



Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

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1. Agenda

Subject

1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda

Meeting

September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024,
5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

Category

1. Agenda

Department

Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront

Type

Procedural

Recommended Action

2. Consent Agenda

Subject	2.1. June Updated Commission Meeting Minutes
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the communication and approve the minutes

Subject	2.2. August Commission Meeting Minutes
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the communication and approve the minutes

Subject	2.3. Request for Special Use Permit and Sound Waiver for Burlington Tenants United at Pomeroy Park
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	waive the reading and approve the request for special use and sound waiver

Subject	2.4. Request for Special Use Permit and Sound Waiver for Our Way VT at Pomeroy Park
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action
Recommended Action	waive the reading and approve the request for special use and sound waiver

3. Public Forum

Subject	3.1. Verbal Comments
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Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	3. Public Forum
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Procedural

4. Deliberative Agenda

Subject	4.1. Marina Fees, Erin Moreau, Waterfront Superintendent and Rob Peterson, Marina Manager, BPRW (attachment)
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	4. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action

Subject	4.2. 127 Path Study Representative, Sophie Sauve, Parks Comprehensive Planner, BPRW (verbal)
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	4. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action

Subject	4.3. Off-leash Committee Choice, Lee Morrigan, Commission Chair (verbal)
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	4. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Action

Subject	4.4. Minutes of Meetings, Aaron Keech, Commission Member (verbal)
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	4. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Discussion

Subject	4.5. Fundraising Events that Pass Through Parks, Cindi Wight, Director, BPRW (verbal)
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

Category 4. Deliberative Agenda
Department Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type Information

Subject 4.6. Park Ranger Program, Cindi Wight, Director, BPRW (verbal)
Meeting September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category 4. Deliberative Agenda
Department Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type Information

Subject 4.7. Conservation Legacy Fund Grant Revision, Dan Cahill, City Land Steward, BPRW (attachments)
Meeting September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category 4. Deliberative Agenda
Department Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type Action

5. Standing Items

Subject 5.1. Parks Foundation Update (verbal)
Meeting September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category 5. Standing Items
Department Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type Information
Report

Recommended Action

Subject 5.2. Off-Leash Dog Sub-Committee (verbal)
Meeting September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category 5. Standing Items
Department Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type Information
Report

Recommended Action

6. Director's Report

7. Commissioner's Items & Volunteer Hours

8. Adjournment

Subject	8.1. Motion to adjourn
Meeting	September 10, 2024 - Parks & Recreation Commission - Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30 PM, 645 Pine Street, Front Conference Room, OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	8. Adjournment
Department	Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront
Type	Procedural
Recommended Action	



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes
June 11, 2024
Parks and Recreation Commission**

Commission Present: Etter, Johnson, Keech, Lantieri and Morrigan

Staff Present: Wight and Putzier

The meeting was convened at 5:31 p.m. by Wight

Approval of Agenda

Wight asked for a motion to adopt the agenda, motion was made to approve with an amendment to move item #2.1. May Commission Meeting Minutes to the Deliberative Agenda by Morrigan, second by Keech. Motion to approve the agenda as amended by Morrigan, second by Lantieri, motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda with the amendment to remove consent item #2.3 Special Use Permit for Burlington Community Justice Center at Oakledge Park by Keech, second by Lantieri, motion carried. Motion to approve the consent agenda as amended by Morrigan, second by Lantieri, motion carried.

Public Forum

Public forum opened at 5:36p.m. by Wight.

Steve Levy, 156 Locust Street stated he loves living in that location, lots of activities and was born in 1953 before transistor radios and asked what is the criteria for waiving amplified sound, very loud treble and was confused as to why the athletics need to have loud acoustics.

Also asked if the department was in charge of recreation path and was told yes. Morrigan said always more than welcome to come to commission when a permit is issued to dispute. Levy also stated he did not know what the typical rules were for obtaining permits and permission for amplified music and Wight encouraged to reach out to her with any questions or concerns and said she would be happy to contact the users of the field and or events. Wight also explained how to look up permits on Civic Clerk.

Philip Pezeshki, thanked the department for efforts at mitigating or controlling bittersweet in Longe Meadow, next to Arms forest, spoke with employee and all mowed throughout the field, before and after and was very impressive, now all mowed area is wonderful. Been in sporadic communication about the plan to manage the field, which will include bittersweet assumed and would be curious to see when the plan would be released. Relieved and grateful to see someone taking care of. Also after last commission meeting asking if anything will be done about the blazes in arms forest, finds distracting to visual piece of the woods.

Public forum closed at 5:45 p.m.



May Commission Meeting Minutes

Keech asked for clarification of off-leash dog area, particularly if the individuals would be voting members of the committee, assumed that they will come up with recommendation and it will then be approved by the commission and was confirmed that would be the process.

Motion to approve the minutes by Lantieri, second by Morrigan, motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers/Chair and Vice Chair

Wight opened nominations for Chair of the Commission

Morrigan said they were interested in position of Chair, had served as Vice Chair, enjoyed all and helping structure the agenda and other local government and everything coming together was very satisfying, while looking through the Council selection committee, Etter was left out completely through the process. Stated that very good catch and incredible able to happen that City Council was able to correct and maintain a very non-partisan commission and how much enjoyed serving.

Lantieri nominated himself as Vice Chair, 4th year on the commission, worked on various committees and groups and as other commitments have wound down seeing what it takes to do projects in the park has been great, studied community planning and trying to levy experience and give back in a leadership way.

Morrigan nominated themselves for the position of Chair, all in favor, passed unanimously.

Morrigan nominated Lantieri as Vice Chair, Keech Seconded, motion carried/passed unanimously.

City-wide Impact Fee Report

Wight explained that there was a user fee study done at the request of the board of finance at the budget creation last year. Said this one looked at multiple departments and did not look at the whole department and hard to pull out pieces but useful to pull out pieces. Looking to parks commission for support, high expectation for subsidizing, and will come back when feel some items should receive more subsidizing more than others, such as new programs that are intro/basic skills for kids to learn to do and don't look for 100% recovery and willing to help support. Community events that the full community can come to and willing to subsidize. Generally in most communities looking for 38% cost recovery they are looking for much higher, as we have parking and waterfront fees. Have increased fees based on that, more with user study and to continue to contribute more towards the fees, adult sports, day camps, marina, arena, evaluating facility rentals, lastly note working with CT as they believe they can substantially improve the spreadsheet and see if making the goals we would like and can get a sense as we set prices to make sure meeting cost recovery. Would like to bring back a real number to the commission in the future.

