



VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

Quarterly Council Meeting September 13, 2023 Middlebury College

Minutes

Attending: Judy Wiger-Grohs, Leslie Kameny, Mike Fallis, Tim Smith, Joe Epler, Sally Thodal, Tim Parsons, Bill Jewell, Bonnie Donahue, Joanne Garton, Emilie Inoue, Chris Company, Scott Wunderle, Melissa Levy, Darren Schibler, Josh Behounek, VJ Comai, Madeleine (Burlington seasonal staff) Chris Zeoli, Ginger Nickerson (online), Sara Packer (online), Cecilia Danks (online), Gwen Kozlowski (online), Elise Schadler.

Welcome and Council Business

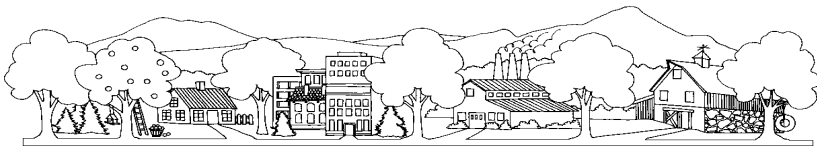
- June meeting minutes: reviewed and approved (Mike Fallis made a motion to approve, VJ Comai seconded.)
- Mileage reimbursements available for members; instructions live on the council private page.
- There is a vacant at-large council seat. A council member from the Environmental Justice staff at ANR may join council later this year.
- UCF is seeking grant reviewers from council (January commitment). Richard Amore or someone from his office will represent ACCD.
- Cecilia provided an update on the town forest census project in concert with Julie Frost, graduate student at UVM. Chris Company and Darren Schibler volunteered to help find audiences to respond to survey requests.

Middlebury Tree Committee Updates

- The tree committee is composed of seven people brought together in 2015. The group focuses on Arbor Day celebrations in town through the library, local stores, and local newspapers.
- During the summer of 2022, a college student incorporated the tree inventory in the town infrastructure database.
- Through a 2020 UCF grant, the committee asked homeowners if they wanted trees in the ROW outside their homes and planted trees in selected places.
- The most recent project focuses on tree planting in East Middlebury in partnership with VTrans. Mature black locusts and sugar maples have been removed by VTrans or its contractor on VT Rte. 125. Through a Caring for Canopy grant, the committee worked with Bonnie Donahue to create a permit checklist to plant a tree in a state ROW. They selected 10 locations for planting in consultation with neighboring homeowners who agreed to water new trees. The Town received a permit from VTrans to release a contractor to plant the trees. The committee is piloting a six-tree planting project on private property near sidewalks along Rte. 125. Those trees are currently growing in a nursery under contract for planting next spring. Chris Company commented that the Council can advocate for

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livability of downtown spaces along State roads to include vegetation, tree care, and other design standards that cater to humans. Shift from adoption of state highways by towns to a maintenance plan.

Program Updates

- Joanne shared a recap of August's rope throwing workshops, some information about the silviculture course she is currently auditing at UVM, work she has done to continue the progress of a coordinated approach to black ash knowledge and preservation, and that she is beginning to be more engaged on some town forest/rural forest issues (backfilling for the gap that Kate left when she left the program).
- Gwen shared about the Vermont Community Canopy program and how UCF has been strategic with outreach and free tree giveaway communications. She also spoke again about the Windsor Pride Tree project and the upcoming Backyard Woods course.
- Ginger shared some information about our continued work on the Sustainable Urban Forests Resilience project and efforts to be explicitly engaged in EAB planning with several southwestern communities and organizations that operate in southwestern VT.
- Elise shared information about our new urban forester, starting 9/25. She also showcased UCF's 2024 grants program and asked Council to help spread the word about the nearly \$500k we have to allocate in this round of funding.

Focused Conversation: Flood impacts

The Council used the remaining time (about 20 minutes) to discuss this summer's flood events and their impacts on communities. Members had thoughts on how UCF can be engaged, what will happen next, and how this group can support more resilient communities:

- Chris Campany shared a good amount of information about what he and the other RPCs have been engaged in since the flooding, including thoughts about flood plain protection and access, policies for compact settlement, and the need for statewide legislation.
- Mike Fallis commented about the uptick in hazard tree removals and blow downs because of ground saturation.
- Elise suggested that we consider a future speaker on floodplain restoration as we consider if and how UCF can be engaged.
- The group agreed that we should be proactive about education others about the role of trees, particularly underground soil systems (Silva cells, etc.) and upstream floodplain forests, in mitigating heavy rain events and potential flood events.

Lunch and Meeting Adjourned to transition to Tim's Middlebury College campus tree tour.

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