

## **Parks Commission Meeting**

June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 5:30pm

645 Pine St. & Zoom

**Staff in Attendance:** Lewis, Sauve, Cahill, Comai & O'Daniel

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Lantieri, Mobley, Boehm, Davis & Johnson

**Public in Attendance:**

### **1. Agenda**

#### **1.1 Motion to amend/adopt agenda**

Lantieri opened the meeting at 5:31pm by introducing himself and asked for a motion regarding the agenda.

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

### **2. Consent Agenda**

#### **2.2 May Meeting Minutes**

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

### **3. Public Forum – Time Certain, 6pm**

Philip Pezeshki joined the meeting virtually and encouraged the Commission to continue talking about e-moto and e-bike problems on the Burlington Greenway. He continued that he has raised a different question about changing all of the stop signs for the streets that cross the Greenway to have the cars stop instead of the cyclists. He noted that this suggestion got brought into the general discussions that are occurring about the Greenway with folks feeling like it's the bikes that are going too fast. He continued that he is a cyclist and he wanted to remind people that once you stop a bicycle, it is difficult to get it going again so having cars stop is a safer option for everyone. He shared that he has researched ways to potentially mitigate some of these issues including altering the paths, either in shape or surface, place speed limit detectors or other technical solutions understanding that enforcement is expensive and difficult to implement, so he encouraged the Commission to look at technical fixes. He also noted that it is important to keep in mind that this is a seasonal problem for the most part, with the winter being quieter on the Greenway. He then touched on the fact that there is signage posted along the Greenway that says that no motor vehicles are allowed on the path and he feels that regardless of the Commission and City Council's decision to allow them, they are technically not allowed and yet they are on the path with a lack of enforcement happening.

Lantieri thanked Pezeshki and shared the sentiment that there is a lot of nuance with the situation and they are working within a narrow lane to try and create structures so

that rules are available are enforceable. He confirmed that the conversation will continue.

Pezeshki responded that he felt it would be helpful for the public to know that the issue is being considered and taken seriously.

Lewis noted that this was a topic of conversation at last week's Ordinance committee meeting with council members and that there have been a lot of staff conversations around this from a policy and ordinance update piece, as well as community engagement and outreach related to how folks interact with the Greenway and other spaces with these e-motos. He continued that it is an emerging issues with a lot of folks trying to figure out the best approach. He thanked Pezeshki for highlighting this concern.

Dave Parnell, a member of the public, asked if the Ethan Allen Park development plan was already moving forward and that there was momentum to implement that, because he had heard that this was the case on Front Porch Forum.

Dillard answered no, that that was a rumor and that it would be years before any changes or work began. He thanked the constituent for coming to the meeting to ask the question directly.

Public forum was closed at 6:16pm.

#### **4. Deliberative Agenda**

##### **4.1 Plan BTV NNE Plan**

Dillard began by sharing screen and noting that he came before the Commission a few months ago and he was back to update everyone about where they are in the plan, first by reviewing the timeline and engagement highlights. He continued by sharing out what they have heard from residents in regards to transportation and mobility, housing and zoning, neighborhood and character and development and nature and sustainability. Dillard noted specifically that people in the New North End love the parks, trails, beaches and open spaces and that there is a strong desire for more trees and shade along North Avenue, community garden spaces, green soil water infrastructure and continued preservation of big key natural areas. He then continued by sharing the vision statement and guiding principles and noted that it is all about balance. He then touched on urban design, multimodal transportation and placemaking and how the Plan supports the vision through these three interconnected frameworks. Dillard specifically noted that what is in this Plan overall is contingent on the kind of growth that the plan envisions happening, so if in fact in 25 years the New North End continues to be a low-density place then a lot of these bigger Capital projects may not be necessary or implemented. Next he reviewed the vision for the Greenway, and mentioned that there were originally 9 recommendations, which they are currently working with the BPRW team on to revise so this section will most likely be some restructuring to the framework of these. Dillard noted that they did hear a lot of concerns about safety on the greenway throughout the engagement that has happened, which has been exacerbated with the presence of e-moto use on the Greenway, and he noted that the Plan recommends doing a safety audit internally for spaces like these. After reviewing some placemaking slides he noted that the New North End has more capacity to accommodate growth in terms of wastewater infrastructure than other parts of the City, which is why there is a