Keech said felt parks was a cash cow for city and then discovered got quite a bit of funding from general fund, some of recommendations that were made, such as adult classes, but as you go down further the highest price proposed is in senior programming and felt need some assistance as well as they are in later stages of life and should get some subsidy as well, also wanted to understand rentals at CORE and Miller and did not know if they are part of the groups doing the rentals and asking what grants they are receiving and taking them away to Parks for rent and see 7 specific groups being targeted and felt should just say no. Point was to examine more thoroughly and who should be taking the bite of the budget.



Wight explained that is one of the things that Cate is looking at, what is market rate and where does it fit with current non-profits and if below market rate, it would be ok to advocate and bring up to market rate and believe or not if below to increase. Senior programs is one that needs some adjusting and senior and adult should be looked at separately and can look at differently depending on the program. Some feel should be subsidizing young adults and they are in the lower income level than seniors.

Etter stated that seniors are still in the lower level and felt one reason so high is that currently already subsidized and the entire city needs to contribute, and money has to come from somewhere.

Keech asked if could still approach and ask for clarification of the breakdown and Wight said could review for August meeting and look and see if categories still make sense and if data can easily be manipulated to separate out adult from senior and the Arena from others and looking at it a little bit more in depth and look at the categories and level of subsidy.

Morrigan said a study from outside consulting firm and asked what the next step is for implementing and Wight said had done some already and every quarter report in on revenue and can be proactive on the conversation by sharing some direction from the parks commission on the rates and the categories. If talk about at the August meeting can share input on the categories and if any place that is out of line for cost recovery or not. Morrigan said the budget is finalized at the end of June and asked if it would then be finalized for FY26 and Wight said no as those and larger discussion will be setting fees in January for camps etc. and booking of shelters and specific items will need to be approved as in the past. Also that the commission could have a bigger part in making decision in cost and Morrigan was very excited about the commission being more involved and having a larger input.

Lantieri said from memory consultant might have left out some areas and asked if some left out and Wight said court and field rentals, and not sure if all recreation was included, the main piece that was not in was on the parks side, looked at all staff and time and not a penny of the budget that did not get allocated and in this one, only pieces of time were taken, some are allocated and need to take a broader look at and need to determine staff that don't fall under a specific area but are still allocated in another place within the budget. Hope to build very accurate spreadsheets and be able to share at the August meeting and more accurately make projections.

Etter said July 4th and Eclipse what about increasing parking or street taxes and restaurants for those events and if being properly allocated. Wight agreed gets complicated fast, not sure if they can take a look at a specific point in time and do a comparison.

Commission Member Projects

Morrigan started saying since at new session would be good time to have general conversation about what each persons interest area is and as items come up who's purview it falls under and if any projects or project areas to discuss as well. Morrigan said they are a local government and process nerd, special interest and goes to a lot of meetings and Council meetings, drawn to parks because of natural spaces and social services, interested in how sometimes public perception, media trail and reality can be very different. Interested in the social aspect of how can really energize people in different ways, currently on the sub-committee for Dog Task Force, not interested in new committee currently but in the future.



Johnson in terms of parks central area invested in was Community Gardens and felt very interesting area of service and amenity that city provides, have many gardens in Burlington and many are very passionate and offering support grounds him and become more interested in accessibility in the parks, recognizing where Burlington is improving and where can improve more, on the Dog task Force Sub-Committee.

Keech said his education and occupation is in the environment and does not have any volunteer hours to share as does not have time to spare and loves conservation.

Etter said budget finance as has time available, trying to keep parks simple and looking good, that can't solve every problem but what can address would be happy to help with.

Lantieri focus on equitable access to parks and green space, not every home or apartment has access and the majority for a good quality of life, come from community organizer and lots of people are in a tough spot currently and while parks can't solve everything, but if you have access to recreation and facilities and or to just a park, it makes a big difference and would like to reignite the spark and bring community together and cross reference ability to mix verbal with data.

Parks Foundation Liaison

Morrigan stated that Duke was previously the Liaison and no longer on the commission and had Wight explain the job of the liaison; stating the person attends meetings and then reports back to the commission, said it works well when it is the Chair, does not matter or have to be but the person has to be able to attend the meetings, sometimes monthly and shifting to quarterly and then committee work being done outside of that, went through big changes in the last month or so, spent a lot of time rebuilding, very impressive. Brooke Gilman stayed on and led, did great job, Brian Lowe will be the next Chair.

Morrigan said happy to do but wanted to open up to anyone that had a strong interest in doing, Lantieri said that he would be interested.

Morrigan nominated Lantieri to serve as the liaison, seconded by Lantieri, motion carried unanimously.

Standing Items:

Park Foundation Update

Wight said that they are continuing to work on playground campaign and general governance and next leadership with Brian Lowe stepping into the Chair Position.

Off-Leash Dog Sub-Committee

Morrigan said waiting on application to be digitized to be on line and to get out to as many people as possible, Morrigan and Johnson will be leading but reaching out to others, at August meeting will vote on who will be the two committee members. After selection will make sure to get recommendations to commission in timely fashion.

Lantieri asked if would vote on members in August and was told yes by Morrigan. Keech asked when would go public as a commission, specifically for applications and was told via email.



Lantieri said for point of information can send an email to all but cannot reply for public meeting purposes.

Director's Items

Wight gave shout out to Jon Sumner and said an expert at cleaning the floors and got lead pay for training custodians at City Hall and Leddy Arena on how to do and proper materials were on hand. Update working with Kieslich park and city attorney office Jo McNeil and great to see support and come out of retirement, next have discussions on encampments and P&R has been involved and listening and the real focus is that no camping in parks and also as supportive of placement of port o lets and some push back on cleaning and without staff are dealing with 5 gallon buckets of feces. Have some long term retirements coming up in June, Susan and Sarah Carter for long standing service with City as Recreation Specialists and will have picture in August report to see Lakeview Office building updates, hired architect to determine original likeness and rebuilt by hand the many pieces, absolutely stunning.

