

**Draft Minutes of  
Resilient Hartford's Clifford Park Food Forest Community Meeting  
May 12, 2021**

**Resilient Hartford Members Present:** Marsha Autilio, Marcia Gauvin, Frederica Graham, Dylan Kreis, Leah Mosenthal, Laura Simon and Chair Kye Cochran.

**Resilient Hartford Liaisons Present:** Jon Bouton, Conservation Commission and Ally Tufenkjian, Selectboard.

**Staff Present:** Matt Osborn, Town Planner.

**Others Present:** Sandie Cary, Becky Cholet, Ruth Fleishman, Sally Mansur, Ryan Scelza, Katie Williams and consultants Cat Buxton and Karen Ganey.

**Welcome:** A remote community meeting on the Clifford Park Food Forest in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law was held on Wednesday, May 12, 2021. Resilient Hartford (RH) Chair Kye Cochran called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Kye read the "Act 92 remote public meeting script". She stated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the Clifford Park Food Forest.

**Background:** RH member Frederica Graham provided background on the Town Committee that was established by the Selectboard in 2014 with the charge of helping to make Hartford a more resilient community. She noted that the RH sponsored Resilience Week in 2016 and 2017 and transitioned to sponsoring resilience workshops in 2018 and 2019 and held Potato Fest in the fall of 2019. Although Potato Fest was planned to be an annual event, Covid-19 resulted in cancellation of the event in 2020 and 2021. Frederica stated that she hopes Potato Fest will return in 2022.

RH member Marsha Autilio provided background on the project noting that the idea came from RH member Dylan Kreis who also serves as the Parks Foreman for the Hartford Parks and Recreation Department. The goal is to convert some park turf areas to other uses in order to reduce the amount of turf to maintain. This project fits in with RH's goal of being more independent regarding food production and security.

**Introduction to Consultants Cat Buxton and Karen Ganey:** Kye Cochran introduced consultants Cat Buxton and Karen Ganey. Cat is a cross-pollinator from Sharon, Vermont focused on ecosystem resilience. Her business, Grow More, Waste Less is empowering and connecting communities to affect positive change from the ground up. Karen owns an ecological landscape design business, Permaculture Solutions that is based in Norwich. Karen designs gardens that maximize biodiversity and ecosystem health. Cat and Karen have extensive experience working with grassroots organizations and volunteering on community projects.

**Acknowledgement:** Cat Buxton started her presentation acknowledging that "the land is sovereign homeland of the Abenaki Nation and People. Since ancient times, the Abenaki know that they have always been here, are still here, and will always be here. We pay our respects to them, and to the wisdom of their elders and their culture."

**Clifford Park Background:** Karen Ganey noted that the property was obtained by the Town of Hartford in 1976 from Erwin Clifford with the plan that the property to be used for recreational purposes. Erwin used the property for agricultural purposes. Previously, the property had been used for farming and once was the site of a dog food processing facility. The Park consists of 12 acres.

**The Plan:** Cat Buxton presented slides of the Park following the Irene Flood of 2011 and the recovery and replanting of trees along the White River in the years following the flood. She noted that the soil is in very poor condition and needs the addition of organic matter. She presented slides of alternative uses with a focus on food production and examples of food forests,

Karen Ganey reported on the Fall Survey about alternative uses to Clifford Park and Ratcliffe Park. The survey was administered by Resilient Hartford and resulted in 167 responses with strong support for alternative uses. She noted that the Parks and Recreation Department identified two areas within Clifford Park for possible alternative uses. She talked about opportunities for variety and ecosystems that have many benefits. The project will develop a plan for the alternative use areas.

**Public Comments:** Sandie Cary, West Hartford Librarian, noted that she loves to walk in the Park and a lot of people walk there. People really like a loop and access to the water. Dog walking is common. The lawn is in poor shape. The river is accessible and shallow. Many folks picnic in the park and kids like to play there. She reported that some people have been picking fiddleheads.

Jon Bouton noted that one positive is there are not many invasive plants in the Park.

Kye Cochran reported that she knows a lot of people who have expressed interest in the project.

Frederica Graham asked where to bring needed materials (grass clippings, wood chips, manure, leaves etc.). Dylan Kreis and Cat Buxton will work out the details of what materials will be accepted and where to store the materials.

Marsha Autilio suggested involving youth. Kye Cochran responded that she has talked to the Ottauquechee School principal who is interested in the project. Frederica Graham noted that the Hartford High School has a community service requirement. Marcia Gauvin noted that she teaches at the Prosper Valley School in Pomfret and they have a place-based program for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Becky Cholet suggested contacting the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources class.

The following organizations were suggested as possible partners: White River Conservation District, Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Dismas House and Bugbee Senior Center.

**Timeline:** Cat Buxton noted that to start, we need to build up the soil and build community. She gave a timeline for the project:

- Host Educational Workshops via Zoom
  1. Soil Health: Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
  2. Design & Species: Wednesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
  3. Finalizing the Design: Late June, Date to be Determined
- Committee formed by the end of May
- June: Soil testing and preparations: Adding layers of organic materials, planting cover crops, delineate pathways and complete the draft community design process
- July – Continue building soil and refining design. Submit final design to Parks and Recreation Department and Parks and Recreation Commission for approval.
- September - Planting of Phase 1 of design

**Project Teams:** Cat Buxton noted that the project is heavily dependent on volunteers. She proposes forming four teams to work on the project:

1. Ground Team
2. Action Team
3. Design Team
4. Fundraising Team

**Next Steps:** It was agreed to hold a Steering Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. via zoom. Marsha Autilio suggested sending out a note to the group e-mail list with the notes of the meeting and a link to the video. Frederica Graham suggested putting up a poster in the West Hartford Library.

Cat Buxton reminded folks of the remote workshops:

- Workshop 1: Soil Health, Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- Workshop 2: Species & Design, Wednesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- Workshop 3: Design Planning, Date to be determined

**Adjournment:** Kye Cochran thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Katie Williams stated that she is very excited about this project noting that it has so much potential. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.