focus on this area. He then began reviewing new public open space in specific locations in the New North End, and called out that these are concepts, not development plans and that this work was done to understand what the capacity of a given property could be in terms of the number of homes that could be created, the amount of new public space that could be created and new community facilities, parking etc. He continued that if these properties were to ever come into redevelopment, they would certainly encourage a mix of housing types, open spaces, mobility hubs etc. like in these plans. The private properties he reviewed were the North Ave. Church, the Ethan Allen Shopping Plaza and Plattsburg Ave. and North Ave. intersection. Dillard then pivoted to reviewing the City-owned focus areas that have been included in the Plan. Before doing so though, he took a moment to touch on a national and international movement of cities repurposing their land for community benefits such as housing and nature based climate solutions and more. He continued that this has already happened in Burlington, such as turning a parking lot on St. Paul Street into housing etc., among others. Next, Dillard shared the Mayor's housing strategy, with the quote, "Burlington will continue to expand its long-standing practice of leveraging public assets for public good. This includes pursuing public-private partnerships and thoughtfully developing housing on City-owned land to meet community needs". Dillard noted that they are looking across the City, but that there are no parcels that are just ready to go without any restrictions. He continued by circling back to the New North End plan and called out that a lot of the City-owned land in that part of the City is parks, conservations areas or school land. He then shared 6 points that make up the City-owned land rationale framework including: building on City land can make housing more affordable, can help fund the park system, means the community gets a say, can model what sustainable development looks like, can keep money in the local economy and generates revenue for Burlington permanently. Next Dillard reviewed the City-owned land recommendations in planBTV for the New North End, which includes a city assets study, continuing public engagement via planBTV 2050, park acreage and program replacement, pursue CHIP financing and accelerating public-private partnership process improvements. He then touched on the specific City-owned properties in the plan, which included the Ethan Allen Parkway and Starr Farm Park, noting that there was both community support and opposition to these locations.

Lewis thanked the planning team for all of their work on this and for being at the meeting to present on this again and answer questions. He continued by reiterating that this is conceptual in nature and the engagement process between BPRW and Office of City Planning will be ongoing as the PlanBTV 2050 is built out.

Lantieri asked what the approval process and timeline for this plan would be.

Dillard explained next steps and said that if everything is approved on the fastest timeline, it would be adopted in late August/early September.

Lantieri thanked him and shared his reflection on the South End project's long standing draft form. He continued that while he is a housing advocate, he feels some trepidation about how a plan is adopted and what its real ramifications are so even if it is just a suggestion of being a possibility, we know that once it is adopted people will take it as truth moving forward and will set what the future conversation of the community is. He

continued that while he thinks it is good to do this due diligence and a full assessment, he would be very disinclined from moving these suggestions forward into the final plan. He closed by sharing that this body would continue to engage in conversations about this over the next few months as the process continues.

