



ASLA  
VERMONT

February 27, 2023

ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear ASLA Executive Committee,

It is my privilege to nominate Jim Donovan, FASLA for the ASLA Community Service Award. Jim has been volunteering his service to his hometown, Charlotte, Vermont, for almost 25 years. During that time, he has donated countless hours to undertake at least nine separate professional, pro-bono projects, as well as made extensive contributions to local and regional committees, commissions, and boards. The range of professional services donated include transportation scoping studies; public trail alternatives, layouts, and open meetings; state permitting, planting plans, and teaching aspects of landscape architecture to his fellow citizens. Jim's expertise is in multi-modal transportation, and he has brought those skills to his town to enable the development of town trails. As an avid gardener as well as a landscape architect, he has provided planting plans for the town library and senior center, collaborating effectively and gracefully guiding these town institutions and fellow citizens.

Jim has imbedded in each of these efforts the engagement of leaders, committees, and citizens to give them a greater understanding of the principles of landscape architecture and the real value of well-designed public landscapes. His work has provided the town with an enlarged view of the profession through seeing the range of projects he, as a landscape architect can undertake and the varied ways he approaches design and planning, the exploration of alternatives, and the application of best practices. He has continuously applied his professional expertise to teaching and leading using the real examples of the public landscapes in the Town of Charlotte for the benefit of his community.

Charlotte is a small Town in the northwest portion of the State of Vermont. Due to its small size, the volunteer work of one landscape architect can have far reaching effects. Jim's efforts and positive service to his community is represented in the letters of support he has received from the Town Administrator, peers and consultants, library director, and fellow volunteer board members. As these letters express, Jim's volunteer efforts have led to educating and engaging his fellow citizens, implementing real-world design and installation projects, and generating actual cost savings to the town. The following pages briefly describe most of Jim's volunteer work for the Town of Charlotte.



### **New Charlotte Library Planting Plan**

In 1998, Jim worked with the newly created Charlotte Library Board to prepare planting plans for the brand-new Charlotte Library. He worked to include native and low maintenance plants around the library to provide year-round interest and incorporated numerous edible and fruits bearing plants. Jim provided the plan to the library for use in informing their patrons about the plants around the library and how they might be able to replicate the approach on their own.

### **Senior Center Planting Plan**

As the new Charlotte Senior Center was finalized, in 2001, Jim worked with Town officials to prepare a preliminary landscape plan. That plan aimed to use plant materials to mitigate the impacts of the parking area, provide shade and create outdoor rooms for seniors to use. He engaged and collaborated with the Senior Center Steering Committee to finalize the layout and selection of plants. During those efforts, he guided the committee to bring to fruition the full range of potential landscape uses, a positive aesthetic character for the proposed landscape, and an integration of limited future maintenance requirements to sustain this landscape.

### **West Charlotte Village Sidewalk Scoping Study**

From 2000 to 2003 interest in a West Village sidewalk emerged from local voices. In response, the Town Selectboard (the Town's governing body) created a Sidewalk Task Force to explore the feasibility of and most appropriate location for sidewalks in the Village. Jim participated in that Task Force, led the scoping study to explore alternate locations and potential impacts, and moderated public meetings to gain citizen inputs. The public work sessions gathered initial ideas and concerns, explored the various alternatives, engaged in fields walks to see and discuss potential layouts on site, and talked about the draft final recommendations around the town to gain consensus. With strong resident support, the scoping study was approved by citizens at the annual Town Meeting.

### **Town Link Trail - State Park Road Section - Design Development, Permitting, and Construction Documents**

The Town of Charlotte has had an overall Town Trail General Master Plan for many years. The central spine of the trail system is called the Town Link Trail that runs from the east side of the town to the Town Beach at Lake Champlain on the west side. The Town Trails Committee had been slowly working to expand the trail on the ground. Jim had already helped to layout several sections of the Town Link Trail, doing so for very reduced fees.



