

Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes

October 14th, 2025 at 645 Pine Street & Zoom

Commission Present: Lantieri, Boehm, Johnson, Bergmann, Mobley & Davis

Staff Present: Sauv , Moreau, Madalinski, Gustin & O'Daniel

Public Present: Sean Melinn, Jeremy O'Clatis, Rhiannon Sinclair (presenter), Zoe Richards (Conservation Board Representative)

The meeting was convened at 5:33pm by Lantieri.

1. Agenda

1.1 Motion to amend/adopt agenda

Mobley made a motion to adopt the agenda. Davis seconded. All were in favor, none were opposed.

2. Consent Agenda

2.1 September Commission Meeting Minutes

2.2 Leddy Bike Park Opening Event Special Use Permit

Boehm made a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Bergmann seconded. All were in favor, none were opposed.

3. Public Forum

3.1 Verbal Comments

Public Forum opened at 5:35pm.

Jeremy O'Clatis from the Bike Park coalition was present to share his support of the space.

Seeing no one else present in person or on Zoom, the Public Forum closed at 5:37pm.

4. Deliberative Agenda

4.1 Open Space Plan

Gustin opened that the draft of the plan that the Commission saw at the last meeting has been further refined since then and that it is in its almost final form. He continued that there have been some key changes since the last draft that they would be sharing with the Commission tonight. He shared that the Conservation Board had approved it the night before, they were hopeful this body would give its support tonight and then they would move ahead to an approval from the Planning Commission and then City Council. Gustin continued that once all of those steps have been completed, there would hopefully be a new Open Space Plan for the first time in 25 years by the New Year.

Sinclair began by sharing her screen and thanked the group for being a part of this process as they continue to advocate for the open space plan. She continued by outlining that the plan for this presentation was to focus on where changes have been made over the past month thanks to community and partner feedback. She shared that the main updates since the last draft were a more robust executive summary, adding information on community engagement and the Conservation Legacy Fund, an expanded urban forest analysis and recommendations, key connection updates, map updates and new actions throughout. She pointed out though, that there was strong support for the overall vision and structure of the plan, so that had not changed. She continued that since the last draft, they have created a “Plan Summary”, which expressed more about why this work was happening, why it is important to the City and some things that were learned throughout the process and how that was brought into the plan itself. She continued that they gave more space for the Conservation Legacy Fund, including its background and how it has been impactful to the City. Sinclair shared that they have also managed to incorporate information about all of the different visioning and outreach opportunities that have taken place throughout the process. She then touched on the expansion of the Urban Forest plan, including both the technical side such as highlighting where changes in tree canopy has occurred and why those changes have happened, as well as a strategy sections, to highlight actions that can be taken to respond to the changes and steward the tree canopy moving forward. Sinclair continued by reviewing the map updates that were made in the healthy ecosystem framework and key connections sections and also general map edits for clarity. She closed by touching on the actions that were updated throughout the plan, including ways private land owners could invest in natural spaces and community garden expansions.

Gustin closed the presentation by explaining to the Commission that they could respond that they support it as is, they support it with some comments or that they want to see major changes.

Lantieri opened it up for questions. He began by asking about the tree canopy increases and where those took place.

Gustin responded that most increases were in City parkland.

Richards chimed in to note that one of the things that was done in this draft update was to make sure that the spatial analysis data was there but also easy to interpret so that the data and actions can be understood and responded to.

Davis asked about the ash trees and their impact on the changing canopy.

Sauvé responded that the City Arborist has been planting new trees where ash is being removed, so it won't show in this set of data, but in the next iteration of this plan these trees will be much bigger so the changes will be seen.

Richards shared that she feels the greenbelt trees are the most under control in terms of long term planning for tree canopy, but the spaces that the City does not have control over, like private residences, is where there needs to be more communication and creativity with action steps.

Mobley noted that this seems like a great way to call people in to this process.

Sinclair chimed in that with 37% of Burlington's land use being residential, this feels like a really important moment to be focusing on residential properties to invest in trees. Lantieri asked if there was an understanding of what percentage of places like Arms Forest or other spaces are Ash.

Richards responded that they could take a good guess at the answer and explained where what trees are more likely to occur.

Lantieri shared that he felt like this document was readable and digestible and was happy to support it.

Boehm agreed.

Mobley made a motion to support the Open Space Plan as is. Davis seconded. All were in favor, none were opposed.

