to limit adverse impacts associated with tree cutting at the former Burlington College lands. The solar utility proposal at Sunset Cliff Road is unique insofar as it is exempt from the city's zoning regulations. The Board reviewed and commented on this project relative to the VT Public Service Board process.

2) IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 26

Chapter 26: Wastewater, Stormwater, & Pollution Control contains the city's stormwater standards and ties into zoning via the Comprehensive Development Ordinance. The Conservation Board continues to work with project applicants and the city's Stormwater Program staff in implementing the stormwater management provisions of this ordinance. The Board has encouraged innovative design and incorporation of functional green spaces into project designs for stormwater retention and infiltration. Particular attention has been paid to unique site sensitivities, receiving waters and city systems, and feasibility within the context of particular development proposals. There has been a consistent push to improve stormwater management practices, particularly on redevelopment sites.

Outside of project review, the Board has discussed with Public Works the opportunity for in-house wastewater review, something enabled by Chapter 26 but not yet implemented. The Board also reviewed and commented on the College Street green stormwater infrastructure watershed plan project. Finally, an LID amendment to the Comprehensive Development Ordinance initiated by the Board received approval by the Planning Commission and is presently before the City Council's Ordinance Committee.

3) OPEN SPACE PLANNING

The Board played an active role in the conservation of 12 acres of the former Burlington College lands on North Avenue. The Board provided a public forum for this matter as it moved through the public process and held several meetings dedicated in whole or in part to it. Ultimately, the Board voted to support acquisition and conservation of these 12 acres. The Board also worked with the Winooski Valley Park District on a couple of smaller conservation efforts along the Winooski River. Lastly, the Board supported a city-wide wildlife tracking project over the winter of 2015-2016.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

CONNECTIONS

In the course of these activities, the BCB has maintained and developed important connections with other city departments and organizations during the past year, including:

- Development Review Board (review of individual development proposals)
- Parks & Recreation Department (Conservation Legacy Program, land acquisition, bike path rehab, open space planning, urban reserve)
- Planning Commission (LID amendment)
- Long Range Planning Committee (comprehensive planning)
- Department of Public Works (stormwater management)
- University of Vermont Rubenstein School of Natural Resources (wildlife tracking)
- Winooski Valley Park District conservation efforts

FUTURE PRIORITIES

The Burlington Conservation Board will continue to provide the City and developers with timely review of proposals that have potentially significant environmental impacts. We will continue to

work with the DRB on development review issues. Stormwater management will continue to be a high priority, and the BCB will work with Stormwater Program staff to develop stormwater performance standards for future development. The BCB will also encourage transferring the state wastewater permitting process to the city. The BCB will review standards for expenditures from the Conservation Legacy Fund and whether changes are warranted. Lastly, the Conservation Board will continue its involvement in efforts around the Burlington College lands on North Avenue.

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