In 2018, Jim volunteered to conduct a pro-bono detailed scoping study for a 6/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile section of the trail linking a neighborhood with the popular Mount Philo state park that had already been generally laid out through another study. He worked with a trail steering committee of Town residents and officials to guide the study. Jim spent time updating existing conditions; exploring public concerns, expectations, and suggestions of interested citizens; developing and ground-truthing viable detailed options for the layout; reviewing the alternatives with the trail steering committee and the public; developing a draft final layout based on their inputs; reviewing that layout with the public; and finalizing the recommendations.

Completing that study, Jim went on to develop construction layout plans to guide the contractor in trail pricing for approval and eventual construction. In addition, he prepared and submitted the wetland permit application to address areas where limited space was available between the existing road and the wetland. With that permit secured, Jim staked out the location of the trail in the field to align with the permit and right-of-way. The completed trail is now witnessing a high level of pedestrian and bicycle use at all times of the year.

### **Town Link Trail - Town Center to Town Beach Section Scoping Study**

Several months after completion of the State Park Road portion of the Town Link Trail, Jim encouraged the Town Trails Committee to continue Town Link Trail expansion. He volunteered to conduct another scoping study for the specific layout of the trail from the West Village Town Center west to Lake Champlain and the Town Beach, the western terminus of the trail.

Shortly after the Scoping Study started, the State of Vermont ordered a complete shutdown of public gatherings due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Jim worked with his Steering Committee to develop an online process for both the Steering Committee to meet and conduct its work and the planned public work sessions to proceed, so that the scoping study could continue.

As part of the study, Jim did field work and area analysis, developed alternatives, conducted four on-line public work session, met separately with concerned landowners, held public outdoor tours of potential routes, and presented the final recommendations to the Town Selectboard for their endorsement.

### **Charlotte Library Wetland Permit Application**

After two decades of ever-increasing use, the Charlotte Library was ready for an expansion. Jim provided input on the overall site plan and worked with a local civil engineer, who was also contributing pro-bono expertise, to minimize intrusions into a wetland setback and nearby wet meadow. He suggested removing existing paving to reduce impervious footprint that allowed



the library expansion project to qualify for a general state wetland permit. Jim prepared the state wetland permit application for the Town, and served as the contact point for town while the permit application was under review and ultimately granted.

## **Charlotte Library Landscape Design and Permaculture Class**

For the library expansion landscape planning and installation, Jim began working with the Charlotte Library to prepare a preliminary planting approach to address the varied conditions on site. During the initial discussion, he joined forces with the library seed exchange team to develop a permaculture design course. That course engaged interested town residents, using the library site as the class focus. He co-taught the eight-week permaculture course with a Master Gardner focusing on permaculture. Fourteen people learned from Jim and his teaching partner on Saturday mornings. An initial task was creating a base plan and performing site analysis of the library site, providing hands-on field experience and translating information gained to a scale plan. Jim guided research on plant materials and uses, led the class in gathering user needs and desires, and on outreach for public inputs. Working collaboratively, the class create alternatives, examined impacts, and framed preliminary design concepts. He also supported his co-teacher in her lectures about permaculture and its application to the creation of an interesting, sustainable, low maintenance planting plan for the library that could also be a best practices example for everyone. The final Charlotte Library Master Landscape Plan was unanimously endorsed by the Library Board.

## **Town Library Rain Garden Final Design and Construction with Volunteers**

A tight budget for the library expansion included limited landscape funding for the implementation of the Library Master Landscape Plan. A raingarden, in the area of pavement removal, required build out to fulfill the required town and wetland permits. Jim developed the final detailed plan for the 2,000 square foot raingarden. Jim secured native wetland plants from regional sources at modest prices. Collaborating with the library seed exchange coordinators, he organized town-wide plant donations. He transported the plants from nurseries to library, and co-organized the volunteer planting teams to plant hundreds of plugs, pots and a selection of larger wetland margin shrubs in the new rain garden.

## **Ahead of the Storm Program Nomination**

Several organizations have cooperated in northwest Vermont to create the Ahead of the Storm program. This program highlights best practices for stormwater management through the use of demonstration sites that show how the various aspects of green stormwater management





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can be used. The Charlotte Library had started an application to be part of the program, but it was put on hold after they decided to work towards expanding the library.