Morrigan stated appreciation on the support for here employees and getting in the trenches with them.

Commissioner's Items & Volunteer Hours

Morrigan had an additional 10 hours, good portion yesterday working with Council and going to a lot of meetings enjoying the change in season and sun and habit of wearing sun screen, really looking forward to new session.

Lantieri has 2 additional hours, Max and Neighbors of the park, not anyone in Parks fault, frustrating but what happens, excited about a July opening and asked if any updates with tree situation at Keislich park and if any changes. Wight said the conservation board touched on at their meeting and said would like to see some type of legacy impact and BPRW met with attorney office and working on final numbers of what staff cost will be over the next few years, staff time and finalizing and will work with SD Ireland, no hostile pieces, continued negotiations and open with communications and elaborate further on.

Johnson no extra hours, did host friend from Washington State and enjoyed, was very impressed with waterfront and Burlington parks and gave a thumbs up.

Etter has no additional hours.

Keech has no additional hours.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:53 p.m. by Johnson, second by Etter, motion carried unanimously.



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes
August 14, 2024
Parks and Recreation Commission

Commission Present: Boehm, Johnson, Keech, Lantieri and Morrigan

Not Present: Bergmann, Etter

Staff Present: Wight, Moreau, and Bushnell

The meeting was convened at 5:40 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

Morrigan moved to amend agenda to move item 2.6 to deliberative so he can recuse himself due to new employment causing a conflict of interest. Lantieri seconds, and all were in favor. Morrigan moved to accept the amended agenda, Keech seconded, and all were in favor. Keech moved to add the minutes from June 11 to the deliberative agenda, all were in favor

Approval of Consent Agenda

Keech moved to approve the consent agenda,

Mayor's Update

Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak introduced herself and asked everyone present in the room to introduce themselves as well. Once introductions were made, Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak began to talk about her first four months in office. The mayor's emails have been trying to communicate as much as possible. Her first 3 months in office were all about the budget - making sure it was community safety forward and balanced. Safety touches every aspect of the city and every staffer and community member is impacted. The community has been clear on their priorities for the budget, and Mulvaney-Stanak has already planned a budget summit for the end of month to start planning for next year. She wants to add public engagement to the budget process. She feels the current system is too short, and intends to do something different.

Beyond that Mulvaney-Stanak's administration has been focused substance use, unhoused issues, and criminal/negative activities impacting community life. The administration been hard at work – focusing on 6 or so “hot spots” and getting more accountability in locations where there are the most issues. These “hot spots” are points for cross departmental collaborations, bringing as many staff members as necessary at the table and providing feedback. For example, the day of the meeting, the Burlington School District was in hot spot meeting to talk about starting school. They are looking at other cities with similar struggles to build a more effective system. Ingrid Jonas has also joined the team to work specifically on community safety. She is retired state trooper, works with CJC, and is a great asset for the city. Mulvaney-Stanak is also working to restaff PD, hire 10 new officers and 3 more CSOs.

Most relevant to the Parks commission is the work Mulvaney-Stanak's administration is doing on unhoused issues. They've been working on how to tackle the issue with dignity and care for folks struggling. There is a massive gap between the state's responsibility and funding limits. There is literally



nowhere for these people to go. There are not enough beds in the state for the homeless and Chittenden County and Burlington in particular have the highest number of unhoused in the state. The motel program ends in September, and as weather gets worse there are fewer protections than there used to be – there's a high bar to get emergency housing during adverse weather issues now which didn't used to exist.

Mulvaney-Stanak's administration is trying to be thoughtful around shared space – They want visitors and locals to enjoy our public spaces, so the city has decided to move folks out of parks while allowing them to stay on public lands. There are three locations on public land where the city has installed basic amenities (bathroom, dumpsters, water for hand washing). Two sites with resources are flying A at the waterfront and in the urban reserve. Things have been stable in those locations and staff are monitoring these sites. Ultimately, however, camping is not the best practice. The administration is working with a CEDO staffer whose only focus is to end homelessness on adding more beds. The third site is on "Old Dump Road" heading into the Intervale. The administration hasn't placed resources there yet because councilors really wanted a dialog with the surrounding community. There are regular encampments at bottom of hill, but criminal activity is happening at top of hill. Ultimately, however, this is only a warm weather strategy and we need more beds for winter. This is imperfect at best, but it's what Mulvaney-Stanak's administration has been trying to navigate.

Morrigan thanked Mulvaney-Stanak for the updated, sharing that he was thrilled with the work that's been done. He was very encouraged to know that no employees were eliminated in the budget crunch and appreciates what's been done with unhoused population. This issue is very close to his heart as he was unhoused for a period of time. There are people who understand why amenities are helpful (city employees have to deal with it anyways, at least it can be more properly disposed of). The bathroom issue is always present because as long as we have unsheltered people using substances, they are in a constant state of withdrawal or improving. These conditions cause many digestive issues. People getting off drugs have less than 30 seconds sometimes from feeling the need to go to defecating. We have people living unsheltered who cannot control their bowels. That's the reality. It's hard to hear people talk about fecal urgency as a political matter.

Mulvaney-Stanak appreciated Morrigan's perspective and agreed that sharing lived experience helps to educate the community about the realities. Stories/experiences like Morrigan's are important. Bathroom access is an equity issue. Her administration is looking for short term, immediate, straightforward ideas to resolve the issues we've been having, and one is to make more public bathrooms available. There is a bathroom in city hall that people don't know about. Mulvaney-Stanak also pointed out that children also experience bathroom urgency. It doesn't matter who you are, we need to do better. The goal is to move from a place of questioning what can be done to a place of proactivity.

Keech admitted that he feels ignorant about temporary shelter situation. He asked what the priorities might look like when things improve. Mulvaney-Stanak shared that there is a popular myth that Vermont has a lot of out-of-staters in our unhoused population, but that's not true, it's mostly Vermonters. It's very hard to find an emergency shelter bed in rural VT. There's no transportation or downtown grocery store in many local locations. Additionally, there is ongoing tightening in states general assistance housing emergency program. Everyone who wanted to be housed could be housed during Covid, but now policy is going the other way. The number of unhoused in Chittenden County are



higher now than at the start of Covid - over 300 unhoused people in Chittenden County alone. Most need low barrier sheltering – meaning no sobriety or other high bar requirements. We need more low barrier shelters. There is a problem with adverse weather program – requiring recipients to be elderly; even families becoming ineligible. The state has implemented an 80 day cap on motel program. It's very concerning how many folks are getting pushed out.