#### **4.2 Tree Ordinance Update**

Comai, the City Arborist, introduced himself and shared that there has been a group of 5 have been working on a long overdue update to the city's tree/vegetation ordinance, which was last updated in 1962 and was not very comprehensive. Comai continued that the recently adopted Open Space Plan included that this ordinance needed to be updated and that he, Cahill, Gustin, Sauve and 2 community members have been working on this. He shared that they focused on including public and private lands, as well as right-of-ways, managed park spaces and natural and conserved lands. He continued that the previous Urban Forestry Master Plan did not speak to any of those spaces, so this group began by rewriting the definitions in the ordinance and focused on defining the roles he and the City Land Steward play relative to the lands that they manage and their authorities over those lands – the City Arborist being responsible for public trees, or by the State statute, a “shade tree” is described as any tree planted in a public space which includes all of the right-of-way trees existing between sidewalks and roads throughout the City and all trees in the managed park spaces, the City Land Steward being responsible for all natural and conserved areas. Comai shared that the group felt it was important to make that distinction and to include all of that. He continued by sharing that they also found out that the Parks Commission has been named as “Burlington’s Tree Board”, but this group felt that the Conservation Board would be a more appropriate fit moving forward so made that change in this process. Gustin noted that this is a draft ordinance and that they are making the rounds to multiple bodies and that they will circle back with another draft later this summer before the final step of adoption. He continued by sharing that there is state statute for trees by that it is entirely about shade trees, which only includes trees in public spaces by a public entity, so this ordinance update will speak to trees beyond that, including trees in natural areas and trees on private property but along straightaways, like a bush or tree growing into or over the sidewalk. He continued that this fleshes out private property maintenance requirements and articulates a little better what the maintenance responsibilities are and the recourse for what can happen if you the property owner ignore it. Gustin continued that they reviewed the existing permit threshold requirements for tree removal that are in the City’s zoning code and decided to use the existing standards and keep that process as is for the time being. He shared that keeping this in mind, measures for protecting existing trees on-site for tree variant development is occurring and the ordinance will retain those and protect them as development activities occur. Gustin then touched on mitigation for tree variant, which isn’t expressly called for now but has been done in practice. He continued that they fleshed this out with 3 options – caliper replacement, pay a fee into a tree fund and/or green infrastructure on-site. He then discussed how the Conservation Board would play a role in this, including project review, providing a community forum for all things tree related and annual review of the work plan for tree management by the City Arborist.

Cahill shared his appreciation for the committee, especially Gustin, and is excited about the process of making these changes to strengthen it and come back with something even better.

Sauve noted that it is great to have a plan and then it is great to see parts of it implemented so quickly, like in this case.

Gustin asked for Commissioner's reactions.

Davis asked for clarification about what private property owners can and can't do with their own trees.

Gustin answered that it is only in regards to the public right-of-ways.

Comai shared that this came from regular see-click-fixes coming through about private vegetation encroaching on public areas, such as sidewalks. He continued that the trickiest part about this is that there are so many rental properties in Burlington that it is hard to track down the owners, so these get passed to Code Enforcement to address with property owners, so they really wanted to spell that out and address it in this.

#### **4.3 Auer Property Acquisition**

Cahill opened by noting that Lauren Chicote from the Winooski Valley Park District was present at the meeting for this item as well. He then reminded Commissioners that this was discussed in executive session recently as a potential for this to be an acquisition between the Winooski Valley Park District and the owners of the property with support from the Conservation Legacy Fund. He continued that as of yesterday, there is a purchase and sale agreement in place and so now is the time for discussion and an advisory action from the Commission to weigh in on use of the Legacy Fund for the acquisition. Cahill noted that this is day 2 of a 90 day due diligence period, including looking at contamination on the site, title and other legal pieces and getting the full picture of the parcel and making sure that this is the right decision for the Winooski Valley Park District and the community. He continued by sharing that there is a building on the site and in the event of there being an acquisition, looking into the structures of that and the potential historic component. He closed by noting that this is still in early stages of deliberation so asked for sensitivity around that and also asked Commissioners not to visit the site on their own and shared that they are hoping to coordinate a visit with the decision makers if there is interest.

Chicote thanked Cahill and that she would be happy to answer any questions that Commissioners might have.

Davis noted that what was provided was comprehensive and felt that this was exciting.

Mobley shared that she was sorry the commissioners with questions weren't present at the meeting and noted they might have more questions moving forward. She continued by giving kudos for the amount of information that was provided and she felt like it hit all of the questions that had been raised previously.

Cahill noted that Warner, the Director of the Winooski Valley Park District, has a lot of experience and skill with acquisitions like this and creating reports, so wanted to give him credit for the memo. He then touched on the addition of the \$40,000 placeholder for BPRW, which will go toward the unforeseen administrative work that will be happening to support this acquisition, such as the functionality with the Greenway.

Davis asked if septic was or was not an option.

Chicote answered that it would be a small capacity and expensive with a lot of hurdles so would be difficult to establish there.

