

Burlington Conservation Board

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Ryan Crehan, Vice Chair
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Dale Azaria
Evan Horne
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Conservation Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 6, 2025 – 5:30 pm
Remote & In Person Meeting

Attendance

- **Board Members:** Zoe Richards (ZR), Rebecca Roman (RR), Ryan Crehan (RC), Dale Azaria (DA), Evan Horne (EH), Ethan Ely (EE)
- **Absent:** Don Meals (DM), Kelly Farrell (KF)
- **Public:** Jill Dixon, Rhiannon Sinclair, Jack Millbank
- **Staff:** Scott Gustin (Permitting & Inspections), Dan Cahill (Parks & Rec)

RR, chair, called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Minutes

September 8, 2025 minutes

A MOTION was made by EH and SECONDED by DA:

Approve the September 8 minutes as written.

Vote: 5-0-0, motion carried. (No EE yet)

Board Comment

RR said VLCT is hiring a water resource specialist.

RC said the Leddy Park bike track is in place now. Dan Cahill said he's been there. It seems to have been positively received and is being used by the community already.

Public Comment

None.

Open Space Subcommittee

RR noted that Sharon Bushor offered support of the Open Space Plan during the Open Space Subcommittee meeting. She'd help advocate for the Tree Ordinance and for expansion of the Legacy Fund.

Update & Discussion

1. Open Space Plan

Discussion and adoption of Open Space Plan.

Rhiannon Sinclair and Jill Dixon appeared on behalf of this item.

The programs and services of the Dept. of Permitting & Inspections are accessible to people with disabilities. For accessibility information call 865-7188.

Rhi and Jill presented revisions from the draft Open Space Plan. They've added an executive summary, more info about the Conservation Legacy Fund (CLF), more robust urban forest pieces, updated maps, and have included a few new actions.

Rhi, the vision and 4 main components remain. We have added additional info where requested. We have elaborated on the reason for the plan and some key actions. There is more information on the CLF. The outreach process and events have been noted.

Jill addressed the urban forest content. We have included analysis info and more info on the recommendations. Additional detail has been added about the emerald ash borer, canopy loss, and gain. We have fleshed out the "connect" strategy and have taken a closer look at UVM data as to forest patch age. This content has been supported with case studies at Leddy and Ethan Allen Parks. The revised plan emphasizes and articulates ecosystem services provided by the urban forest.

Jill, we have made a number of visual improvements to the maps. A stewardship zone has been added along Englesby Brook. We have elaborated on core ecological lands and waters and have improved the key connections map.

Rhi, updated actions include a series of standards to compliment and reinforce the intent of this plan. We have articulated "green planning principles" and included a demonstrative graphic of various green design measures that can accompany infill development. Additional action items relative to community gardens have been included.

RC thinks the plan looks great. He'd like to see a breakdown of acreage of the different types of open space. Also, under "conserve," need to add language around "keep and protect existing open space." There should be something in the plan about making connections between people and the open spaces in the "connections" section.

ZR noted some small things like identifying the natural areas shown in the photos. As to the opening quote referring to the west coast, maybe look at something local (done by Christine). Clarify/revise the land acquisition item in the "Comprehensive Plan" corner.

DA referred to subcommittee notes from earlier today. This plan is amazing. She was pleased to see modifications to the plan in response to draft comments. In pg. 50-54, there is description of natural communities, problems facing them, and what restoration measures may be. There's no indication of where they are in Burlington. Jill, we'll follow up to see if there is data as to where, exactly, these places are. DA, the plan could even refer folks to resources as to where the natural communities may be. Dan Cahill said we have data from the 2014 Open Space Plan assessment. EH, "Wetland, Woodland, & Wildland" does this well by identifying natural community types and some places they may be.

RR, the implementation matrixes by section is great. The information provided is necessary and important. In table of contents, under each item, note pg. # for implementation matrixes. The communication has improved in this revised draft.