Boehm asked what parks commissioners should be thinking about in terms of seasonal movement.

Mulvaney-Stanak shared that staff is looking to get more emergency beds online, low barrier in particular. They are looking for a location for emergency winter shelter as VFW is no longer in location. The city isn't equipped to provide these services, but we are holding these people regardless. We're looking for sites for winter shelter. The old federal social security building on Pearl Street is a likely option, but they are looking at many sites as possible shelters. Unfortunately, there aren't a ton of options that feature everything we need to house folks over the winter. Even if we had millions of dollars out of nowhere, it's going to take a couple of years to get through this, so it's important to get ahead of the game as best possible. Ultimately, all of these issues are unintended consequences of the pandemic.

2.6 (moved from Consent) Request for Special Use Permit and Sound Waiver for VT Progressive Party Gathering at North Beach Shelter

Morrigan reiterated that he is now an employee of the Progressive party so he recused himself from vote. A motion to approve special use permit and sound waiver gathering at North Beach was requested. Lantieri moved, Keech seconded, and all were in favor

Minutes approval

Keech noted that page 4 notes that he stated "all know his stance on the dog task force." He asked to add word negative to clarify stance, otherwise he would like the statement stricken. He moved to make the edit. Lantieri seconded, noting that the minutes will need to be approved at the next meeting. All were in favor

Public Forum

Public forum opened at 6:21pm. As no one was present or wished to speak public forum was also closed at 6:21pm

Swim Water Update Process

Erin Moreau, harbor master and Department of waterfront superintendent was present to explain the new swim water update reporting system. The waterfront team oversees all municipal beaches and swim waters and it's their job to inform public of the water status daily. Cyanobacteria is the reason we often close the beaches and it's not going away. We needed to make things more formal than just updating on social media like we used to, so over the winter we partnered with the state to build a Burlington version of the statewide swim water page. We mirrored it for just Burlington beaches and now it's a home where people can go consistently and check the status of the beaches. Both a great interface for the public and also a really simple way to understand access – it uses traffic light colors to indicate safety (green means go, yellow – proceed with caution, red – stop) which is very understandable. On the back side, we are able live update the page throughout the day. We have two designated seasonal employees whose only job is to test the water all day long. Every beach updated a



minimum of 2 times daily, providing more info for the public and more data for us (and UVM – the Lake Champlain basin program has researchers who are working on cyanobacteria). Overall, it's been a huge improvement.

Moreau continued by explaining the process for closing a beach. Staff tests for e coli in water from the harbormasters boat 2 times weekly. This is not ideal because it takes about 20hrs for results (that's how long e coli tests take). Moreau is hoping that now that the waste water department is testing for Covid, it may translate to other improvements. The team tests for e coli on Monday and Thursday (results Tuesday and Friday). Cyanobacteria, on the other hand, is checked by seasonal employees daily. Up until this year, we had 2 options, category 1 (no problems) and category 3 (close the beach). We've now added category 2 which means giving the public more info to make informed decisions. Category 2 is a "warning" for issues. If we see algae starting to form we used to close at that point, now we use a category 2 as a middle range, basically meaning If you could ingest it, take caution. We'll also put staff at the site to monitor the bloom, and if it gets any closer to a category 3 we close it.

This year, we had a total of 8 failed tests, either e coli or cyanobacteria. That's different than amount of beach closure days. We did that 8 times this year so far and had 29 category 2 cyanobacteria warnings (these are done by the beach). This information really impressed Moreau as she thought she'd see a lot more full closures and fewer warnings. Flooding this year has made the lake act differently than any other year. There were 10 total days that beaches were closed this year, and that was actually for e coli. Compared to 2023, 29 cyanobacteria failed tests (closures) and 40 closure days for cyanobacteria and 1 for e coli. They are seeing less lake blooms in general this year let alone blooms that close the beaches for days. We have seen a flux in lake temperature every time we get a flood event, lowering the overall temperature. That might have something to do with lack of blooms this year, and this has been noted state wide.

Keech asked, if e coli testing takes 20 hours, how long does it take to measure cyanobacteria, and Erin shared that it can be done 3 ways, but mostly it's measured visually by staff who have been trained to spot by state. Keech asked if this was done in a vehicle or on bikes, and Moreau confirmed that it's primarily done on bikes except when they take electric carts in morning to help haul trash. If striations are scene in the water column they will do a scoop test (must be done after 10am). If they close a beach, they will not reopen until they do a strip paper test which comes from state and tests for harmful chemicals in cyanobacteria blooms. They won't reopen until chemicals aren't present. Keech asked if alerts can be added to the city homepage and Moreau confirmed that this is part of their next steps.

Moreau added that the environment changes constantly. Staff will be working on things like adding information to the city homepage in the off season. Additionally, the city is getting new website overall, and the BPRW waterfront update is coming mid-october. Moreau has been in conversation with DPW and IT, with the goal to make it like state page but with a little more control over changes. IT is working to replicate page and there could be more changes coming. They want to put out QR codes on permanent beach signs, but if we're about to change the coding we can't do it yet. What's not captured in swim water updates is what DPW does. We need to own that we're recreational water folks even if issues aren't our faults. Want to make sure the reason for things happening is clearly indicated. If we want the public to come to us for that knowledge we need to own that knowledge. Luckily we haven't had to close for a CSO, but we're working to find a way to indicate it. It's growing and we're trying to stay one step ahead of things.



Boehm shared that nice that the page is the same as the states as it makes it easier for visitors to understand. Moreau added that we would have joined state system, but we update more often and state doesn't update on the weekends. This is how we build community trust, by providing all the info we have.