4.2 Ordinance Appendix D, Sections 2 & 5

Lantieri opened this section of the meeting by giving an overview of what these sections cover and the history of how things have gotten to this point, including going to PACC and the full council, but needing to go to the City Attorney's office after more review by this body. He continued that they would be focusing on a section about Perkins Pier and park closings.

Moreau shared that she met with PACC and they wanted to bring 2 changes back to the Commission for review. The first was changing the closing of Leddy Park from 11pm to 9:30pm, which aligns it with most of the other parks. She continued that this will not apply to Arena users, but would help with enforcement of the park, which has had some significant issues over the past few years. Moreau then touched on the section about only the Director of BPRW and the Chief of Police being able to close a park on a temporary basis. She continued that the way this is interpreted is for public protection from conditions caused by weather or climate or when there's a reason that is believed that a closing of a park is necessary. Moreau explained that because of unsafe activity at North Beach in a specific part of the park this season, they were curious if a portion of a park could be closed for public safety reasons and that the hope was to clarify the language to allow staff to be protected in these decision making moments.

Mobley asked for an explanation of what "portion" means.

Moreau answered by sharing a specific example of something that happened this summer in a specific space at North Beach – use of a parking lot for unwanted activities and behaviors. She continued that the thought was, if they could close down that section of the park, temporarily, that could help bring things back in line.

Davis asked how they limit the amount of parking.

Moreau answered that they would keep that lot open as long as they could, but when staff felt that things were starting to turn, they would put up temporary wooden barricade to stop people from entering that space.

Johnson asked if the Commission should consider putting any guardrails up like time limits etc. or is this meant to be a longer term solution.

Moreau didn't feel like she could answer that because each circumstance she could recall, she would have recommended a different amount of time for the closure. She continued that they would want to limit it as much as possible because they want to see

spaces used and that they only want to close areas if there is imminent danger or an area of growing concern like the space she mentioned at North Beach, where alcohol was excessively consumed and a consistent pattern was clearly noted. She shared that this is a tool in the toolbox to help reduce issues, not reduce access.

Lantieri shared that he had one note of trepidation with regards to the Chief of Police's ability to close parks at their discretion.

Moreau responded that the parameters, maintenance or construction, for public protection from conditions caused by weather or climate or when there's a reason to believe that the closing of such parks is necessary for the maintenance of order, safety and decency, were listed.

Lantieri felt like "order and decency" was a vague loophole that he would not like to see enacted.

Mobley asked for clarification that this process would add in the Chief of Police.

Lantieri clarified that no, that is already in there, but that it's for the whole park, not portions of them.

Moreau continued that this is actually making things more specific from "police department" to "chief of police" and that she agreed that there is some level of interpretation here. She then noted that this is something the Commission could take their time with, especially since this is something that would be helpful to have during the spring/summer months and we're going in to winter. Moreau did ask how the Commission felt about making the Leddy Park closing time change from 11pm to 9:30pm today.

Lantieri answered that he was comfortable with that, especially since it would be bringing it into alignment with most other park closing times.

Boehm asked about the Perkins Pier piece.

Moreau answered that there was some miscommunication on this part and that there has always been overnight parking there, nothing was actually changing.

Mobley shared concerns about the Leddy parking lot will endure more negative activity and behaviors if the park is closed earlier.

Moreau understood her concerns, but shared that they can't call on external enforcement until the park is officially closed and most BPRW staff don't work as late as 11pm, so there has been a gap, but having the park close earlier would give more time for enforcement to be called upon.

Moreau continued by sharing that she was gathering that it would be helpful to go back to the City Attorney to review the closing portions of the park section based on lingering questions that she didn't feel like they could answer today.

There was a general agreement from the Commission to table the discussion on section 5 but approve section 2.

Boehm made a motion to adopt section 2. Bergmann seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.

4.3 Staff Update/Director Search

Lantieri shared that he was in the first round of the hiring committee, who sent their final candidate choices to the Mayor's office for further review. He continued that he

was hopeful that they would have had more information at this point, but as of this meeting had not heard back from his latest inquiry to the Mayor's office.

Sauvé shared that the Waterfront is closing for the season tomorrow, the 15th. She continued that there was an all-staff gathering last week that was a positive coming together of everyone.

Boehm asked if the staff was up-to-date on the hiring process.

Sauvé answered yes.

Mobley asked what the process for sharing out who is appointed to the role will be.

No one knew.

Lantieri closed by saying that he would keep everyone updated.