EH, on the core ecological area map, he understands the large mass that extends into Colchester, but he does not see in the plan why Colchester is included. The shift away from "invasive species" to "aggressive introduced" should be explained.

A MOTION was made by DA and SECONDED by EH:

Recommend adoption of the Open Space Plan per the comments above.

Vote: 7-0-0, motion carried.

2. PlanBTV New North End

Follow up discussion of comments to provide City Planning.

RR recapped the discussion of this item at last month's meeting. Conversion of parks/green spaces to development should be lowest on the list. Put ecology first, not after the plan. We need to account for nature-based climate solutions. It was helpful to hear percentage of open space retained if development were to occur. The various city plans need to be in alignment, including with the open space plan.

ZR, we've talked about housing and conservation. When Cambrian Rise was permitted, a city park was established as well as the development. We can do both.

RC, development is basically permanent. It is a big deal to convert part of a park that has stood for generations to development. He referred to the current Comprehensive Plan that calls for protection of our parks and open spaces and steering development away from them. UVM has land that they planned to develop for student housing. UVM scrapped it because it was too expensive. ZR agrees with citing the current Comprehensive Plan, highlighting the shift in direction. RC noted we have not said "no" to any development.

EH, the idea of development improving the ecology of these park lands seems off base. Dan Cahill, in the instance of the Ethan Allen Park concept, as drawn, it would have a lot of open space frameworks that could include green design measures. There is opportunity for enhancement in some aspects. RR concurred with respect to the Ethan Allen Park concept – retention of 99% of the parkland, address a hazardous intersection, and provide housing.

RR, converting green spaces should be lowest priority. Even conceptual planning should consider ecology first. Development and protection can be considered together. What's proposed is a total shift in direction from the current Comprehensive Plan as to protection of parks and open spaces. RC, this is out of order with an analysis of city-owned properties. That should have been done already. DA, point out first that the Conservation Board does not typically say no to development. Doing so helps with credibility in making these comments.

Project Review

1. ZP-25-488; 11 Driftwood Ln (RL, Ward 4) Andrew & Tracy Russell / Michael Koch Proposed replacement of deteriorating seawall.

Jack Millbank appeared on behalf of this application.

Jack Millbank overviewed the project. He noted that the existing seawall abuts Leddy Park and extends onto it. The wall had been stabilized in 2012 with large boulders and smaller shot rock behind it. At that time, the city allowed access for the work from Leddy Park. Unfortunately, the large boulders allowed wave action and erosion through the joints. This started out as just a maintenance project and access through Leddy Park again was requested. Access through the Park was not granted this time. As the initially proposed wall was not an exact replacement, then zoning approval is needed. The plan has been revised to show retention of the existing configuration. The new wall will use something called "Panton" stone that is interlocking to avoid the gaps. A set of wooden stairs will be replaced with stone. Also, we are removing wooden timbers and leaving stone.

RR asking about the floating silt fence. Jack, use is dependent on the water height and whether frozen or not.

RC asked access. Jack said they'll access from the subject property and will simply remove and replace. RC, do you expect to use geotextile fabric? RC, referring to ESPC. Jack, yes, we will use erosion control fencing and matting. Jack, will use jute, not plastic mesh. RC, it looks like you're bringing in topsoil and fertilizing. Is that necessary? Jack, no, we could use organic hydroseed.

EE, take out the comment in the plans about using fertilizer. EE, is there any planting proposed where the wall is being removed from city property? Jack, we're not touching that portion of the wall. EE, what about soil stockpile locations? It would be good to note no soil stockpile within the lake's flood zone.

A MOTION was made by EE and SECONDED by EH:

Recommend approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. Utilize jute EPSC materials (not plastic).
2. Keep soil stockpile out of the lake's flood zone.
3. Remove reference to fertilizer on the project plans.

Vote: 7-0-0.

Adjournment

6:54 PM.