

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Thursday, July 25, 2019; 2:00 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Maddie Zimmerman, Conservation Intern, Town of Williston; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Laura Meyer, Williston Vermont Master Naturalist Class & Conservation Commission; Alicia Daniel, Executive Director, Vermont Master Naturalist Program

Absent: Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission

Meeting began at 2:05 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

The minutes from the June meeting were accepted.

Partner News and/or Updates –

The St. George Selectboard approved and signed off on the partnership agreement. Everyone is very excited about the connectivity and opportunities associated with the partnership.

Shelburne announced that they closed on a 2 ½ acre parcel (a bargain sale with a developer). This was part of their efforts to conserve land along the La Platte River.

South Burlington held another Weed Warrior event in July and there has been a positive response from residents.

Coordination of PR/engagement event –

The group discussed only doing a press release to announce the partnership, but then time it with the engagement event at the Ewing property (possibly getting a photo to use of the event). Ashley will be coordinating the event and press release with Shelburne (Dean), TNC, and South Burlington's Public Information Officer.

Dean relayed that there is a journalism degree at UVM, and they have a Community News Service that is associated with that degree. The service has articles running in each partner municipality.

The group agreed that a fall event makes sense. Probably on a Saturday (to engage more with the public), and possibly in September or October. It was suggested that putting out the press release before the event could help with advertising. When a timeframe is determined for the event, Ashley will share it with the group.

Potential NR206 Projects for Fall Semester –

The group reviewed potential projects to propose to the UVM fall NR206 class.

There was interest in forming a project idea around a regional trail mapping project that might interact with the CCRPC map. It would also give students an opportunity to engage with communities in different municipalities. Landowner outreach may be a component of this project, as the identification of trail segments and/or access points don't always fit with a landowner's expectations. The partnership would need to work with students to identify outreach/communication strategies to help in their interactions with landowners and respond to concerns that are raised as part of this project.

There was some interest in adding a project related to the tracking of invasive plants and then mapping them regionally. Maybe doing outreach on the "invasive of the week".

The group really liked an idea about using goats to regionally battle invasive plants and having students look at this concept and determine the best way to make it happen. Who would be a potential partner; who could host the goats; how much would this kind of program cost; what they eat; where are the best locations to use goats to eat invasive plants; etc.

Next Steps: Ashley was going to draft a project proposal list and share it with Melinda for editing, and then send it to the class instructors.

Partnership Hosting a Regional Vermont Master Naturalist Class –

Alicia Daniels, the Executive Director of the Vermont Master Naturalist program, and Laura Meyer, a Williston Master Naturalist, came to propose the idea of the partnership hosting a regional Master Naturalist class in the Fall of 2021.

It was relayed that as a result of the program in Williston, that the Town is getting a lot of projects and work done with the help of trained Master Naturalists. These projects include: trail design, inventory of new forest, invasive plant removal, community hikes, etc. There was the idea that the partnership could contribute funding, and that participants in the regional class could come from any of the partner areas.

The program teaches participants about the natural history of Vermont. Participants are more likely to be invested in their Town and participating in things like the Town Plan. They are currently trying to enroll participants for the fall in South Burlington and Hinesburg. The program wants folks to think more regionally.

The regional class would be a pilot. Alicia did something similar in Bristol, and the group there learned the regional story but individuals focused their projects on their local home/town. This year, the average participation in the program across the state was 15 participants/town. The program is currently booked into Fall 2021. Funding would be a \$5,000 match (from the Regional Partnership). The existing programs in South Burlington and Williston would not run if the partnership hosted a class. The cost for someone to participate is \$450. The fee goes towards hiring trip leaders, paying coordinators, office and admin work. The program follows the academic calendar.

They are holding a walk in the Winooski Gorge on August 31st to try and recruit participants. It was suggested that the partnership consider adding a "mini-walk" to the PR event, and Alicia suggested she

would do this for free. A class size generally ranges from 15-25, but Alicia indicated she might not limit a regional class.

The partnership began discussing the funding piece of this. It was suggested that South Burlington could possibly help fund at least one round of this class. Hinesburg and Shelburne both indicated that their Committees might have some funding to chip in. It was discussed that the group should discuss funding again at the next meeting once partners have taken this opportunity and funding request back to their municipalities. The cost would run about \$1,000/partner.

The partnership agreed that this program would benefit the partnership as a whole, and directed Ashley to go back to Alicia and secure the Fall 2021 date.

New Partners? –

The partners discussed the idea of adding new partners to the group. It was suggested that Ashley break the current list of potential partners up into “buckets” to separate out the different kinds of partners the group could have. Different partners will bring different skill sets and resources to the table, and we might want to bring certain entities on board depending on the kind of project we’re working on.

It was also suggested that School Districts be added with the idea of connecting with them on regional support for land stewardship and the implementation of best management practices on their land.

At this time, the group agreed that it would make sense to bring in partners to help with the existing mapping effort, including Land Trusts and state representatives. In regards to the state, it was suggested that Jens Hilke be contacted to see who might be the best ones to connect with at this point.

Once the press release is completed, it should be used to send to partners to get them interested in and excited about the group.

Discuss Next Meeting –

It was noted that the Town of Hinesburg will want to reassess where the partnership is in a year, and whether it’s been a worthwhile endeavor. That helped direct the group to maintain a monthly meeting schedule.

It was decided to try and schedule a monthly, recurring meeting on the 4th Wednesday of the month, at 2:30 PM. Initially, these meetings will be held at the City Hall in South Burlington, unless otherwise noted. This schedule will also be adjusted during the holiday season.

The next meeting will be: August 29th, 2 PM.

The meeting was adjourned.