



VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

VT Urban & Community Forestry Program
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Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Council Meeting

September 11, 2019
Montpelier, VT

MINUTES

Attending: Jane Brown, Cecilia Danks, Kate Forrer, Joanne Garton, Steve Handfield, Ann Hazelrigg, Jenny Lauer, Bob McCullough, Ginger Nickerson, Sara Packer, Tim Parsons, Dave Raphael, Elise Schadler, Dave Schneider, Tim Smith, Warren Spinner, Ethan Tapper, Bonnie Waninger, Susan Witham (VTrans guest)

Welcome and Council Business

Cecilia welcomed the Council members and introductions were made.

- **Review/Approve Minutes:** The minutes from the June 12, 2019 council meeting were reviewed and approved (Warren Spinner moved, and Tim Parsons seconded.)
- **Election of Leadership Team and Review Membership**
 - Cecilia Danks will stay on as Chair, and Richard Amore will remain Vice Chair.
 - Leadership Team: Emilie Inoue and Sara Packer are stepping down from the leadership team. Melissa Levy and Bonnie Waninger expressed interest in stepping up. Ann Hazelrigg moved, and Steve Handfield seconded. All voted to approve.
 - All other council members signed their membership letters, so the council as a whole remains the same.
- **Proposed Schedule and Bylaw Changes**
 - New policy: A sign-in sheet for meetings and events (including Arbor Day) would be useful to prove match for federal grants.
 - Proposed Bylaw Changes: Current Bylaws say the minutes will be distributed via email within two weeks. The proposal is to change it to one month. Other changes may be proposed by Elise Schadler as well. The current requirement for bylaw changes requires an email to the council 30 days in advance. Therefore, this will be formally considered at the December meeting.
 - Proposed Meeting Schedule Change: The current council meeting calendar has consisted of four meetings: March ½ day webinar, June outdoors fieldtrip, and September and December meetings (unspecified type). Elise proposed having the September meeting hosted by a council member (or two members) and include a presentation. The December meeting would always be held in Montpelier. The council approved and this will begin in 2020.

Program Conversation

- **Questions/Feedback on Written Program Report**

- Arbor Day 2020 is scheduled for Thursday, April 30, 2020 at the Montpelier College of Fine Arts.
- The Big Tree program will be taken on by Gwen Kozlowski. Gwen will work with Ethan Tapper to reverify what's still out there.
- Backyard Woods is being advertised again. Sign-ups are down this year for some reason, so please advertise as usual and add to your local Front Porch Forum.

- **Staffing Update: Technical Assistance Coordinator Position**

- This position should be hired soon.

- **Focus Share: Town Forest Recreation Planning**

Kate Forrer provided an update on Town Forest Recreation Planning. This is based on an LSR grant.

- UCF has worked with 10 towns on their town forests. This project was designed as a four-phase project: visioning; feedback and information collecting; strategy development; and implementation.
- Work has now shifted to developing a toolkit which can be used by other towns moving forward.
- This project is a management planning tool, not just for recreation (even though recreation is in the grant name).
- UCF is planning to do 10 events in town forests around Vermont by June 2020.
 - A series of town forest walks and workshops hosted in partnership with town forest committees and focused on building skills in recreation planning and implementation (fall/winter/spring/summer 2020).
 - A recreation planning webinar series in partnership with the New England Community Forestry Network (winter 2020).
 - A town forest festival—a one day summit for town forest volunteers, community leaders, and partners to celebrate, share and become inspired around recreation in town forests (spring 2020). This might be held twice (north and south).
 - One regional community forestry summit. A gathering in partnership with Northern Forest Center, Open Space Institute, Vermont Land Trust, and the Trust for Public Land. This has been scheduled for Thursday, November 21 at Lake Morrey.

Revisiting Council Priority Areas (2016-2019)

Cecilia reviewed the expired Council Action Plan and led a discussion regarding whether a formal plan for the council is the right direction to go. She also solicited input from Elise regarding the role of the council plan in aiding UCF staff.

- **Recommendations/Thoughts/Questions:**

- Planning can be good for all involved.
- Understand value of council plan in overall plan. Can the staff inform the council on how to best help? Has the plan assisted UCF staff? Does it work with a 5-year plan? Many town plans are moving from 5 years to 7 years. How can the council best assist?
- Revisit the council plan periodically.
- For the plan to be useful it should direct the staff and make the staff more efficient.