Public Comment Approach

Morrigan began by asking Keech, who originally requested the item, to share his reasoning behind the request. Keech explained that, 2 months ago, 2 people came in for public comment which is a pretty rare thing to happen. Because it's rare, Keech really wants to embrace these people. The policy is to listen and have no dialog, but Keech doesn't like that. He understands why that's the case with city council, but parks commission see people on much smaller scale. He feels it's a disservice to public if we let people speak and don't respond. Because of the rules, he couldn't ask for details from the last public forum visitors, so the committee could help rectify their situation. Ultimately, Keech emailed with these people and found that they felt that the commission doesn't respond or take action when they come in. The public is expected to write us to get follow up and they have a right to a response. The department should lay out facts for everyone and Parks commission should deliberate. We should be learning from these situations too. We should know what these rules are. The public deserves to learn why choices were made/rules exist, and commissioners need to know these things. These rules don't serve the public and something needs to change. There isn't a mandatory response or an insured discussion next meeting, and Keech found it embarrassing that they couldn't respond.

Morrigan asked for suggestions of what we should do going forward and Keech shared that he would like commissioners to be able to ask questions and have dialog. While the public doesn't have a right to the response they want, they do deserve a response.

Morrigan likes the idea of follow up. At City Council the public fills out sign in sheet, parks commission can use that to follow up. If this is what we want to do when someone comes in follow ups should be decided before the end of the meeting. He cautions on holding a dialog because there are circumstances in which it could become very problematic. Public meetings can really go off the rails when people come and use forum to derail discussion. Even if they don't have a malicious intent, if there's a back and forth things can get out of control quickly. He thinks having comment is good and follow up is good, but we have met our obligation as officials without opening dialog. He is very wary, especially as chair, but this is a discussion and can be voted on next month if need be.

Keech, on the other hand, was open to experimenting. With so few people coming per year it doesn't seem like it would hurt. If we're choosing to keep things the same way, he would like to have the department provide explanations of why things are the way they are or we can let them know we'll explore topic further.

Wight shared that the commission builds the agenda every month. When these things happen we can discuss at commission time and request to add to agenda. Morrigan asked Keech to put together proposal for new procedure, and he agreed to do so, noting it might take more than a month. Morrigan agreed to table it next month if Keech does not have time to complete the proposal.

Standing Items:



Park Foundation Update

The Parks Foundation does not meet over the summer and will not be meeting until September.

Off-Leash Dog Sub-Committee

The application to join the committee has been digitized and the team was planning to pick new members the day of the meeting, but decided to push back a month to see if they can get more applications. They are adding 2 more members of the public to the committee. Wight provided new commissioner Boehm with an explanation of the work of the sub-committee - 2 commissioners and 2 members of the public will create recommendations for Parks committee which will then vote and send recommendations to City Council. The application will be sent to commissioners as soon as it is posted.

Director's Items

Wight shared her hopes that commissioners had a chance to read the monthly report. One thing that didn't make it into the report is that from 10 until noon on Saturday Burlington School District will be holding a celebration of Olympic bronze medalist in women's rugby 7s, Ilona Maher. It is a civic ceremony so it doesn't require parks commission approval.

Wight also provided an update on the work being done to recover from the most recent storm. Teams have been incredible cleaning up from storm, including central facilities, but especially arborists.

She gave a special kudos to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission who provided \$100,000 for trips and other summer programming.

Wight mentioned that Champ camp has as many kids on wait list as there are spots available. They are looking to expand for next summer by adding a second location.

Arena changes from staff has brought in additional money and Central facilities has looked into other suppliers to save money as well.

Finally, Wight shared that they are looking for volunteers for Wag the Waterfront – looking for licensing volunteer specifically.

Commissioner's Items & Volunteer Hours

Morrigan had 5 hours this month. He shared that he has changed his pronouns to he/him, and added that he is totally patient if people need some time to adjust. Transitioning at 40 isn't super easy, but one rewarding thing was that he moved to Burlington because it's the first place he ever felt safe as a queer person, first place so open and accepting. He's grateful to have come to this place while living here.

Lantieri was pleased to announce that the Champlain Street Park is now open! It's been 5 years in the works and goes to show the dedication of BPRW staff, especially Max Madelinski and the grounds crew. There's still a little more work to be done, but it's open and wonderful! Lantieri had no parks volunteering this month, but got his place of employment to sponsor a block party!

Boehm, as a brand new commissioner, took this moment to introduce herself. She has lived in Burlington for 9 years in the South End. She has 9 and 6 year old boys who use parks and programs.



Boehm works for VSAC and has served on ward 5 NPA with Lantieri. She feels park spaces are so important for kids and family, and is excited to learn more and see where she can plug in.

Aaron was able to report 2 volunteer hours.

Executive Session

Morrigan called for a move to executive session. Lantieri moved, Keech seconded, and all were in favor.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:47 p.m., the motion carried unanimously.

DR



MEMO

Date: September 10th, 2024
To: BPRW Commission
From: Meghan O'Daniel, Community Garden & Parks Outreach Coordinator
RE: Pomeroy Park Neighborhood Event Special Use Permit for October 5th, 2024

Request for a Special Use Permit at Pomeroy Park to hold a neighborhood event and for a waiver to allow amplified sound.

Burlington Tenants United is looking to hold a Tenant Assembly in Pomeroy Park. They are expecting around 50 – 75 attendees. The gathering and amplified sound will take place between 3pm and 6pm, and will consist of speeches and group activities meant to develop important soft skills for tenant organizing. Peoples Kitchen will be serving food. They have the necessary Certificate of Insurance. This will be free and open to the public.

Contact for the event is Chris Sheehy.

It is on a day with no conflicting events and the organizer will let the surrounding community know via Front Porch Forum ahead of time.

Staff Recommendations:

Allow for Special Use Permit including a waiver for amplified sound.



MEMO

Date: September 10th, 2024
To: BPRW Commission
From: Meghan O'Daniel, Community Garden & Parks Outreach Coordinator
RE: Pomeroy Park Neighborhood Event Special Use Permit for October 12th, 2024

Request for a Special Use Permit at Pomeroy Park to hold a neighborhood event and for a waiver to allow amplified sound.

Our Way VT is a self-publishing magazine looking to hold a community event that will focus on creativity in Burlington in Pomeroy Park. The event will consist of general socializing and viewing local art from 1pm – 6pm and live, local music from 6pm – 9pm. They have the necessary Certificate of Insurance. This will be free and open to the public.

