



Kassia Hardesty, Chair
Andrew Brewer
Lincoln Francis
Emily Donahue
Jessa Gorman

Alec Ellsworth, Parks Director

Parks Commission
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 / 6:00 PM
Location: City Hall and Zoom

Mission: The Parks Commission advances a long-term vision to ensure that parks, gardens, greenways, and natural areas are vital to Montpelier's community identity and are forever available for the enjoyment of all.

Commissioners: Kassia, Lincoln, Andrew, Andrew, Jessa

Staff: Alec, Keir

Public: Izik Currier, Bill Heigis, Jim Coppock, Linda Young, Kip Roberts, Joanne Garton, Arthur Foelsche

Meeting Agenda

- 6:00 Commissioner Introductions
- 6:03 January 20th Agenda, December 16th Minutes – Lincoln motions to approve both, Jessa seconds. Passes unanimously.
- 6:05 Public Comment for items not on the agenda – N/A
- 6:10 Staff Update, Review Incident Reports (Alec)
 - Incidents: Park neighbor, also incident related to staff
 - Successful year-end fundraiser, can now run the MYCC program again. Also a private \$10,000/yr commitment going forward.
 - Staff member has moved on, looking to fill as quickly as possible.
 - 1-week until filing deadline for Parks Commission position
 - Would like to view and talk through final City Plan
- 6:20 Stonewall Meadows Draft Management Plan Public Comment Period
 - Izik (Eagle Scout):
 - Revised bench drawings based on Parks Commission feedback – to make more accessible, added railings to the bench design, figured out better method to secure to the ground.
 - To be installed at Stonewall, no specific location yet
 - Planning to build 6 – two on the edge of the main field, 4 others scattered throughout the trail. Some could also be installed in other parks if valuable (eg. Statehouse Path)
 - Not making a sign, just the benches
 - Alec suggests using an earth anchor (metal hammered in, chains to bench) instead of burying the back posts
 - Fundraising: Asking for donated lumber and supplies, also doing a bottle drive to raise additional funds for items that won't be donated

- Labor: Izik's troop and sister troop – about 25 people who can help build
- Lincoln suggests making sure the Parks Commission and/or staff are informed of the timeline so neighbors etc. aren't surprised when benches are installed
- Timeline: Thinking of installing no later than May – can install as soon as the ground is thawed
- Management Plan –
 - Info went out via press release, social media, contact to neighborhoods. No comments since last meeting.
 - Remove “With contributions from...” text
 - Re: Dogs, quotes city code of ordinances. Will borrow from the Country Club Road sign. Emily will find a space for this in the document.
 - “Rules applicable to both parks” – change to “the following rules and regulations will apply...”

6:38 Sparrow Farm Trail Reroute (Alec/East Montpelier Trail Initiative chair Bill Heigis)

- Seeking to reroute to avoid steepest sections so that they're more navigable for all uses
- Would use existing and new property
- Width would be similar to Parks Connector trail (6-8' tread) with a bigger corridor
- Segment just below Sparrow Farm will require a bigger bench cut
- Will reuse existing VAST bridges
- Timeline: East Montpelier Trails is ready to start construction this year via volunteer labor
- Won't add any boardwalks or bridges except higher up, where minimum width would be 4 feet
- Some small stream crossings, may require a small bridge structure
- Original route was through some of the older forest, walked with foresters including Paul Cate, moved to current proposed route. The current route avoids the mapped old growth forest.
- Proposed route is flagged if anyone wants to walk it on the ground
- Current route is a fast downhill bike trail. These updates will reduce grade to also reduce speed, reduce erosion, make it better for multi-use recreation.
- Next step will be wetlands review.
- Jessa moves to support the conceptual project for the Sparrow Farm Trail Reroute and work with staff towards implementation. Lincoln seconds. Passes unanimously.

7:03 Public Comment for items not on the agenda (returned to this agenda item at request of Linda)

- Linda: Did fundraising effort raise enough funds for the outhouse?
- Linda: Surfacing need for a management plan for Summer Street Park. Would be helpful to have a more official position on the Parks Commission if we're doing more work in that park.

7:07 EAB Biocontrol Project (Joanne Garton)

- Forrester with VT Urban Community Forestry Program.
- Ash trees – expensive to manage, deal with ash in rural and urban forests.
- Biocontrol for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) – currently 13 release sites across Vermont, EAB confirmed in Vermont in 2018 (confirmed in Michigan in the late 90s). Vermont has the benefit of experience and knowledge from neighboring states and Canada where EAB has surfaced earlier.

- Research that EAB biocontrols are effective in urban areas. Won't ever eliminate EAB, but reduces EAB to slow the spread. Joanne saw that there weren't any urban release sites in Vermont, saw opportunity for Montpelier to be part of a release to help slow the spread here.
- Black ash is extremely susceptible to EAB (green, white, and black in Montpelier, but black most susceptible).
- Joanne looked at possible stands – existing ash monitoring site in North Branch Park with white and black ash, also by the Stump Dump, also southern area of Hubbard Park.
- Primary candidate: southern area of Hubbard Park. Multiple species of ash, easy to access for biocontrol release.
- Joanne applied with the southern Hubbard Park site in mind. Waiting to hear back on their application.
- Community outreach plan. All the other release sites in Vermont are on state land, no community outreach elements. This would be new/different for this more urban release site.
- Very common to use biocontrols. Undergoes many years of testing before wasps are released. Testing began 2007, first release was in Michigan in 2009. We've already had 13 release sites in Vermont. Risk of parasitizing another species of beetle is extremely unlikely.
- Montpelier Tree Board approved concept of applying.
- City Council and Conservation Commission likely interested as well.
- Next step: Recommendation to City Council to approve southern area of Hubbard Park as a release site for EAB on consent agenda.
- Alec can setup an email address for Parks, Tree Board, state, etc. to all receive the same public comment.
- Andrew moves to support the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program's proposal to use biocontrols in a southern area of Hubbard Park to mitigate the spread of emerald ash borer. Jessa seconds. Passes unanimously.
- Would like to see FAQ and also more longer info on Parks website, email to EAB list.

7:47 Ongoing Projects Quick Updates

- Hubbard Park Multi-Use Trail – no updates
- Cumming St. Pump Track – Arthur – working with Mike Fritz out of Elmore, plan in process. Hope to have a conceptual draft at February Parks meeting.
- FY27 Budget – City Council discusses the budget tomorrow.

7:53 Agenda items, date, and location for next month's meeting.

- Date: Tuesday, February 17th
- Agenda: Review of final City Plan, Cumming St. Pump Track conceptual draft, Final Stonewall Management Plan vote and approval, celebrate Lincoln's Commission tenure

8:00 Adjourned by unanimous consent