- Review the plan and revisit action items. Assign sub-committees to various topics (tree wardens, town forests, etc.). Would this help the staff?
- Council offers consistency while administrations change. But the plan relies on council members to have the capacity to implement it. What is the value of the council plan in relation to the program plan?
- Staff have limitations on capacity too. What would the staff find helpful?
- Helpful to document actions taken by council members related to plans.
- More structure to plans, specific tasks, timelines, measurable results. Collaborate with staff, avoid one silo for council and another for staff. Check-ins at meetings about exactly what is happening on various items. Question: is the council advisory or is it activist?
- Comments from Elise:
 - Things have been reactive: the council brings something to the table and staff act on it.
 - It would have been helpful for the staff to have a subcommittee on tree wardens; but staff understand how limited everyone's time is.
 - Big help: if council could produce an annual report/letter to the legislature.
 - Question: how much capacity is represented in the council? Who has (more) time to spend helping?
- Cecilia and the executive committee will review the suggestions and come with proposals at the December meeting.

Council Feedback

- **UCF Grant Program 2020**

UCF has the potential to receive \$90,000 this year (40K normal funds and a 50K bonus). How should the grants program be structured?

 - The 50K bonus:
 - The bonus is for demonstration projects for ash tree removal and re-plantings (Vermont is one of three states that will get these bonus funds to produce examples).
 - UCF will choose three towns in Vermont for \$15,000 each and then use the last \$5,000 for trainings.
 - The normal 40K: UCF staff would like to put some of the normal 40K to fund Energy Saving Trees, which has no funding for 2020. Costs for this program: 300 trees = 10K; 450 trees = 15K. The other option for this money is Caring for Canopy grants.
 - Suggestions:
 - Several members thought 15K for Energy Saving Trees, 25K for Caring for Canopy.
 - Be sure to pick towns large enough to accommodate a quantity of Energy Saving Trees.
 - Caring for Canopy should have a minimum \$1,000 grant amount (this is due to the large amount of time and paperwork required at the state level to dispense funds).
 - Use both grants to emphasize EAB preparedness.

- Consider creating two tiers of grants: one for smaller towns with no paid staff, one for bigger towns with staff.
- Prioritize Caring for Canopy grant projects that do more than plant a couple trees (look for projects that enhance education, training, etc.).
- When choosing the three towns for the bonus money, be sure to pick a variety of sizes/locations.
- A conference call will be organized with Elise, Bonnie Waninger, and other council members not at today's meeting.
- **USFS Grant Feedback**

UCF is developing a grant proposal with a focus on rural roadside forests and municipal/tree warden capacity. A new LSR grant federal requirement only allows for a rural emphasis.

 - Suggestions:
 - Bring management ideas into rural roadside ROW: wildlife management, fish habitat, invasive species control.
 - Start from the beginning: learn to identify ash trees. Train roadcrews in the basics: using chainsaws, proper PPE. Roadcrews are often only told what to do, not asked for input or thoughts.
 - Support tree wardens better; have them work closely with the town road crews.
 - Rural ROW is VERY contentious. Competing interests: landowners, tree wardens, road crews, power companies, logging companies, wildlife agencies, invasive workers. The New England region has not really addressed this issue.
 - Tag line: 27,000-acre unmanaged land (rural ROW adds up to that).
 - Note: Green Mountain Power just requested a rate increase specifically to deal with EAB. May be the first but won't be the last.

EAB Updates

- Ginger Nickerson worked with First Detectors to deploy purple traps this year. Re-collecting the traps will be done shortly.
- Several museums had displays on identifying EAB and ash trees.
- FPR will be doing delineation surveys at newer infested areas this fall.
- Many towns have been using loaned iPads to do their tree inventories and entering them online in ArcGIS.
- Site visit requests: More and more requests are coming in via email and phone. UCF would like to have First Detectors go out and take photos of the trees. If they think it is worth the time of a forester, it will go from there.
- Elise is compiling an ISA certified Arborists list of those who are willing and able to perform chemical treatments for EAB.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: December 11, 2019

