



## VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

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### VT Urban & Community Forestry Program

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## Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Council Meeting

**March 11, 2020**

**GoToMeeting**

### MINUTES

Attending: Cecilia Danks, Savannah Ferriera (FPR staff), Danielle Fitzko, Kate Forrer, Joanne Garton, Steve Handfield, Emilie Inoue, Bill Jewell, Gwen Kozlowski, Lee Krohn, Jenny Lauer, Melissa Levy, Bob McCullough, Nick Meyer, Ginger Nickerson, Sara Packer, David Raphael, Elise Schadler, Dave Schneider, Warren Spinner, Ethan Tapper, Richard Amore

### **Tree Warden Statute Update**

Danielle Fitzko described the on-going saga of the attempted amendment to the Tree Warden Statute in the Vermont State Legislature.

- The Tree Warden Statute was first established in 1904 and last amended in 1969.
- Summary of Issues with Current Statute:
  - Conflict with other statutes
  - Lack of clarity on processes
  - Lack of clarity on definitions
  - No reporting requirements
- Objectives in seeking to amend the statute:
  - Define terms
  - Create consistent language
  - Establish a hearing process
  - Add reporting element
  - Support management of forest pests
  - Update state governance
- The 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions saw amendments proposed and testimony taken in the House Ag & Forestry Committee, but no movement.
- In 2020, H.673 has been introduced to the House Ag & Forestry Committee. There has been quite a bit of back and forth, and it remains to be seen if it will move out of committee this year.
- If some version of this bill passes, UCF will assist municipalities with understanding and interpreting the new statute.

## Council Business

- **Review/Approve Minutes:** The minutes from the December 11, 2019 council meeting in Essex Junction were reviewed. Cecilia suggested one change was made to clarify the discussion around Council priority areas (the change has been made). The amended minutes were approved (David Raphael moved, and Emilie Inoue seconded).

## Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit

Kate Forrer gave an online tour of the newly released toolkit.

- History of the project: In 2018, UCF used USDA Forest Service grant funds to work with a consulting firm that specialized in community planning. Ten selected communities were engaged in a robust planning process to develop action-based town forest recreation plans. The planning model included public visioning sessions, needs assessments, facilitated walks in the forests, and a final plan that provides actionable strategies to assist communities in taking the next steps.
- Result: The Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit, which provides all the resources needed to replicate this planning process in other communities, with the goal of supporting sustainable, forest-based recreation in town forests statewide.
- Find It: This online toolkit was launched in January 2020. It is accessible from the UCF public website, and any town in the state can access it.
- Summary of What's There:
  - The toolkit offers community visioning assistance and seeks to connect townspeople to resources.
  - It seeks to take community members from plan creation to implementation. It includes many templates for forms, flyers, promotional ideas, surveys, strategies and meetings. It also includes implementation pods and grant writing resources.
  - In addition, the toolkit includes summary pods for the 10 towns that were a part of the original project, thereby giving other municipalities examples of actual completed plans.
- Workshops: Multiple workshops, events and a summit are planned for later this year.

***Suggestion: Advertise these upcoming workshops/events to trails people in addition to broadcasting it as widely as possible, in hopes of maximizing attendance.***

## Hot Topics in Forest Health

Savannah Ferriera, the new Forest Health Specialist at the Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Lab (VAEL) in Randolph, spoke to the council on current and future pest threats to Vermont forests. Included in her talk was information on Oak Wilt, Beech Leaf Disease, Spotted Lanternfly, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and Emerald Ash Borer. Savannah's PowerPoint presentation is available on the Council Private webpage.

## Program Conversation

- EAB Management and Caring for Canopy Grants:
  - EAB Management: three \$15,000 grants (four applications)
    - Selected partner communities: Northfield, East Montpelier, Essex
  - Caring for Canopy Grants: \$25,000 (15 applications, requesting \$51,000+)
    - 11 selected, most received partial funding
  - All grant agreements are executed.
- Tree Stewards: award nominations due March 29.
- Arbor Day Conference: Thursday, April 30, Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier
  - Keynote Speaker: Eve Frankel, Director of Strategic Communications at The Nature Conservancy. Eve will speak on *The Role of Storytelling in Science Communications*.
- National EAB Awareness Week: May 16-23, 2020
  - UCF will provide seven EAB Awareness Week kits to communities.
  - County Foresters will lead tree walks in every county.
  - EAB informational signs will be posted at trail heads.
  - Trainings on how to implement purple trap monitoring will be done at three town forests (north, central, south)
  - UCF will highlight one partner community per day on social media.
- FPR Realignment: The Division of Forests recently went through a realignment to better serve state residents in the future.
- Elise maternity leave: due April 8<sup>th</sup>, planning to be out entirely April – June; back one day/week in July. Gwen and Joanne will be the main contacts.
- COVID-19: It's unclear what impact this may have on the program. Ideas being considered include moving the First Detector trainings online and moving Arbor Day to the fall. Stay tuned!

## Meeting Adjourned

**Next Meeting: June 10, 2020**

**Location: Richmond Town Forest (town forest field trip meeting)**