Lantieri shared his excitement and support, both for the partnership and the acquisition. Chicote shared that they are excited to work closely with the City on this collaborative project.

Boehm made a motion for the Commission to authorize the use of \$340,000 for the project costs related to the acquisition of the Auer property. Davis seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.

#### **4.4 Grow Wild Demonstration Presentation**

Cahill began by sharing screen, noting that he was sharing this presentation on behalf of Diane Hannigan, the City's Nature Based Climate Solutions Coordinator, whose position is a partnership project with Burlington Wildways and is largely connected to working with the school district to develop and teach nature curriculum and bringing nature into the schoolyards. This is important work from an open space standpoint because the school district represents such a frontier for opportunity and also from an equity standpoint because it is accessible to all students. Cahill noted that Hannigan has more than doubled her programming hours this year, which is very exciting. He continued that part of this work is providing members of the community opportunities to learn what we're doing with native plants and how to do this work on lands that they have connection to in their neighborhoods, whether that's in green belts through the guidance of an update vegetation ordinance, or in their own yard or property. He shared that they have created a lawn demonstration at the Lakeview Cemetery in partnership with our Grounds and Cemetery team and Burlington Wildways, which houses the Grow Wild campaign. He continued that sites like this will be heritage legacy things that are going to be a part of our parks but that right now the programs and the humans attached to them are pilots and temporary and they are trying to figure out what sustainability looks like in the City's approach to climate adaptation and he feels this position is one of the most important things related to that. He then pivoted to talking about the new location at Oakledge Park for the next iteration of a Grow Wild lawn demonstration, noting that is near the new universally accessible playground and tennis courts. He shared that the process for arriving at this location involved scouting out 4 different locations throughout the park with the Planning Team and Grounds Team and this spot rose to the top because of the proximity to the playground with the hope that there would be interest from folks visiting that space to learn more, as well as the opportunity to tie into the creek connection that was built along with the playground installation. He also noted that this location has been difficult for the Grounds team to access, so reducing the amount of mowing in this space is helpful. Cahill then spoke to adding a demonstration site in the South End so that the two main soil typologies in Burlington will be represented for folks to learn from. He noted that while this isn't an action item, he wanted to bring it to the Commission's attention because in the Open Space Plan, it fits perfectly into the Connection section on page 118, identifying some of those actions like educating the public on nature based solutions and their value. He continued that creating spaces like this allows for connecting communication approaches that he feels are really meaningful ways to give people a window into their

ability to see themselves in this plan. He shared that the plan also identifies “stewardship zones”, which are buffered areas around natural areas and if community members take on a variety of potential actions, they can support what’s happening nearby naturally. He closed by sharing that Madalinski from the Planning Team is helping to facilitate where and how all of this nature-based and adaptation work is happening to communicate that out effectively through a story map framework where the visual map will be connected to where this is all happening.

Mobley shared her appreciation for the timing of this and having this as an example of something coming to life from the Open Space Plan.

Lantieri echoed what Mobley said and shared that it is great to hear from staff who are doing these innovative things and using their knowledge and highly technical skills to make meaningful changes in the public realm.

Cahill noted that it is the cross-team partnerships that make this really effective so to be able to go into the field with the Grounds team and then interface with the Planning Team at their weekly meeting, and it is the creation of those internal cultural spaces that helps the innovation happen.

Lantieri noted that the momentum of the different divisions and teams within Parks working together is getting stronger and that’s really exciting to see.

#### **4.5 FY27 Budget Process**

Lewis shared that the Departments have proposed their budgets and the Mayor’s budget has been presented to the Board of Finance and is under consideration by the City Council. He continued that it is scheduled to go back to City Council for consideration and hopeful adoption on June 15<sup>th</sup>, but they have until June 30<sup>th</sup> to do so. He continued by noting that there is a public process with the council so if you’ve watched the presentations and want to show support or ask questions there will be a public forum that is associated with the City Council presentation as well.

Lantieri asked if Lewis anticipated any changes.

Lewis didn’t think that would be the case because of the high level of engagement across the board throughout this process, but if there are any substantive changes he would loop Commissioners in.