After the expansion was complete, Jim reopened the application on behalf of the library. He updated the runoff calculations to include the new impervious areas on the site and determined how much runoff storage was needed to meet the program standards. He then analyzed the amount of storage that the rain garden provided. He suggested the use of rain barrels to provide additional stormwater storage on site, with the added benefit that they would provide water for the new plants in the rain garden as well as for other plantings around the library.

He submitted the updated forms to the Ahead of the Storm program and provided the additional information requested by the reviewers. The application was successful, and the Charlotte Library is now one of the premier demonstration sites for the program, with information signs about the raingarden and rain barrels and how they can be used on other residential, commercial or government sites.

### **Closing**

In conclusion, I highly recommend Jim Donovan for the ASLA Community Service Award for his sustained pro-bono volunteer contributions over 20 years that have advance the public landscapes of Charlotte through learning, awareness raising, collaboration and, importantly implementing valued projects that are a shared asset of his town. He has demonstrated successful outcomes, engaging citizens and town officials, raising their sense of the value of landscape architecture works as a common benefit and an asset of a livable community.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tom Hand, ASLA, PLA  
Vermont ASLA Chapter President







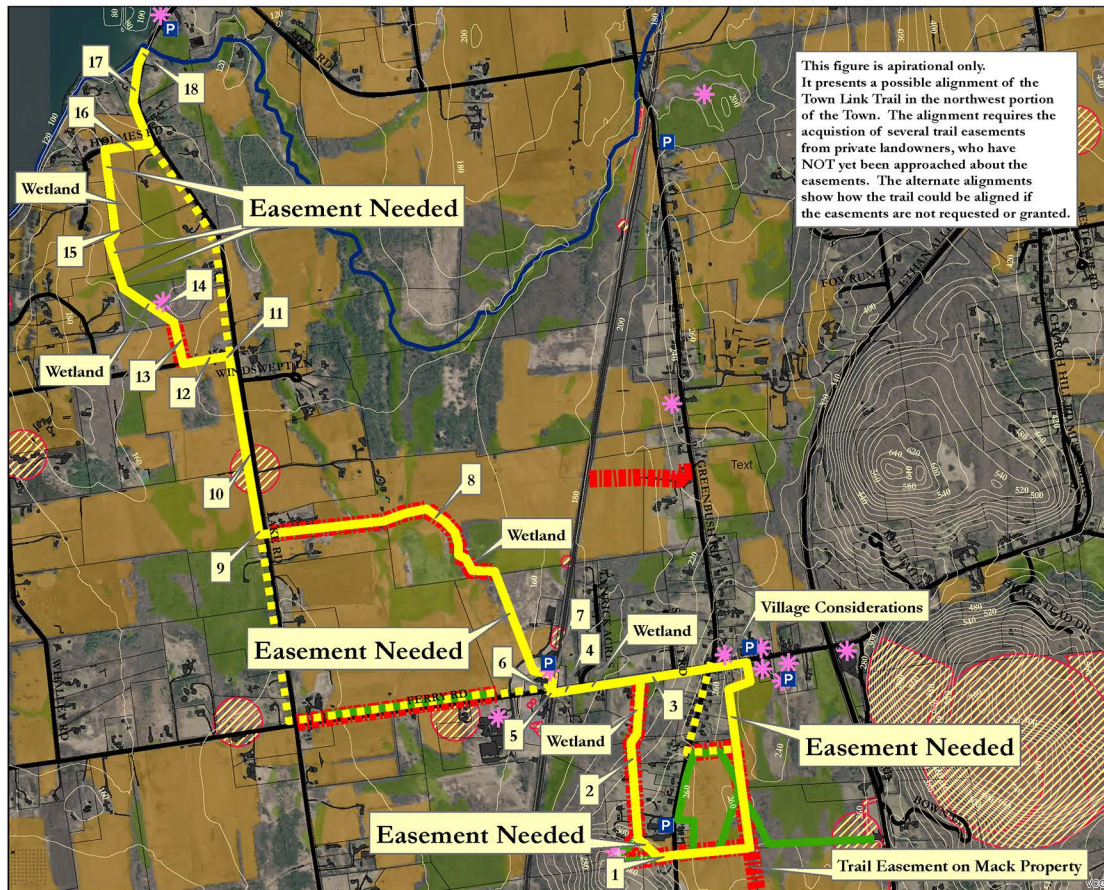








## Charlotte, Vermont

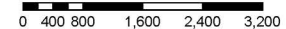


See Section B.2.b.iv in the Study Report for descriptions associated with the number call-outs and other labels on the plan.