Contact for the event is Trey Hancock.

It is on a day with no conflicting events and the organizer will let the surrounding community know via Front Porch Forum ahead of time.

Staff Recommendations:

Allow for Special Use Permit including a waiver for amplified sound.

MEMO

Date: September 12, 2024
To: Parks Commission
From: Cindi Wight, Director
 Erin Moreau, Waterfront Superintendent & Harbormaster
 Rob Peterson, Marina Manager & Deputy Harbormaster
Subject: Marina Fees

Recommendations to BPRW Commission:

Approve the 2025 fees for slips and moorings at Perkins Pier and the Community Boathouse.

OVERVIEW

All slip and mooring fees require approval annually from the BPRW Commission and the City Council.

COST Recovery Goals related to Marinas

Category – Enterprise
 Our cost recovery goals for Enterprise range from 100-150%

Enterprise categories have a commercial service or contract, similar to a private operation and include specialized services. Generally more tourist-focused.

The cost recovery *Enterprise* category requires the least subsidy from the taxpayers because it serves a unique group of users. The activity (motor and sail boating) is not open to all community members. Our enterprise groups (marina and campground) cover approximately 150% of expenses. It includes indirect costs but not capital expenses, typically covered through bonds or Penny for Parks (small projects).

Fee Changes

For Seasonal Boaters at the Burlington Boathouse and Perkins Pier, we applied a fee increase of between 1.7-8.6%, to account for our increased expenses for labor and utilities. Last year, we increased the Non-Resident rate significantly, and this year we focused on increasing our Resident rate to keep it proportionate with other marinas in the harbor. We are also proposing a flexible rate for transient moorings that starts at a lower rate, raises during peak season, and lowers in the fall with the anticipation that slightly lower rates will increase our occupancy level during the shoulder seasons. We also propose a new special overnight rate for certain prime slips during the summer concert series, using the July 3rd slip rate. Finally, we are proposing a special day rate slip fee for the Antique Boat Show.

Description	Current	New Price	% Increase FY25
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Daily Transient docking after one hour	\$10.00/hr	No change	N/A
Overnight Slips	\$2.75/ft.	No change	N/A
Overnight Slips Peak Rate	\$3.00/ft	No change	N/A
Transient moorings Spring/Fall Rates after 5:00pm	\$1.50/ft.	\$1.25	-20%
Transient moorings Peak Season after 5:00pm	\$1.50	No change	N/A
Seasonal Boathouse Dock Resident	\$102.00/ft	\$108.00	5.88%
Seasonal Boathouse Dock Non-Resident	\$118.00/ft	\$120.00/ft	1.69%
Seasonal Perkins Pier Dock Resident	\$81.00/ft	\$88.00/ft	8.64%
Seasonal Perkins Pier Dock Non-Resident	\$94.00/ft	\$99.00/ft	5.32%
Seasonal Mooring Rates Resident	\$54.00/ft	\$56.00	3.7%
Seasonal Mooring Rates Non-Resident	\$63.00/ft	\$65.00	3.17%
Boater Wait list	No charge	No change	N/A
Monthly Slip	\$32.00/ft	No change	6.60%
Monthly Mooring	\$25.00/ft	No change	8.60%
Commercial Slip Rates for existing slips	No change	No change	N/A
July 3 rd /special event Slip (flat rate)	\$250.00	No change	
July 3 rd Mooring (flat rate)	\$150.00	No change	
Antique Boat show flat day rate		\$25.00	100%

Long term challenges

The City relies heavily on the revenue from the marina to cover city expenses. The recent bond vote will support dredging a portion of the high sediment areas of the marinas and a feasibility study to determine the future outcome of the Boathouse facility. Unfortunately, we have historically relied on the net revenue from the marina to support the general fund budget, which means little capital dollars have been reinvested into our waterfront. Our aim is to re-capture some of the increased revenue in order to re-invest in Waterfront capital.



MEMO

Date: September 5, 2024

To: Burlington Conservation Board & Burlington Parks Commission

From: Dan Cahill, City Land Steward

RE: Conservation Legacy Fund Grant - Final Reports from Grantees and Program Revisions for 2025 Grant Cycle

PURPOSE OF MEMO

Update the Conservation Board and Parks Commission on the 2024 Grant Program via, final reports by grant recipients: Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Burlington Wildways, and The Vermont Garden Network. Also, this memo includes proposed adaptations to the scoring matrix for the 2025 Grant Round and recommended actions for the Parks Commission and Conservation Board.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2023, The City of Burlington initiated the first cycle of the Conservation Legacy Fund Grant Program. This grant program is designed to empower the City, outside organizations, and individuals to participate in Nature Based Climate Actions in Burlington.

With the support of the Parks Commission, Conservation Board and City Council, the City of Burlington awarded three organizations a total of \$151,560. The following amounts were awarded to each organization:

- Vermont Youth Conservation Corp - \$48,000
- Burlington Wildways - \$55,000
- The Vermont Garden Network - \$48,560

See the attached final reports from each respective organization for details of the work that was empowered by the grant awards.

PROGRAM REVISIONS FOR THE 2025 GRANT CYCLE

In the spring of 2024, members of the Parks Commission and Conservation board reviewed the administrative structure of the 2024 grant cycle. This included testimony from grant applicants and discussion with City Staff. Please see the attached “draft scoring matrix” intended to guide the scoring of applications for the 2025 Conservation Legacy Fund Grant applications. Track changes are visible in the attached “proposed scoring matrix.”



Synopsis of adaptations:

Language was added around details of eligible costs and types of projects that are eligible for grants. Also, changes were made to scoring criteria in specific areas.

- “Alignment” weighting was slightly decreased.
- “Community Support” weighting was doubled.
- “timeline” weighting was slightly reduced

Recommended Action:

Review and approve revisions to the 2025 Conservation Legacy Fund Grant Scoring Matrix.

Nature Based Climate Solutions

Grant Application Scoring Matrix

Successful grant applications must specifically address one or more of the six themes of [Nature Based Climate Solutions: An Addendum to the Burlington Open Space Protection Plan](#).