Lantieri encouraged Commissioners to attend the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### **4.6 Comprehensive Plan Update**

Sauve shared screen and provided a quick overview of the open house summary and what is going on with planBTV 2050. She shared that there were 322 sign-ins, most of whom were Burlington residents who owned or rented. The most represented areas of the City were the South End and Old North End/New North End, with most being English speakers who plan or hope to stay in Burlington. Sauve continued by sharing the questions that BPRW asked, which were: share a special memory related to the places, programs and events offered by BPRW, what is at the root of BPRW’s value to Burlington, what is a trunk that supports the BPRW system but could or should evolve and what is a leaf that could be reimaged, replaced or let go? She shared that all of the questions received helpful and informative responses! Sauve continued by reporting out on the surveys, and shared that 448 statistically valid surveys were completed as a part of the random sample and 105 open public surveys were completed, but they are

hoping to get more info throughout the summer via direct outreach via REIB, intercept surveys in the parks and on the Greenway, user counts, tabling at events and more done by 2 interns, who she introduced. Sauve continued by sharing that the next step of this process will be scenario planning, which is a method for making decisions by exploring several plausible futures, rather than predicting or planning for just one. She continued that a big focus of this is adding 7,000 housing units by 2050 and how we could get there from here through various scenarios. There will be focus groups occurring to solicit feedback and analyze impacts in July, which will include people like housing advocates or developers or community organizations, and then the scenario planning modeling will occur after. Sauve continued that there will be another open house and more public engagement in the Fall where these ideas will be presented. She concluded that this process will essentially identify different roadmaps that we could potentially take in the future.

Mobley added that a common theme that has been popping up is a desire for more indoor spaces for recreational opportunities. She noted how often what BPRW offers has come up throughout this process and yet the balance that we're striking around some of the budgetary choices doesn't quite align with that. She's curious about how that will emerge in the scenario planning that is done.

Boehm was glad to hear that there will be another open house and opportunities for engagement and she noted that she thought the last open house was incredibly well done.

Lantieri offered to be in a focus group with his housing advocate hat on and welcomed the interns and shared that he would like to join them for a day of surveying or tabling.

#### **4.7 Urban Reserve**

Lantieri shared his screen and touched on the background and history of the Urban Reserve, noting that it is a 40-acre parcel north of the Moran Plant with limitations for development because of its history of being an oil refinery. He continued that it entered into the open space of Burlington starting in 1990 and is largely still vacant, with roughly half of the acreage being filled lands which are subject to the Public Trust Doctrine, which is a key influential legal decision that was created to be used for the public benefit, which is how the Urban Reserve came to be. Lantieri continued that the stated purpose of the Urban Reserve was to reserve the right for future generations to determine what level of development should occur at the site, which essentially meant they were not going to do anything there then, but they wanted to save this as an open space so that future generations can determine what is included. He continued that as part of the conservation easement, 8 acres of shoreline, 1.5 acres of natural area and a public recreation area of about 13 acres were included in this. He shared that also in this conservation easement that no less than 50% of the property should be retained as public open/recreation space or conservation land, which will allow for passive use, publicly accessible open space, the continued re-naturalization of the property with opportunities for public education informal passive recreation and a commitment to investigate and potentially remediate the brownfield site and maintaining some of the cultural industrial heritage of the site. Lantieri noted that all of these things, to some degree, have been happening. He then shared that it is defined as a "park natural area"

