

I. Call to Order

Members Present: Mary Hussmann, Amanda Goldstein, Courtney Blasius, Meredith Bushey

City Staff Present: Ray Coffey, Community Services Director, Robin Merritt, Recreation and Parks Manager, Councilor Aurora Hurd (Council Liaison)

Guests Present: Nick Warner, Winooski Valley Park District

Meeting Start Time: 6:34 PM

Minutes Recorded by: Councilor Aurora Hurd

II. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Moved by Amanda

Second by Meredith

Approved: unanimously

IV. City Council and City Staff Liaison Updates

Budget coming up – first budget meeting is 12/4, HOME act around priority housing – specifically three plus bedroom housing and low income housing, Amendments to the Unified Land Use and Development Regulations approved.

Fire: Challenges with recruitment and retention.

Police: Chief Rick leaving this week, interim Justin H. interim chief, hiring of chief interview questions (may have internal or local folks) diligence to get a lot of people at the table so process is confirmed by community. Aim for the new year to have new chief hired and starting. Also, down staff, doing what they can to fill those.

Community Services: Pivot time from labor with pumpkins to budget season. Halloween went well, had 5000 people through over course of weekend. Strong partnership with Downtown Winooski. A lot of winter programs are announced and filling up – promoting it. Haven't missed too much with changes in ESSER funding and changes in AmeriCorps staff. Looking to get another one, coming in free of charge from the new person. O'Brien center behind the scenes work continuing with design and development, things are moving, hoping to have December 11th to council for consideration.

V. Inclusion and Belonging Commission Liaison Updates

Member unable to attend but hope to fill alternates. Two new members have been interviewed.

VI. Review Draft Invasive Species Management Plan

Nick Warner Executive Director with Winooski valley park district present. The park is in two towns and is an incredibly important ecological asset and archaeological site. Discovering how people have been using the park already, doing some clean up in the few years.

Robin: Need something in the books for park management with this Invasive Species plan and can manage at a tangible level. Adding individual species to the list still but bringing it to initial review tonight. Will then bring to the Abenaki leadership to get their perspective.

Nick: Winooski is ahead of the curve with this plan. Parks district is working to share resources with Winooski.

Ray: Walking through document tonight. Goal: This is really a document that can be picked up by anyone who is working in a park can use. Need to incorporate some more plants from report this and other reports from parts of the city in the appendix. Bringing it here to SHCP first.

Now going through the document to suggest edits. Initial reactions:

Who is Abenaki Leadership? Through conversations with Nick and Elaine, delimited there might be two contacts, who can be connectors into the community if they themselves aren't appropriate. Further discussion followed around the state recognized tribes with different politics and different priorities and there being a single point of contact, but are able to get guidance. Goal is for work to be respectful and proactive.

Discussion about how to bringing in local, state, and UVM experts. Building more relationships with community partners for resources with this document to manage parks better. Question around can natural area be outdoor lab with local schools (UVM, St. Mikes, CCV)? Building volunteer opportunities around invasive eradication to meet the lack of capacity in Winooski staff department.

Question: Are there edible plants or interest to other cultures or groups? Culturally significant plants that are also invasive. Discussion followed with decision of possibly adding another column on appendix for cultural significance.

This plan can also be used to get grants – specifically tasked to get resources to do the work. Opportunities to get money. Plan also gives ability to have stuff to do when people come and ask for volunteer opportunities or (high school, college) class trips. Show up to have tools and expertise. Allows to be more effective in leveraging folks who are interested in doing the work.

Any areas of concern with wordings? Could definitions be added. No further big concerns.

Soil Management is also in discussion with construction moving materials that might spread invasives.

Discussion moved to Invasive Management Recommendations. This plan is both aspiration and practice goals.

MOTION: To approve plan with edits as presented, to come back to commission if significant edits are made.

Moved: Courtney

Second: Amanda

Approved: unanimous

VII. Discussion of Memorial Park Management

Ray gives some table setting for where management stands. Winooski is one of the members of Winooski valley park district. Currently don't have any parks managed, want to change that with the district taking ownership of Memorial Park Management. Also, recommendation to have Winooski to pay more into the district, will be part of the budget proposal to City Council. If asking for this.

Context from Nick: 80% of operating budget comes from member towns. Go through careful screen with any property. Not asking for anything tonight, but are planning to begin sharing with community at large soon. Goal is to make sure everyone has eyes open and that this transfer in membership has community support. Due diligence process which will begin now. Talking with neighboring property owners to ensure they are interested too. Data will be public. Sees it as great potential with this site, hoping to include Colchester as well.

Side note: could be location for a boat launch. Which is called out on the parks plan in the goal.

City would give up site control, but easements could help protect the city interest. City feels it is not currently managing effectively and feel this would be a way to better take care of it.

Questions? Discussion followed of how other parks in Winooski may play into this.

Commission gave general approval to continue exploring where this partnership might continue to grow.

VIII. Adjourn

Motion: Meredith

Second: Amanda

Approved Unanimous at 8:06 PM.