

## UCF Meeting Minutes – December 13, 2023

### Essex Offices

In attendance: Joanne Garton, Tim Parson, Melissa Levy, Scott Wunderle, Savannah Ferriera, VJ Comai, Bob McCullough, Ann Hazelrigg, Josh Behounek, Chris Company, Darren Schibler, Gwen Kozlowski, Emilie Inoue, Richard Amore, Tim Smith, Joe Epler, Bonnie Donahue, Adam McCullough, Michael Sadler, Elise Schadler, Bill Jewel, Cecilia Danks

1. Approval of September 2023 Meeting Minutes

Darren moved to accept the minutes. Chris Company seconded the motion. All approved the minutes.

2. Vacancies on UCF Council

There are two vacancies (at-large, Vermont Woodlands Association). Currently, there are 14 core/dedicated seats and 6 at-large seats. The group brainstormed membership from invasives, stormwater, dept. of health, community wildlife, hazard mitigation, climate action office (ANR), emergency management, Lauren Oats and TNC, Stephanie Smith (emergency management?) watershed groups, natural resource conservation districts. An open call for council members may be the best next steps. Chris Company suggested a future meeting topic on leveraging other grant funds.

3. Grant review committee will be Melissa Levy, Bonnie Donahue, Richard Amore or a new employee from ACCD, Elise and Gwen.

4. New leadership rotation. Scott and Tim are signing off, Richard and Josh are in the leadership positions in 2024.

5. Elise will send meeting invitations for the 2024 Council meetings.

6. Introducing Oliver Pierson, director of Forests at VT FPR

Forests has been hiring many positions this year, particularly since Oliver began his position at the end of September of 2023. One big need in Forests is to increase and refine planning processes for state lands. Upcoming funding will likely be lower than the past year or two, and one-time funding is levelling.

7. Introducing Adam McCullough, Urban Forester at UCF

Adam provided his background tree experience and highlights from the first few months on the job.

8. Celia provided an update on the Town Forest Census. She may be looking for Council members to test the survey. Tim and Joe updated Council on the \$1 million award to the City of Rutland for urban tree planting via IRA funding. The hope to subcontract 40-50 silva cells (estimated cost is \$40k per tree), trees will be purchased out of Rutland City budget. Two City engineers are working on the specs of the project with Joe and Tim. Darren updated the ARPA block grant subaward to Chittenden County RPC. Grants aim to cover project development and planting of 2,000 trees in urban areas for water quality and climate benefits. Grant funding will benefit riparian restoration as well as urban tree planting in urban centers. Bonnie provided an update to the VT State Standards. Richard shared updates from ACCD Better Places and the "Small Towns, Healthy Places" podcasts. Chris alerted Council to the upcoming \_\_\_\_ conference at the end of October. RPCs have no funding for natural resource planners and are looking for more input from conservation groups and entities.

9. Program Updates: Gwen and Elise provided updates on the website update.  
**Action item:** Send community map update to VLCT and remind RPCs to share.  
Action item: talk about hazard mitigation plans with Environmental Leadership Institute.

10. Arbor Day Updates

[Add these.]

11. UCF Strategic Planning

- UCF Core budget is \$300,000
- IRA provides \$750,000 (\$600,000 to grants, \$150,000 to salaries)
- ARPA Urban Tree Planting Project \$1 million (\$150,000 to salary, \$150,000 to Community Canopy, \$700,000 for CCRPC to grant out to communities and administer the grant program)
- Sustainable Urban Forest Resilience Project (EAB funds from USFS): \$143,000 (\$125,000 in grants, \$18,000 for salaries)
- Women in the Woods LSR Project: minimal \$ for Joanne's salary
- Models for Community Forestry LSR Project: \$15,000 for Joanne's salary

Reviewed team member work time 2023 (as it went) and 2024 (dream).

Elise discussed pilot tree planting project.

Reflections on UCF Program Strategic Plan.

- Steve promoted "spark economic vitality" as a way to get leadership teams (e.g. selectboards) interested in trees in downtowns.
- Chris stated in other parts of the country, states focus on "urban growth centers" as opposed to "village centers" like in Vermont. UCF can promote trees in all parts of river corridors, including headwaters and keeping trees/wood in the waterways.
- Bob suggested containment ponds around the watershed, including woodlands such as town forests.
- Bill suggested increased awareness about Class 3 wetlands, which currently are not protected.
- VJ supports educating people how to care for trees.
- Bill suggested classroom module for teaching tree planting.
- Chris drew parallels to Trout in the Classroom programs
- VJ suggested a ½-day tree planting workshop.
- Chris suggested Vermont Road Commissioners through RPCs or Vermont Local Roads to bring tree-planting workshops to public works crews.
- VJ suggested generating a list of professionals in different parts of the state that can weigh in on tree care in different regions.

How can we leverage the unprecedented funding to VT UCF and make the case that this investment in our community trees and green spaces should continue?

- Public service announcement, videos, social media posts via video, work with an intern who is also working/majoring in communications,
- When the funds have dried up in 3-4 years, we will try to show why work should continue.

- Does communication go to the public? Lobbyists?
- Can we connect through Vermont Public? Feed them stories. Ask questions to Brave Little State? Tree Talk? VTDigger?
- A long-term goal of communications is to have state funds be part of the program.
- Hashtags for grants. Require submission from grant funded projects.
- Josh: Find and replace “promote and educate” with “do”, like 3.4. Use urban & community forestry practices to adapt climate change strategies that mitigate urban air temperatures, water and air pollution, and support biodiversity.

2:30 PM: meeting adjourned