- Forests and Tree Canopy
- Agriculture and Community Gardening
- Water and Wetlands
- Lawns, Fields, and Small Open Spaces
- Green Infrastructure
- Equity, Inclusion, and Relationships

Within one or more of those themes, successful grant applications must achieve one or more of the strategies and actions identified in the Addendum's Implementation Matrix. Acceptable types of grant applications include implementation work, operational work for sustained implementation, and planning work.

The creation of this grant program is connected to the acknowledgment that funding and resources available to NBCS have been limited. While creativity and new concepts are welcome and encouraged, this funding should be equally considered for ongoing NBCS activities in Burlington.

Review Criteria	Weight	Maximum Points	Weighted Points
Demonstration of Need: Does the proposal address urgent environmental challenges included in the framework of the Nature-Based Climate Solutions Addendum?	5	4	20
Alignment: Does the proposal align with the implementation strategies outlined in the Nature-Based Climate Solutions Addendum.	4 5	4	16 20
Project Plan: Does the proposal provide strong evidence of careful planning, thought and research?	4	4	16
Community Support: What partnerships or collaborations strengthen your proposal? Do you have matching funds or other evidence of community support?	4 2	4	16 8
Community Benefit: Will the project benefit a large and diverse segment of the community?	3	4	12
Project Feasibility: What is the likelihood of successful project planning, implementation, and completion?	3	4	12
Timeline: Will the project be completed within the grant time limit?	2 3	4	8 12
Total			100

Burlington Youth Crew 2024

Two four-week Burlington Youth Crews operated during the summer of 2024 providing summer jobs and training to 12 youth members from the greater Burlington area. The crews were led by VYCC Crew Leader, Mac. Mac brought previous VYCC experience to the role which helped Mac create an engaging learning environment for crew members. The crew members had the opportunity to explore conservation work, connect with local natural areas, and contribute to increased community resilience. The crews completed eight weeks of projects partnering with various partners, which gave wide exposure for members to different careers within conservation.



Session 2 Burlington Youth Crews poses at a rocky overlook.



Session 2 Burlington Youth Crew takes their final photo together on the last day of work. Each member holds up a recognition award given out by Mac, crew leader.

The crew members all lived in the greater Burlington area. Members were interested in serving in their local communities, learning about conservation, and having a meaningful summer job. Members built new friendships, transferable job skills, and enjoyed their time together as a crew. One member called it “the best summer of my life”. Several members expressed interest in returning to VYCC next summer to continue to take action, learn new skills, and connect with their local communities.

Season Summary:

- 4 weeks with Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront
- 2 weeks with Winooski Parks District
- 2 weeks with Rock Point
- Amounting to over 1,800 hours of work



Burlington Youth Crew 2024

Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront

Arms Forest received both trail maintenance and invasive species removal. The crew removed bittersweet vine, buckthorn, burning bush, and knotweed. The crew constructed turnpike to elevate the tread across a 40-foot section of muddy trail. Ten logs were used for the sides of the turnpike. Landscape fabric was laid in between the logs and gravel fill was added on top. The crew also brushed in a social trail, cleared four existing drains. Six new drainage dips were added to the trail and 40-feet of trail tread was re-benched.

At **Crescent Woods** the crew added 11 embedded stepping stones in the trail tread and 9 stepping stones at various points across the creek bed. One large base step was added to a future stone staircase at the bank of the creek. The crew leader reported that an estimated 500lb of rock was turned to crush to set the stepping stones and base step. Mineral soil was added to tread surface around the terrestrial step stones.



Aiden of Session 2 Burlington Crew saws through a log for the turnpike structure at Arms Forest.



Along the **Burlington Greenway**, the crew focused on removing non-native invasive species. Buckthorn, bittersweet, burning bush, and knotweed were the target species. The crew also performed some corridor maintenance and weeded two rain gardens along the Greenway.

Session 1 Burlington Crew digs a drain across trail tread at Crescent Woods.



Burlington Youth Crew 2024

Winooski Valley Parks District

About a half mile of trail at **Ethan Allen Homestead** was resurfaced with gravel and stone dust to make a hard, compacted tread for bikers and hikers. This involved crew members shoveling gravel into trucks, then into wheelbarrows, and then transporting it down the trail. The crew dumped piles from the wheelbarrows all along the trail, for their crewmates to spread, shape, and tamp the surface into the trail with McLeods and tampers. There were also two short reroutes in this trail system; one that was 40-feet near the south side of the park where you can connect to the Intervale, and one that was 25-feet on the north side of the park by a canoe launch at the Winooski river. Twenty willow starts were installed in a clearing near the canoe launch reroute.

At **Salmon Hole**, the crew focused on trail improvements and soil retention. The crew maintained an existing retaining wall that was starting to lean downhill. The crew excavated the soil behind the wall to reset the wall and added three posts on the downhill side to reinforce the structure. The crew also constructed eight puncheon sections and eight check steps that were secured into the earth with rebar. Some existing puncheon and stairs received shingles to increase traction for hikers. Nine willow starts were installed in the riparian buffer of the Winooski River.



Session 2 Burlington Crew and their supporting project partner pose during a tread maintenance project.

Rock Point

Rock Point focused on non-native invasive species removal. Target species included: Phragmites, bittersweet, knotweed, and buckthorn. The crew learned to identify the invasive plants and by their second day on the project, learned a more methodical approach to removing invasives in lines to avoid missing plants. The crew was shown some rare plants to avoid that were in the area.

The crew then cleaned up trash surrounding an abandoned encampment.



Burlington Conservation Legacy Grant Progress report 2: September 2024

Funding Area 1: Grow Wild

Funds have allowed for increased staffing capacity to host events, share and create educational materials and better achieve biodiversity goals through successful native plantings.

Public walks & bike rides have attracted 39 participants while tabling events have reached hundreds of community members.

Educational resources improved through website redesign (to be completed by fall/ winter 2024), and 4 sets of "how-to" graphics for native habitat by Christine Hill in progress.



Funding Area 2: School-Based Tree Nurseries

Project expanded to two additional district schools, now serving 511 students who added ~400 plants to campuses.

C.P. Smith Elementary School "pocket forest" planted in spring 2024, and live-stake tree nursery started summer 2024 at Sustainability Academy with 80 initial trees.

Native tree and perennial nurseries planned expansion for fall 2024.