in the ordinance. Lantieri noted important years for the Urban Reserve – 1990 purchased by the City, 1994 the last petroleum drum was removed, 2012 voters passed a bill to devote \$6 million toward waterfront revitalization, 2018 completion of the Greenway and 2019 Croteau vs City of Burlington which was a moment in the City where a policy around the removal and storage of possessions was created. Lantieri then shifted to what has been happening at the Urban Reserve more recently, specifically this Spring. He shared a list of dates and groups who participated in cleaning up the space, starting with a City-led clean-up on April 21<sup>st</sup>, to which Lantieri followed up by organizing volunteer cleanups of the space, of which there have been 8 so far with a 9<sup>th</sup> planned. He noted that they have been able to fill up a dumpster every time! Lantieri then shared a list of the impacts, including: 35 new park volunteers, 73 volunteer shifts, 292 volunteer hours, about \$10k of in-kind labor, at least 100, 42-gallon trash bags, a stronger volunteer coordination network and a sense of agency within the people of Burlington. He then shared that the overall goal is to give the entire space a re-set to see if we can chart a new path for this location and for community members who use the space. He noted that he has been working with O’Daniel and Cahill about how to partner with BPRW on this as well as working with the NPAs and other organizations to leverage this source of potential labor and impact at a time when the budget is stretched thin. He continued that when he hears someone say that “the City should do something” it encourages the idea in him that people aren’t recognizing the agency that they have to interact with and make a positive impact in the public realm. He hopes to provide opportunities for people to see that and to grow stronger advocates and volunteers that can someday be working on their own kinds of projects and making their own positive impact. Lantieri then touched on the costs of endeavors like this, including monetary costs and time and poison ivy. Next he discussed what’s next – and noted that recently signage went up marking some areas as “sensitive conservations areas”, support BPRW in determining the appropriate usages allowed and policies needed to maintain a safe, sustainable and vital park and long term determining some of the final specific usages of the space through amendments to the ordinance, which the Commission can help with.

Cahill gave kudos to the City staff effort to get things to a baseline, but that clearly didn’t get everything, so the fact that different cleanup projects and community initiatives have come together and coalesced with the City’s efforts is amazing. He continued by giving the Park Rangers a shout out for all of the hard work they do in that area on a daily basis, both stewarding the landscape but also being in relationship with the humans who are finding their way through the parks as park users in different forms. He then noted that staff are in the process of writing a management plan with objectives and tasks related to those restoration frameworks for the area identified for restoration.

Lewis gave kudos to Lantieri for all of the time and energy he has put into the space with the volunteers. He shared that he recently walked down there with Cahill and leadership from the Mayor’s office and the space has been transformed since that first cleanup. He asked Lantieri to share their appreciation with all of the volunteers.

## **5. Standing Items**

### **5.1 Parks Foundation Update**

Lantieri shared that there is a meeting on Thursday and that they are waiting to launch their campaign with the opening of the new Pomeroy playground.

### **5.2 Director's Report**

Lewis noted that the monthly report has a lot of great information about the current goings on. He continued by bringing up the e-moto and e-bike conversation, noting that it was a topic at last week's Ordinance Committee and amongst staff within the different Departments that are impacted by this both in park spaces but also along the right-of-ways to make sure that we have a unified voice and what options may be available in trying to understand the different pinch points as it relates to enforcement and ordinance adoption regulations, including in the park ordinances which would require staff to work through what the timeline could look like on that, acknowledging that there is a request from the ordinance committee to try to move this work forward as quickly as possible. He continued that there is interest in trying to establish speed limitations along shared use pathways in our system and trying to connect the language between shared use paths and parks ordinance information as well as looking at the enforcement potential. Lewis then noted that they have been working very closely with the school district on this to share information out to families.

Lewis then thanked Johnson for his commitment to the Commission and the City.

Johnson was appreciative and shared that while he was sad to be leaving, he's excited about the direction the Commission and the Department is going in.

### **5.3 Commissioner's Items & Volunteer Hours**

Johnson did not have any hours to report but noted that he has been seeing a lot of e-motos on the Greenway. He then noted that he would miss everyone and thanked everyone.

Mobley had 3 volunteer hours to report and gave kudos to BPRW's start to the season.

Boehm went to the BTV Open House and attended one of the volunteer days at the Urban Reserve.

Davis had 1 volunteer hour to report and noted that she saw coverage about Beach Bites on the news already.

Lantieri shared about his visit to San Francisco and their public parks. He had 20 volunteer hours to report.

## **6. Adjournment**

### **6.1 Motion to adjourn**

Boehm made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Davis seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The meeting was closed at 8:18pm.