## <sup>E</sup> Possible Alignment

Feet



December 16, 2020

Figure 10



# Town of Charlotte

ESTABLISHED 1762

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February 24, 2023

## **Letter of Support for Nomination of Jim Donovan, FASLA for ASLA Community Service Award**

To Whom It May Concern:

In my roles working for the Town of Charlotte over the past 24 years, in my roles as the Town Administrator, Selectboard Assistant and Town Planner, I have had the privilege of being recipient of Jim Donovan's many volunteer contributions to the town. When I started working in Charlotte in 1999, Jim was serving on the Planning Commission. As a commissioner, Jim stood out as having deep knowledge of the many technical facets involved with land use and development proposals, which often included components of landscape architecture, he informed his peers through his understanding of what was before them and what good practices may direct. Jim's low-key, friendly disposition served to "bring the temperature down" during meetings that could sometimes be emotionally charged.

After a dozen years he stepped down from the Planning Commission, and Jim volunteered to represent Charlotte as a board member of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. In this role, Jim diligently and creatively found ways to bring forward the concerns of Charlotte (one of the smaller towns in the county) to be addressed at a regional level, and he also imbedded "Charlotte values" about public good and community into policies and practices that affected the region.

In more recent year, Jim has, on several occasions, offered his landscape architecture skills for trail design and stormwater management while coordinating projects that were instrumental to the development or improvement of important town infrastructure. These efforts provided a savings to the Town upward of \$100,000. While carrying out these works, Jim maintained his characteristic soft-spoken demeanor, encouraging and guiding the participation of other residents, which invested those residents in the outcome of those projects, and truly became exercises in community building and improvement. These volunteer efforts were pro-bono, embodying its meaning of "for the public good."

Jim's volunteer contributions, to the Town of Charlotte over the past twenty plus years, using his knowledge and skill in Landscape Architecture, as well as his gentle personality and his strong interpersonal skills, have been extraordinary, and have been very much appreciated. I recommend Jim for this important ASLA Community Service award.

Sincerely,

Dean Bloch, Charlotte Town Administrator





## CIVIL ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES, INC.

10 Mansfield View Lane  
South Burlington, VT 05403

Phone: 802-864-2323  
Fax: 802-864-2271  
E-Mail: [dmarshall@cea-vt.com](mailto:dmarshall@cea-vt.com)

February 22, 2023

Mr. Thomas Hand  
ASLA Vermont Chapter President  
Site Form Studio  
PO Box 1272  
Stowe, Vermont 05672

**Re: Jim Donovan Community Service Award Recommendation**

Dear Mr. Hand:

It is my pleasure to recommend Mr. James Donovan for the ASLA Community Service Award.

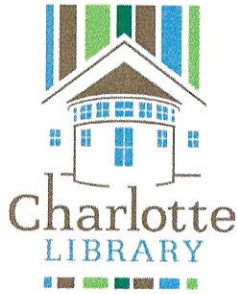
While I served on the Town of Charlotte Sidewalk Committee, Jim provided exemplary communication skills and design guidance on how best to integrate this proposed community amenity into the existing conditions.

I have also worked with Jim professionally and have found that he delivers a well-grounded approach in implementing practical solutions for complex projects. It is this skill set that provides the important bridge between theoretical design and successful real-world application for those community endeavors of Jim's that I was able to observe as a citizen of Charlotte.

The recognition of Jim's services to the Community of Charlotte is long overdue.

Respectfully,

David S. Marshall, P.E.