Funding Area 3: Trail Stewardship Program

Burlington Highschool students getting involved in Burlington natural areas as Trail Stewards.

Development of invasive plant management training to be offered to stewards with a pilot starting fall 2024.

Program enrollment up to 430 from 360 individuals at the start of the year.



Funding Area 4: City Nature Celebration

This year's celebration welcomed 600+ participants for two weeks of engaging events, talks, guided walks and more.

Participants restored the floodplain forest with 300+ plants, and identified 676 species during the City Nature Challenge bioblitz.

Partnered with numerous community organizations and others around the state such as VT Center for Ecostudies to offer many ways for community members to learn about and get involved in nature-based climate solutions and the natural world.



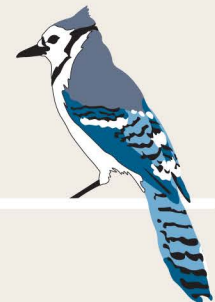
Funding Area 5: Strategic Planning & Outreach

Strategic planning for partnership has helped us to better reach the Burlington community. This year, Burlington Wildways' began sending the Burlington Conservation Newsletter to keep the community informed about and engaged with conservation opportunities in the city.



Funding Area 6: Burlington Wildways Trail

Trail and natural areas brochure in design phase. This resource will help to make our connected natural areas more widely known and accessible for the community to benefit from.



Climate Resiliency and Collective Gardening

This growing season has been exceptionally challenging for gardening in Burlington. In the past two months alone we have experienced not one, but two, unprecedented climate catastrophes - the July flood and the August public health announcement on the mosquito-borne virus. Harvests have been impacted by extreme heat, excessive rainfall, high humidity and the resulting increase in plant diseases. Gardener morale is low.

As we walk around the three City of Burlington community gardens where VGN manages educational program sites - at Tommy Thompson, Winooski Valley Park District and Starr Farm - we reaffirm our belief that this model of collective gardening is a viable and innovative nature-based solution. Collective gardens are thriving despite many challenges. We are actively mitigating and adapting to climate change through our gardening practices and we are building a more resilient community.

Action 1 - Offer educational opportunities for Burlington residents to expand their knowledge and practical skills in small-scale food production by organizing a workshop series on climate resilient gardening.

Pivoting after a flood and public health announcement

Twice this season we have cancelled Garden Like a Farmer workshops due to climate-related circumstances. In July, we pivoted to flood recovery at VGN program sites directly impacted by flooding. In August, due to mosquito pressure at community garden sites, especially during the hours when community members have discretionary time to garden or attend a workshop, VGN has cancelled early morning and evening garden programming at Seedsong, Starr Farm, and Family Room Collective Gardens for the remainder of the season. Our garden mentor leadership teams are coordinating weekend midday work shifts to keep up with garden maintenance and much anticipated fall harvests.

Our last workshop in the Garden Like a Farmer series is an invitation to a Zoom meetup to reflect upon our lived experiences gardening through a very challenging growing season and an opportunity to discuss garden-scale strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change. This final workshop will be scheduled in October.

Climate Resiliency and Collective Gardening

Action 2 - Expand collective gardening to increase access to gardening space and offer a nature-based solution toward social cohesion and well-being.

Starr Farm Collective Garden

New garden prep methods and communication systems have contributed to VGN's experience in managing a collective garden. In response to high weed pressure and an intentional desire to reduce tillage, VGN trialed "lasagna gardening" in 1/4 of the growing space at Starr Farm. Four months later, the potatoes, squash, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes planted in sheet mulch are thriving. The collective management of the garden has been facilitated by a WhatsApp group constantly updated with task lists, photographs, and ongoing communication to include all garden members in the day-to-day needs of the collective garden.

"The success of this new collective can be seen in the transformation of the space. To take a once abandoned, overgrown piece of land and transform it into a highly productive garden that regularly feeds thirteen people has been a great achievement."

- Angela DeBettencourt, Garden Manager

Climate refugee gardeners in Burlington

At the end of July we welcomed three community gardeners displaced from flooding at the Intervale to join the Starr Farm Collective Garden for the remainder of the growing season.

"I joined the Starr Farm Collective Garden after losing my gardens at Tommy Thompson Community Garden for the second year in a row. Gardening is a huge part of my identity and is something that brings me tremendous joy and purpose, and being welcomed into Starr Farm was incredibly beneficial for my mental health and quality of life in Burlington. I am so grateful that this space to grow and enjoy nature exists in this city I love." - Carrie Marr

Climate Resiliency and Collective Gardening

Family Room Collective Garden

After three months of a busy summer season facilitating biweekly garden activities for families with young children, the Family Room Collective Garden has shifted into harvest season. The garden has provided immense joy for all ages and several pounds of nourishing food. VGN is assessing the extent to which this garden embodied a collective model since we could not rely upon a consistent group of garden members to keep up with tasks on a weekly basis. Much of the physical labor to upkeep the highly productive garden became the responsibility of VGN staff and interns. We look forward to further discussing challenges, successes, impact and next steps for collective gardening at our next community of practice gathering in October.

“The Family Room families and program have benefited greatly from this collective garden. The children have gotten so many wonderful gardening experiences from digging in the dirt, planting corn, beans and potatoes and caring for many other familiar and new vegetables. Parents really loved spending time learning gardening techniques and talking with the staff about different vegetables. Later in the season everyone was excited about taste testing the veggies and harvesting for Family Room lunches. And families were also so happy to harvest veggies for home both those they already liked and some new to them they wanted to experiment with.

In all there was so much learned, loved and appreciatively eaten from this wonderful productive garden project. And the staff made it a rich and connected experience for all of us -including the staff at the Family Room who learned a lot as well- Thank you!”

- Sarah Sinnot, Family and Community Engagement Director



Top: Culturally meaningful crops at the Family Room Collective Garden - a Mexican landrace ear of corn, arms full of molokhia greens, and bitter melon hanging from a garden arch.

Middle: VGN Interns and Garden Mentors leading hands-on activities at the Family Room and holding harvest baskets and succession planting trays; weigh station at Starr Farm to track garden harvest and celebrate beefsteak tomatoes.

Bottom: Garden members at Starr Farm Collective garden harvesting carrots and building soil with the lasagna gardening method, layering cardboard, straw, and compost.