



VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

VT Urban & Community Forestry Program

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Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Council Meeting

December 9, 2020

GoToMeeting

MINUTES

Attending: Richard Amore, Jane Brown, Cecilia Danks, Kate Forrer, Joanne Garton, Ann Hazelrigg, Steve Handfield, Gwen Kozlowski, Lee Krohn, Melissa Levy, Bob McCullough, Nick Myer, Sara Packer, Tim Parsons, Elise Schadler, Warren Spinner, Bonnie Waninger, John Parry (USFS), Connie Carpenter (USFS)

Welcome and Council Business

- **Review/Approve Minutes:** The minutes from the September 9th, 2020 council meeting were reviewed and approved (Lee Krohn moved, and Melissa Levy seconded).
- **Relevant Council updates:**
 - [The Better Places pilot program](#) provides “placemaking” grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 that improve the vitality of state designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas.
 - Council on Rural Development: [Leadership Network Webinars](#)
 - Cecilia putting in NRSC grant proposal to conduct a town forest census.

Amended Tree Warden Statutes

New legislation has been passed to modernize Vermont's tree warden statutes and other state statutes related to public trees and roadside vegetation. The original Vermont tree warden statutes were established in 1904 and last amended in 1969. The ecological landscape and intricacies of municipal governance changed significantly since the statutes were adopted. This was a multi-year process where changes were proposed in 2017, 2018, and ultimately passed in 2020. Extensive testimony and edits from all stakeholders made this a collaborative success story. Signed into law by Gov. Scott on Oct. 8th, went into effect on November 1.

Legislation changes can be found in Title 24, Chapters 33 & 67 and Title 19, Chapter 9

10 changes of note in the updated tree warden statutes

1. Municipalities can appoint a non-resident and may also share a tree warden.
2. It is required to report appointments with contact info to VT FPR. An online reporting system is currently being worked on, but it is up to municipalities to decide on how to comply with this element.
3. Tree wardens control shade trees within a municipality. There are definitions for public places, public ways and shade trees.
4. Shade trees defined as trees intentionally planted by a municipality or that are designated by the municipality through an established process.
5. Shade Tree Preservation Plan was established as an optional mechanism for designating additional trees as shade trees; this expands the role of the of the tree warden.
6. There is a clarified process for shade tree removals, including public notice and public hearing
7. The final decision about shade tree removal has been transferred from the tree warden to the legislative body
8. Conflicts between Title 24, Chapter 67 (Parks and Trees) and Title 19, Chapter 9 (town highways) were eliminated.
9. Penalties for unauthorized shade tree removal based on size of tree and consistent with timber trespass were established.
10. Updated state governance to include Forests, Parks and Recreation.

UCF Support plan

- Updated web resources, [view here](#)
- Shade tree preservation plan pilot program: working with 10 municipal partners; seeking 2 council members to dedicate 1-2 hours in early February: **Melissa Levy, Bonnie Waninger, Jane Brown**
- Contract with VT League of Cities and Towns to support tree law guidance/webinars/trainings/articles
- Working on web-based tree warden contact reporting button
- Tree warden school- in process, more to report soon!

VT UCF 5-year Strategic Action Plan

- Reviewed 2016-2020 Action Plan and summarized accomplishments according to Desired Future Conditions (DFC).
- Added strategies that UCF is tagged within the 2017 State Forest Action
- Small groups met virtually in October/November to discuss each DFC and propose

strategies for new plan.

- Staff met twice to review, discuss, refine, and establish a final proposed list that best reflect our current programming and areas on which we hope to focus on or anticipating will become a focus in the coming years.
- Elise read and reviewed proposed strategies. **Action Item:** a survey will be sent to council members to help staff prioritize strategies.
- Overall, strategies were changed to be broader, bigger buckets, so UCF staff can adapt work accordingly. Positive feedback on changes were shared. Strategies align with conversation and are particularly thoughtful.
 - *Note: Include federal partners in cross program & cross agency collaboration.*

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

Ginger and Joanne shared progress of UCF team and highlights of JEDI actions within UVM & FPR. UCF team is making effort to improve outreach and access to all Vermonters: race, age, class/income, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical or neurological status, religion.

UCF team met in October to consider: who we work with now, who are we not working with who we work for, identify the resources we are protecting or stewarding. A spreadsheet with short/long term actions will be made available to the council in the future.

Activity: Explored these question these questions on anonymous “sticky note board”:

1. What are you doing to learn about justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in your professional life and/or personal life?
2. What are you struggling with when it comes to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion?
3. What are your hopes and visions for how VT UCF can improve our activities through an integrated lens of justice, equity, diversity, inclusivity?

[Feel free to add your thoughts or view here.](#)

Federal Updates

- John Parry, USFS, highlighted CARS state reporting system; noted the high level of work coming out of Vermont!
- Requested any specific technology transfer needs for training or publications. Examples of past work include iTree Academy and revising the Tree Risk Assessment Publication
- Highlighted potential to interact with other state councils since we are all meeting online

Program Conversation

- Ash Tree Management Grants- \$55,000 allocated to 7 communities: *East Montpelier, Middlebury, Montpelier, Richmond, Waterbury, Williamstown, Williston*
- EAB Municipal Management Case Studies completed by Ginger, [available here](#).
- Roadside Vegetation Manual- final product of Resilient ROW project, completed by Joanne, [available online here](#). Email Joanne for hard copies.
- EAB updates: view updated [EAB Infestation Map here](#).

Next Meeting: March 10, 2021