February 24, 2023

ASLA Jury on the Community Service Award,

We are writing to express support for Jim Donovan's nomination for the 2023 ASLA Community Service Award. The library board and staff are grateful for Jim's work on the design and implementation library landscape plans. This includes the original library landscaping, established after the library opened in 1997, as well as the design and establishment of the library rain garden and updated landscaping in 2020 and 2021 in a collaborative process engaging learning and volunteer planting co-leadership.

The gardens here at the library inspire wonder and joy in all who visit. There is no doubt that Jim's vision for these sustainable, educational gardens brings the library spirit of community and conviviality outside the building walls, creating a welcome for visitors as soon as they park their cars and walk up the sidewalk.

With Jim's leadership, the rain garden design went from sketch to reality. His ability to work with other experts in our community led to a landscape-design workshop series, focused on native plantings and permaculture precepts. His professional skills and planning meant the group-based project was completed on time, despite the limitations imposed by the COVID restrictions in 2020. Further, his enthusiasm and goodwill made this collaborative effort a success from a community as well as a landscape-design perspective.

All at the library and in our community will continue to appreciate and enjoy the library landscape that Jim Donovan created.

With best wishes,

Margaret Woodruff  
Library Director

Jonathan Silverman  
Chair  
Charlotte Library Board of Trustees

## Charlotte Trails Committee

### Charlotte Vermont

Dear ASLA Community Service Award Jury,

The Charlotte Trails Committee enthusiastically supports Jim Donovan's nomination for the 2023 ASLA Community Service Award.

Jim Donovan has been generously helping our all-volunteer Trails Committee for over 15 years. When the Trails Committee decided to prioritize planning and building an 8-mile pedestrian path connecting the major assets and centers of our town, we did not know how to get started with such a complex project. The path, which would become known as The Charlotte Town Link Trail (TLT) originates at the most well attended state park in Vermont- Mount Philo State Park and ends at the beach on Lake Champlain. The TLT also goes under a major highway- route 7, which bisects our town into East Charlotte and West Charlotte. The long-term plan was for the Town Link Trail to provide a safe alternative for people to walk and bike, to visit local farm stands and small businesses along the way, and also to provide a place for people to connect and see their friends and neighbors.

In the very early days of planning, Jim Donovan approached the Trails Committee to see if he could be of assistance. Without Jim's guidance and extensive knowledge, I don't know how the Trails Committee would have ever embarked on this project. The Trails Committee had a very limited annual budget that mostly covered hand tools for trail building and printing costs for our annual fundraising letter. Jim was there to lay out a step-by-step plan. He offered to do the actual work on the ground and permitting of the first section of trail for a nominal fee. He knew that we needed community involvement and support for the project to be successful, so he arranged for three public informational meetings very early on in the process. He was very right about that support for the project began to build.

The Town Link Trail project continues, and every section brings different complexities including easement procurement, wetlands, culverts, safety concerns, wildlife considerations, financing. Jim Donovan has been a constant steady hand over the years, and sometimes very actively involved. He completed the planning and permitting for the trail section nearest Mount Philo. He did the scoping of the trail section near the beach. This also included several public meetings and for Jim, private consults and walks along the proposed route with concerned neighbors.

Jim Donovan's history as a member on town committees also facilitated the Trails Committee understanding of what was required for the project and how best to proceed. The Charlotte Town Link Trail, which is an ongoing community project, has become a cherished asset for the town. We have a long-term plan. We have most of the scoping completed. We have a significant budget now which is voted on every year. We have professional signage and a web site. We have huge community support.

Thank you, Jim Donovan.

Sincerely, Charlotte Trails Committee volunteer officers,

Margaret Russell, past chair

Laurie Thompson, past chair

Bill Regan, current chair



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**Nominee Contact Info:**

Jim Donovan, FASLA, AICP  
Professional Landscape Architect (retired)  
Broadreach Planning & Design  
PO Box 321  
Charlotte, VT 05445  
802 734-7115  
[jdonovan@gmavt.net](mailto:jdonovan@gmavt.net)

