

Regional Conservation Partnership Meeting

Wednesday, April 17, 2019; 1:00 PM

First Floor Conference Room, City of South Burlington Police Department

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Commission

Absent: Daryl Arminius, Town Planner, Town of Charlotte

Meeting began at 1:05 PM.

Round of introductions.

There were no changes to the Agenda.

There were no changes to the Minutes.

Partner News &/or Updates –

The Hinesburg Conservation Commission is embarking on a natural resources inventory. It will hopefully fill in what they don't know; identify other potential natural resources datasets; and identify any next steps for the inventory process.

Shelburne has at least one volunteer looking to collaborate with others in the removal of invasive plants. They are looking for a group to help.

South Burlington has scheduled two upcoming invasive plant removal events for their Weed Warrior program. One will be on June 29th at Red Rocks Park, and the other will be on September 21st at Wheeler Nature Park. Ashley will send the group an event flyer when it comes out.

Williston has done invasive plant inventories on several properties and is now looking for a way to engage volunteers in removal of those invasives. They would be interested in collaborating with the South Burlington Weed Warrior program.

Bob mentioned invasive plant management that the South Village neighborhood in South Burlington is doing. He indicated it might be part of their Act 250 permit. They had to have a management plan.

Dave commented on the interesting proceedings in South Burlington related to the Interim Zoning process and the DRB meeting related to TDRs.

CCRPC reported that VHB staff had developed a tool for invasive species management along the Vermont Gas pipeline project. It was a tool that was developed for tracking management protocol.

Review Feedback/Results from Council/Selectboard Meetings related to the Accord
(see draft accord document) –

Ashley reported that the South Burlington City Council is supportive of the partnership and of the accord language. They asked about long-term funding and whether the group had considered including viewsheds in their priorities (noting it would not sway their support if viewsheds were not included).

Melinda reported that the Williston Selectboard was supportive. Most questions were related to the funding of the partnership and that funding was not addressed in the current accord document. They were also interested in who would be appointed from the Town to attend meetings, and what this group would hope to accomplish.

Alex reported that the Hinesburg Selectboard thinks the partnership is interesting. They asked if the CCRPC would be a better lead for this kind of group, or at least be given an option to sign off on this agreement. They also wondered who from the Town would be appointed to represent the Town. They also questioned the long-term sustainability of a group like this. Alex mentioned he was also asked to update the Conservation Commission.

Dean reported that the Shelburne Selectboard had similar comments to those from Williston and Hinesburg regarding funding and staffing. They wanted to know who would sign off on the accord. It sounded like they do not think the accord document needs to be signed off on by the board. Dean suggested simplifying the accord document and provided the group with a revised version of the accord.

Sarah Gentry Tischler reported that St. George is excited to have this conversation. They don't share the same concerns with staffing. She suggested referencing "volunteer" in the Accord.

Sarah Dopp noted interested in discussing the group's conservation priorities further.

Shelburne indicated they had received some feedback related to stormwater.

All agreed that a map would be really helpful in displaying conservation priorities.

Funding: Kevin Dorn suggested that the issue could be addressed by adding language to the Accord that would state "no financial obligation or commitment is required by any municipality, entity, or organization". Hinesburg noted that there would still be staff time required.

Map: Shelburne indicated that they were hoping to standardize/unify language for parcel identification. It was suggested that a Natural Resource Inventory might be able to establish language for parcel mapping. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife's new publication of *Conserving Vermont's Natural Heritage* could serve as a common defining resource and might also be able to provide some useful language, though it may not match up with each Town's priorities.

South Burlington indicated it was ready to make a commitment related to staffing concerns.

CCRPC suggested adding a Timeline to the agreement. It could include concrete tasks and expectations.

The question was raised about Charlotte's interest in the group and whether they will actually participate in it. Ashley said she would reach out to them and check on their status.

Hinesburg discussed their plan for reviewing the accord. Their board will discuss it again in May, and then hopefully finalize (sign) in June. South Burlington agreed with that timeline. Shelburne reiterated

that they don't feel their board needs to sign it. Kevin Dorn discussed that it would be a symbolic step for all of the governing bodies to sign off on this accord. It was agreed that the final accord would be signed by the group's governing bodies.

Next steps with the Accord: Ashley will revise the document based on the comments/feedback received and will then send it back out to be finalized. The group discussed the strong desire that this be the final version of this document.

The group had a discussion regarding the CCRPC and their role in the group. Should they be a signatory or are they just a partner? Since the CCRPC's area includes municipalities that aren't at the table for this, it might make more sense for the CCRPC to just be a partner.

Review Draft Mapping by CCRPC –

The group discussed this work eventually leading to a series of maps for the region. Melanie has asked each municipality to review the maps and make sure that all conserved lands have been included. The question of how to include regulatory "conservation lands" continues to be discussed.

St. George will be reviewing the map and checking on whether there are any parcels they might have to add (maybe some "open space" parcels).

There is a possibility for three maps. There were various variations discussed, including: 1. Land Ownership, 2. Land Use, and 3. Conservation Status. What will these maps look like?

A map depicting important natural resources for the partnership will be part of Phase 2 for this effort. This might also include some zoning/regulatory designations.

Hinesburg indicated that it would be helpful to have an agreed upon system for categorizing conservation and public lands to take to their Conservation Commission to help in the identification of parcels and their conservation status.

Williston noted that their Conservation Commission has already discussed levels of protection.

The CCRPC indicated that the next step would include putting together a table of parcels and to fill that out with identifying information, possibly with the help of Town Conservation Commissions/Natural Resource Committees. The table should not include association lands and lands protected with town regulations.

Dave suggested adding dates and authors to documents so partners can better track documents and materials.

Report: UVM NR206 Project Status Update –

Ashley stated that she was hoping the students could do a presentation at the next Partnership Meeting. She was going to try and coordinate that.

The group reviewed the document they provided as their status report. Questions arose regarding what the communities higher priorities (including rankings) were and whether the document the students provided are the commonalities between the municipalities. Where should this partnership put its focus? Ashley indicated that would follow-up with the students to see if they had already provided the partnership with the list of commonalities.

Ashley asked for feedback related to the final product the group expected from the students. It was decided there isn't time for a story map and that would be a future effort possibly done by the CCRPC. The current document appeared vague and needed more words and descriptions. What can the group get from this commonalities list to put towards a future story map?

The group decided a final presentation would work well, including details regarding how the students arrived at this commonalities list. Several municipalities indicated an interest in the group providing questions that arose from their review of each plan (i.e.: When you read Shelburne's plan, what did you think about conservation in Shelburne?).

St. George was wonderin if the students had taken a look at St. George's map and identified any low hanging fruit for conservation.

Next Steps –

The group discussed setting a next meeting date/time. The meeting was tentatively scheduled for May 3rd, at 9 am. Ashley will coordinate this meeting with the students so they can give a presentation.

Once a date and time is confirmed, Ashley will send around a meeting invitation that will include a meeting location.