



VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

Quarterly Council Meeting

September 7, 2022

Vermont Electric Cooperative,
42 Wescom Road, Johnson, VT

Minutes

Attending: Richard Amore, Joe Epler, Cecilia Danks, Mike Fallis, Kate Forrer, Joanne Garton, Ann Hazelrigg, William Jewell, Melissa Levy, Bob McCullough, Tim Parsons, Sara Packer, Elise Schadler, Tim Smith, Scott Wunderle

Welcome and Council Business

- Welcome Scott Wunderle (VT ASLA rep) and Joe Epler (new Assistant City Forester, Rutland City)
- Introductions
- Grant review: \$30,000 for Caring for Canopy grants, \$80,000 for Urban Reforestation in state-designated downtowns and village centers. Richard Amore, Bob McCullough, and Anne Hazelrigg will review.
- Council vacancies from FPR, VWA, and at-large
- Council leadership: at present, there are two people in leadership roles (Melissa Levy and Bonnie Waninger), group discussed implementing new two leadership position that rotates

Implementing \$1 million for tree planting

In a “normal” year, the Caring for Canopy program awards \$30,000 - \$60,000 in grants to projects that move forward urban & community forestry programs in municipalities. This year, the Governor’s budget awarded \$1 million to plant up to 5,000 trees. There is NO MATCH requirement. The money must be fully committed by the end of 2024 and fully spent down by the end of 2025. Additionally, the federal Inflation Reduction Act has dedicated \$1.5 billion to federal Urban & Community Forestry program. We do not know yet how this money will reach the Vermont UCF program.

The draft plan to implement spending this money is:

- Vermont Community Canopy (\$150,000) to plant 3,000 trees through 4 or 5 rounds of giveaways
- Grants (\$700,000 of \$2,500 - \$50,000 max) to municipalities, schools, higher education, mobile home parks affordable housing organizations, Vermont Garden Network
- Limited-service position (two years duration, \$150,000) assisting with Vermont Community Canopy program, tree care trainings, application support, sourcing trees.

Group discussion:

- What should we be doing now in the planning phase to ensure that new trees survive?
 - Watering – gator bags about \$20 per tree incorporated into cost, need an available truck to carry water, need buy-in from local homeowners who can volunteer to water trees.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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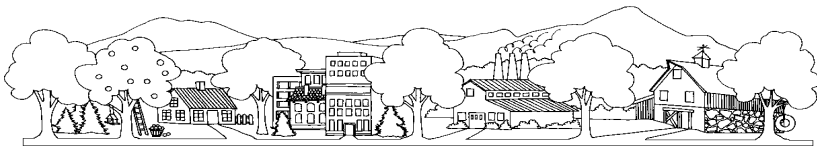


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- Need 2" of mulch to retain water.
- Training about watering, planting height, and mulch (bark mulch of pine trees) – require it for grant recipients. Take a quiz!
- Create a list of appropriate trees for climate change, make sure trees are of good quality, publicize list of fall planting hazards.
- Municipalities should commit to in-kind volunteer hours.
- Allow for municipal planting on private property.
- Include grant funds for preparing site or hiring a professional arborist.
- Right tree, right place training.
- How can we align and integrate this tree planting initiative with other Agency or partner programs?
 - Habitat for Humanity, 350vt.org, Master Gardeners, local gardening clubs,
 - Grant applicants would need to talk to engineers, public works planners, need steel grates or Silva-cells – takes time to excavate area and backfill (Deep Root). Utilize \$100,000 each year to fund ~4 Silva-cell projects.
 - Partnership with Vermont Tech, tech centers, integrate students into helping with maintenance, also at primary and secondary school levels.
 - Affordable housing and community land trusts, but the plants are hard to maintain in affordable housing areas.
 - Town outreach from higher-ed institution so that towns could benefit from college quad/green plantings as match.
 - Utilities – let them select trees that will work for them, give them \$ to plant
 - VOREC – leverage their funds
 - VTrans – integrated planning with streetscape projects
 - Mini-grants for 1-tree giveaways.
 - Cemetery Commissions – began in Cemetery Beautiful movement.
 - Tap into projects already in the works re: streetscape projects
- What can guide the hiring of the limited-service position?
 - Advertise: Paul Smith's, VTC, UVM, AmeriCorps, outdoor recreation outfits, NOLS
 - Could do some basic pruning training and pruning itself for smaller towns that don't have resources.
 - Help do the planting. Would they need hands-on training themselves?
 - Should the person be ISA-certified arborist?
 - Is there a partnership with Paul Smith's, UVM, to bring in someone in the winter part-time who is ready to work more hours in the planting season.
 - People working at nurseries.
 - Communication skills, customer service oriented.
 - Build in professional development.
- Set up database of places to buy trees for municipalities applying for grant.

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Congratulations to Kate, next steps for UCF

After 16 years with VT UCF, Kate is leaving the program to take a new job as Executive Director of the Vermont Woodlands Association. The UCF team is planning for the transition and Kate's last day on Oct. 11th. At present, UVM Extension does not intend to rehire her position. Kate may stay involved with UCF as VWA representative to UCF Council.

VT Electric COOP Tour

The group listened to Sara Packer describing her work managing vegetation in utility right-of-ways and toured the control room of VEC.

Watering Trees

The group brainstormed ideas to support municipal tree watering. Ideas included:

- Educational campaigns/flyers/door hangers about specific watering needs and instructions
- Focus on deep watering, purchase and distribute rain gauges so people know how much water the tree gets naturally/or moisture probes
- Purchasing or funding sap tanks (350 gal) that can be used for watering for the back of pick-up trucks
- Purchasing or funding water backpacks, smaller watering tanks, gator bags/donuts (for all 5,000 trees...?)
- Encouraging planting in clusters (seasonally) to keep watering easier
- Work with Fire Departments: use their hose/tank infrastructure or secure hydrant access (Tim P. has a hydrant key to water trees on campus)
- Agreements with adjacent property owners to water the new trees
- Education at schools – kids will pester their parents!
- Promote green stormwater engineering that sends rainwater into city tree wells.
- Hiring seasonals/work with programs for people with disabilities, work with boy scouts/girl scouts, connect with Master Gardeners.
- Team up with schools, daycares, clubs, etc. --- provide some educational programming and a tree in exchange for watering commitment.
- Gel pellets/hydrogels
- Automatic drip lines on a timer
- Encourage municipalities to contract with a local landscaping/mowing service --- work with Parks Departments, as they are probably already doing this! High Schools as well – if they're hiring someone to water the sports fields.
- Water tank giveaways regionally – encourage municipalities to share/rotate weekly throughout the growing season.
- Talk with golf courses --- they are masters of watering!
- Encourage mulching properly to retain moisture.
- Do not water all trees – accept attrition

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Program updates & highlights

- UCF JEDI work: the program's vision towards justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion is on the website as a final document.
- The Northeast-Midwest Urban Forestry Economic Study released numbers outlining the impact of urban & community forestry in each state. Vermont could use some of the impact numbers in an updated letter to legislatures this December.
- Forest Matters Video Series are complete and available at anr.vermont.gov/forestplanning
- Black ash project update and the work of UVM graduate student Charlotte Cadow are available on Charlotte's [StoryMap](#).
- Sustainable Urban Forest Resilience Grant (~\$100K) is a source of money awarded to VT UCF for strategic assistance to communities needing to manage ash and outreach with "non-traditional" municipal partners to promote EAB planning.

Meeting Adjourned

The group then moved to the Johnson Arboretum near School Street.

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