



## City of Auburn, Maine

Office of Planning & Permitting

Eric Cousens, Director

60 Court Street | Auburn, Maine

04210 [www.auburnmaine.gov](http://www.auburnmaine.gov) |

207.333.6601

### Agenda

#### Lake Auburn Stakeholder' Group Meeting

February 22, 2024

5:00 p.m. City Council Chambers (second floor), 60 Court Street

- Review Council Committee Charge
- See attached meeting notes from previous meetings
- Organize into focus groups
  - **Focus Group 1**
    - Task 1 - Agriculture, Forestry: Sec 60-952(a) amend the description of permitted/prohibited agricultural uses. Define which agricultural uses are permitted (and by default the non-permitted activities are prohibited) and the scale of the permitted activity with a focus on water quality impacts.
    - Task 2 - Hobby/ Non-hobby Farms: Sec 60-951(b) amend the definition of non-hobby agricultural uses
  - **Focus Group 2**
    - Task 1 - Septic Systems Inspection Program: Sec 60-952(f)(6) consider amending the described inspection method to shift responsibility for the inspection to the land-owner and provide a phased implementation.
    - Task 2 - Development/ New Systems in the Watershed: Consider further limits on the number of new subsurface wastewater disposal systems. The current ordinance will limit the construction of new systems (new here having the same meaning as the state plumbing code) to an estimated 38 new systems.
- Assigning tasks/ deliverables
- Report out to the group

## Notes from AG Products Working Group and community conversation- 01/25/2024

**Signed in:** Pam Rousseau [drpbr@hotmail.com](mailto:drpbr@hotmail.com), Julia Harper [goodfood4LA@gmail.com](mailto:goodfood4LA@gmail.com), Daisy Kettle [dkettle@bates.edu](mailto:dkettle@bates.edu), Maya Karmaker [dmkarmaker@bates.edu](mailto:dmkarmaker@bates.edu), Kahryn Cullenberg [kcullenberg@bates.edu](mailto:kcullenberg@bates.edu), Britny Anderson, [britnylee1@gmail.com](mailto:britnylee1@gmail.com) **Others Present:** Jeff Harmon, Kathy Shaw, Paul Jacques, Steve Beale, Camille Parish, Evan Ma, John Cleveland, Bruce Rioux, Tim Cowan, Steve Milks, Eric Cousens, John Blais, Katherine Cook, (several more). Please add if you are on the page and came to this meeting.

Eric Cousens presented slideshow

Questions and topics of discussion action items and deliverables (ordered by action):

- Funding:
  - NRCS and BMPs- Does NRCS consider that Lake Auburn is a drinking water supply in their programming?
  - How are they funding the resources? John Blais answers that the goal of the organization is to help people protect the resource.
  - Consider all things that impact the lake- Does DOT have resources/ consider the drinking water supply for the road projects on Route 4 and the surrounding roads?
  - Discussion of available funds to assist homeowners in culvert replacement. They are income tiered and applied for through the town/ city.
  - City should prioritize education and outreach about available funds and other programs for properties within the watershed.
  - What will be the cost of inspections and replacements?
  - There was debate on whether ratepayers or taxpayers or property owners should have more of a hand in paying for inspections. Watershed property owners shared that living in the watershed poses additional burden.
- Education and Outreach:
  - Question about why swimming in Lake Auburn at one side of the bridge, but not the other?
  - Discussion about what homeowners can do to make their property more environmentally friendly? Discussion of pavers and buffers and what LID practices increase water absorption and reduce nutrient runoff. Should there be impervious area limits on lots? Impose square footage impervious limits?
- Text Amendments:
  - Must decide which entity is performing the inspections.
  - Why is the limit for tree clearing 10,000 square feet in the watershed? Is this too much area to clear? Can this be amended?
  - Homesteader shared that property owners should have a time period to decide whether to pursue a larger farm permit before bans on new farms go into effect.
  - Discussion that we need to balance conservation with the people already living in the area.

- Watershed system data
  - How does current infrastructure support the protection of the lake? Must have a watershed-based plan to identify priorities including replacing culverts as needed. Watershed study is complete.
  - There is an existing data base of all septic systems in the Lake Auburn Watershed

**Notes from Preparation Community Meeting with SNRB 1/18/2024**

**Present:** Chris Carson, Jane Costlow, Mayor Jeff Harmon, Councilor Steve Milks, Councilor Tim Cowan, Dave Griswald, Ralph, Eric Cousens(staff), John Blais (staff), Katherine Cook (staff)

**Topic: Permitted and prohibited uses in the AGRP zone in the Lake Auburn Watershed Overlay District:**

- Discussion around what AGRP uses would be allowed and prohibited in the Lake Auburn Watershed. Specifically, discussion whether certain AG and natural resources and recreation uses may be allowed, like Maple sugaring, small scale animal uses like horse riding lessons, beekeeping, small veggie and berry farming, conversion of existing type of farm to another type of farm, etc. Suggestions of process to regulate include:
  - Investigate what is impacting the lake and ask for experts to work with us to protect the lake
  - Scott Williams from Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program could speak
  - Jeff Harmon-The framing of “commercial” vs. “hobby” format is not helpful. Much of the group seems to think this framing of monetary gain is irrelevant. Instead, group should; look at impact and risk:
    - Pesticides?
    - Scale?
    - Use?
    - Proximity to the lake?
    - Data: Nutrients and materials must stay on property
  - John discusses the idea of a scoring matrix to determine lake impact and corresponding treatment/ mitigation. That would allow a property owner/ regulating body to determine how much protection a given activity would require, or if the activity is too harmful based on scale and intensity of use. We should find guidelines to determine numbers for this scoring matrix.
- Significant discussion around what resources and mechanisms already exist in the state and other Maine cities and towns.
  - What does the state already regulate?
  - AGRP BMP’s? How can Auburn enforce existing and new standards?
  - Are state BMPs more or less stringent than the City of Auburn’s
  - NRCS and the Dept. Of Ag. Likely already has evaluation benchmarks and BMPs that the City of Auburn can use for the Lake Auburn Watershed Ordinance.
  - Dave Griswald suggests that there may be other scoring matrixes as John Blais suggested in use in other comparable communities.

## Topic: Subsurface Wastewater and Septic System Regulations and Inspections

- Discussion around the priority, administration, and funding of septic system replacement and inspections. Jeff Harmon emphasizes the importance of the exercise of talking the inspection process through with involved groups and the public.
  - Staff are suggesting that the systems be inspected every five years or at point of sale.
  - Jeff Harmon believes that septic inspections might be a high administrative burden amounting to more than one inspection/ working day on average. (over 270 septic systems are not to the standard).
  - Discussion of delegating this to another group that is outside of the direct city staff. Auburn must ensure that funding and resources are available. We need to determine the data/ numbers from development and septic in various conditions to determine.
- Discussion of mechanisms to make program actionable include:
  - Discussion of funding for when people's systems are failing, or they are close to the lake without the means to replace them. Possible funding through CBDG.
  - Eric suggests someone could be based in the Planning and permitting Office to do the inspections and record keeping funded by LAWPC.
  - Funding should replace systems when they fail and incentivize replacing a certain number of systems per year (for a certain number of years?) even before they fail based on proximity to the lake to improve performance and treatment.
  - Can we access 319 funds?
- Discussion of program communication:
  - Jane Costlow signals the importance of having maps and other visuals for what we are talking about (septic system, treatment, soils, proximity to lake, etc.)
    - Evan Ma, summer intern, 2022, did a great job of tracking this and wrote an informative thesis on this topic.