4.4 Bike Park Update

Madalinski shared the update that the bike park is mostly complete! He continued that they are working on some signage and fencing aspects but the actual construction of the trails is complete and everyone is pleased with the end product and that it is already getting a lot of use after the soft open. He then invited the Commission to the opening event on October 25th.

Melinn shared that he and the rest of the Bike Park Coalition have been so excited to see the space used so much already. He continued that they are working on ambassador program starting in 2026 to get kids involved who maybe wouldn't be able to explore and interact with the space. Melinn then touched on some details about the event, including vendors who will be trialing different kinds of bikes, food truck vendors, a ribbon "breaking" ceremony to officially open the space, among other impromptu things.

Davis asked about pushback from the community about the space.

Melinn responded that the next year is going to be a big learning process about the space and how it is used by the community and how to really make it a community space, which will involve conversation with people across the spectrum, including those with concerns. He was happy to report that there has already been a certain level of "self-policing" amongst users. Melinn continued that there is a good maintenance plan in place that will continue to be developed with community involvement. He shared that a piece of that plan will be closing down for the winter, which will involve tarping the tabletop jumps to help with erosion and discouraging use in the off-season.

Lantieri asked Melinn to talk a little bit about the structure of his organization.

Melinn replied that there is a steering committee of 5 people for the volunteer organization (Burlington Bike Park Coalition), including himself, who make decisions about different things including fundraising. He continued that there is also an advisory committee that is comprised of individuals who are interested in the project and have different expertise. Melinn then shared that BPRW's Planning Team has been an integral and critical part of this project.

Davis asked what this phase of the project cost.

Madalinski answered around \$125,000, and it is being paid for entirely with state grant funds from the VOREC (Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative) program.

Melinn said that this has helped immensely with funding and the project as a whole and he feels that they are set up for success going into next summer.

Lantieri asked if they were a non-profit.

Melinn answered that their fiscal sponsor is Fellowship of the Wheel, who is a non-profit, and they also provide insurance coverage for the space.

Madalinski chimed in that they still need to sort out exactly who is doing what in terms of maintenance, but he sees the path forward being a shared responsibility between the organization and the Department.

Melinn was excited to share that they have a lot of volunteers who are chomping at the bit to be involved. He then circled back on the Ambassador Program that he mentioned earlier, noting that the goal is to support kids who are interested in using the space. He continued that they are going to be working with the Boys & Girls Club and Old Spokes Home in addition to other organizations to make this happen. Melinn then mentioned that this is an adaptive trail, with the intent that everyone will be able to access the space.

Lantieri shared that he feels this space is a big step for equity access across the board and gave kudos to Melinn and the Bike Park Coalition for all of their hard work and dedication.

Sauvé shared that working with this group has been amazing and is so glad that they have made it to this point.

Melinn shared the same sentiments in regards to working with the Department.

4.5 Comprehensive Plan Update

Sauvé began by sharing that the work has continued to progress towards the visioning of the Comprehensive Plan and that there was an RFP out for a consultant to support the work and they are in the reading period of those submissions. She hopes to have a selection to share by the next meeting. She continued by reminding the Commission that the Department would like someone to join the PAC (Planning Advisory Committee) to help inform the direction of the plan and to help with outreach to connect it to groups and individuals.

Lantieri asked if anyone was interested.

Davis asked what would be involved.

Sauvé answered that it would be about a year long process and involve consistent meetings throughout that time.

Lantieri closed by saying that if anyone is interested that they should reach out to Sophie.

Boehm asked some specifics about the commitment.

Sauvé answered that it's hard to answer specifically because it's a cross department process, but there will be more information to share over the next few months.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Parks Foundation Update

Lantieri shared that there was a meeting earlier that day but that there weren't any major updates.

6. Commissioner's Items & Volunteer Hours

- Boehm shared that her family went to the bike park and that it was very fun. She reported 1 hour of volunteer time.
- Bergmann did not have any hours to report
- Johnson did not have any hours to report
- Mobley did not have any hours to report
- Davis reported 1 hour of volunteer time
- Lantieri shared that their memo was received and got people's attention. He attended the PACC meeting and explained everything that was in the letter and said that they were appreciative to have transparency and communication and would like that to continue. He reported 10 volunteer hours. Lantieri continued by asking the group if they were okay with moving the November meeting from the 11th (Veterans Day, a City observed holiday) to the 18th. O'Daniel will confirm if the Stone Cottage at Kieslich Park is available.

7. Adjournment

8.1 Motion to adjourn

Davis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bergmann seconded. All were in favor, none were opposed.