Burlington Conservation Board
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Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 8, 2025 – 5:30 pm
Remote & In Person Meeting

Attendance

- **Board Members:** Zoe Richards (ZR), Rebecca Roman (RR), Leslie Spencer (LS), Ryan Crehan (RC), Dale Azaria (DA), Evan Horne (EH), Kelly Farrell (KF),
- **Absent:** Don Meals (DM), Ethan Ely (EE)
- **Public:** Jill Dixon, Rhiannon Sinclair, Bren Alvarez, Marty Courcelle, Neil Gardner
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Permitting & Inspections), Dan Cahill (Parks & Rec), Charles Dillard, Sarah Morgan (City Planning)

RR, chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Minutes

August 4, 2025 minutes

A MOTION was made by DA and SECONDED by ZR:

Approve the August 4 minutes as written.

Vote: 6-0-0, motion carried. (No RC yet)

Board Comment

None.

Public Comment

None.

Update & Discussion

1. **PlanBTV New North End**
   Design concepts discussion with Office of City Planning staff

Charles Dillard and Sarah Morgan appeared on behalf of this item.

Charles Dillard overviewed the New North End Plan project and provided context. Sarah Morgan mentioned the relationship of this plan to the Open Space Plan and the Historic Preservation Plan as well. Sarah went over the project schedule and noted that they are in the “planning and urban design” phase of the project. Demographics, housing, transportation options are among the items under consideration. She displayed a map of areas identified for potential growth; not all the same type or extent of growth. She noted the Rt. 127 scoping study is included in the assessment of potential growth. Mobility and connectivity – infrastructure needs are under consideration. Evaluation of safer crossings of North

Avenue are being done. Charles noted 70% of vehicle trips in the New North End is SOV transportation, including 40% AM trips that begin and end in the NNE. Sarah mentioned role of TDM. There was a CarShare vehicle in the NNE for several years, but it was underutilized. It is no longer located there. Charles mentioned potential for a mobility hub within the NNE. He mentioned 5 "focus areas" with potential to accommodate additional growth. He showed several street cross sections of potential street improvements. They are doing an assessment of demand for gathering places of various types within the community. Charles noted a "test fit" analysis for several properties, including the North Avenue Alliance Church, the EA Shopping Center, Starr Farm West, and the Ethan Allen Parkway/North Ave/EA Park intersection too. Charles addressed public land focus areas. They will do a civic assets study – study of all city lands and what they might be suitable for. Sarah pointed out a 20-year timeframe for these concepts.

RC said he can't ever see supporting development in city parks. He's surprised that a civic assessment hasn't yet been done. The push for housing needs to account for keeping Burlington a livable city. Charles noted this is not a zero sum game and referred to ecological design standards. Lawn spaces could be made more ecologically robust as part of a redevelopment scenario.

ZR, start with the ecological design first, rather than a particular location. She mentioned a last remaining remnant of a sandplain ecological community in the Starr Farm area. What counts as a city asset? Charles, we will definitely consider ecology as part of the overall puzzle. He noted what is not built in Burlington is built in the suburbs and exurbs.

RR noted that growth outside of Burlington is not directly within tonight's purview. The BCB supports housing where its supposed to be. RR likes the details provided, like 99% of EA Park to remain intact.

Dan Cahill, in terms of property acquisition, the city is not a developer, but he appreciates we are pushing into that a bit. We've not engaged in conservation / development projects with the Legacy Fund. Charles would like to see collaborative partnerships in the future. Ultimately, he said, the plan is determined by the community. Charles invited the Board's feedback and continuing conversation.

KF, ecological design standard is the baseline from where we move forward. We need to be careful that the various city plans align with one another.

RR is very curious about the collaborative work among developers. Generally, they decline to do more than the minimum required.

2. Nature Based Climate Solutions Grant Program
Review available funds and program adjustments

Dan Cahill appeared on behalf of this item.

Dan Cahill said that we have $68K rather than $168K available for the Legacy Fund Grant. For about 3 years, there was an error in what monies were available annually for the Legacy Fund. Basically, the Legacy Fund is tied to 2005 funding levels. It does not grow with the grand list as was thought. With this one big change, the grant sizes will be reduced to the $10K - $30K range.

RR provided a quick overview of the Legacy Grant program for the new members in the room.

ZR noted that the 2022 Nature Based Climate Solutions Addendum is the basis for the Legacy Grant Program.

KF asked for some grant program projects. Dan noted native plants project, invasives management, community trail stewards program, etc.

Dan, the grant will open October 1, 2025 and will remain open for applications thru end of November. He went over the whole schedule and the grant review matrix.

Dan, any thoughts on the proposed award amounts? DA, what were they in the past? Dan, the highest has been $75K with the lowest about $30. DA, will this fund range be useful to applicants? RR, we could consider the possibility for one large or several smaller, depending on the applications and what resources are needed. KF said it may be smart to go with one larger award. RR, the review committee should meet twice in January, rather than once in December and then in January.

Dan, is anyone interested in being on the committee? RR, KF, and DA. Maybe DM too (not present tonight). Two Parks Commission members have participated in past reviews as well.

3. Open Space Plan
Review and discussion of the new draft Open Space Plan

Jill Dixon and Rhiannon appeared on behalf of this item.

SG overviewed the draft and the context of how we got here.

Jill and Rhi overviewed the draft plan. (LS left at 7:15 pm)

RR asked a process question about providing individual comments. SG, send to me by week's end, Monday if need be.

RC said he would really appreciate if Open Space was defined by percentages / acreage. KF said she was surprised that private residential lawns are part of the open space inventory. SG said its about knowing where the open space is and guiding opportunity for neighborhood based open space assets, like community gardens.

DA, impact of tree removal from private property is relevant. Its significant and should be called out on pg. 145 as something that homeowners can do. There is opportunity to build on what private property owners can do for open space improvements.

RC emphasized the human connection to open spaces, accessibility.

RR, with the plan in PDF, the double page layout isn't present. The two-page spreads should be two pages. Maybe a strategy summary should be provided as an appendix.

DA, it will be hard to make it short and difficult to summarize. Huge kudos to the team. Something like an executive summary would be helpful. She also noted the action items that are BCB primarily or as a key partner. SG noted that the plan will come back next month for adoption. RR suggested discussing further at the October Open Space Subcommittee meeting.

KF didn't understand some of the content of the points, like redefine the city's "green infrastructure." What does that mean?

EH, its nice to have some open-endedness to goals. Too much specificity can be limiting. Also, he spoke to noting funding sources. SG said that was considered, but we ended up guessing for a number of items and decided to leave that out.

Project Review

1. ZSP-25-8; 77-91 North Winooski Ave (RM, Ward 3) Neil Gardner / Wayne Nelson / Martin Courcelle
Sketch plan review for proposed construction of memory care facility to the rear of three existing properties.

Bren Alvarez, Marty Courcelle, and Neil Gardner appeared on behalf of this application.

Bren Alvarez overviewed the site, it contains 3 properties. The applicants envision a three level structure behind the three existing buildings along North Winooski Ave. Marty Courcelle said preliminary soils analysis shows great potential for infiltration. We'll use pervious pavers.

KF, overall thinks is a great project. She is curious about plantings in the southwest corner. This would be the best place for new trees, for the trees and shade they'd produce.

RC, we want to see a planting plan. Avoid invasive species.

KF, if you did rooftop solar, consider integration of a green roof as well. Maybe a little better efficiency for the solar panels.

ZR, noted the resident garden at the Converse Home is a nice amenity.

KF, daycare drop-off should be considered, and avoid conflict with parking spaces.

Adjournment

8:20 PM.