



Sustainability & Natural Resource Management Board

Meeting Minutes | July 13, 2023

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 in City Council Chambers.
In attendance: Ralph Harder, Chris Carson, Jane Costlow, Councilor Walker, Katherine Cook (for PB), Phil Crowell. Unable to attend for health reasons: Dave Griswold.
2. **Minutes** from the April 13, 2023 meeting will be approved at our next meeting.
3. **Public Comment** – none.
4. **New member recommendations for workgroups.**
Three people have requested to join the Sustainability Working Group: Sasha Goodwin, Chris King, and Jay Rich. Ralph moved that the three of them be approved for SWG. Jane seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Phil requested that they fill out volunteer applications and submit them to the City Clerk.
5. **Discussion of recycling and solid waste**
Phil provided several updates. A third bin for recycling materials should have arrived at public works (Gracelawn) today. Staff is working on signage, has gotten feedback from the Sustainability Working Group (SWG). Timing for pick up and replacement of bins depends on Casella. MWAC had requested that the bins be removed from their site. It has become apparent that other towns, including Minot, were using the Auburn site for recycling. People from those towns may still be coming to Gracelawn. Still getting a sense of what the dimensions of demand will be. Staff is planning to have someone on site this weekend during peak hours, and also on occasion during the week for spot checks. A camera will be installed to help with illegal and inappropriate dumping. Non-Auburn residents will be turned away. Some of these issues

are arising because of having 24-7 availability; there is also some contamination in the bins from solid waste. Staff have met with Casella about monitoring contamination in the bins. Phil anticipates that with three bins things should be fine. There was brief discussion of the potential for additional recycling locations: Edward Little has always been well-run and clean, but is not open to public. Ralph wondered if it would be possible to expand the number of drop-off sites. Phil reported that while the city would like to explore having a second site, they first want to get the new process under control. South Main Fire Station might be good location. Ralph suggested the possibility of having volunteers help with educating the public about what can and can't be recycled.

Curbside options for composting were also discussed. Phil noted that the city is looking into this, and that it may be part of RFPs for the city's next solid waste contract. Phil is having conversations with Biddeford & South Portland about how they put together RFPs to include composting. The RFP needs to be ready by December 1. The current contract for solid waste expires March of 2024. Chris asked about what if anything Casella tells us about what is most lucrative for them in the recycling market, and whether there might be advantages to targeting those items for collection.

SWG will take the lead on the recycling and composting questions. The need to have designated staff person to make sure to get the data we need was noted. Phil will get a staff name to Ralph.

There was some discussion about how citizens can report unsightly and illegal dumping, and whether it might be possible to publicize such information on the city website?

Finally, the city also will be contracting with an independent company to do cleanup at illegal and unauthorized camp locations; he noted the need for people who are trained and equipped to deal with various forms of hazardous waste.

6. **Net Energy Billing Credits Agreement with Eagle Creek Report.** The city is receiving credits from Hackett Mills Hydro under the energy credit initiative. Phil distributed a handout showing where the credits are going and how they're reducing energy bills at various sites throughout the city. Hackett Mills Hydro credits are, among other things, used to keep EV charging stations free.
7. **MEVS Brown Solar Project update from Cenergy** not moving ahead, city exploring other sites, in particular landfills.
8. **EV Charging Stations.** Phil provided information on where current EV stations are sited; the city is looking at additional options, including stations for electric buses. Potential sites include the Library, the PAL center and Norway Savings Arena. The city has received \$75,880 through the Energy Efficiency and

Conservation Block Grant (partnering with DOT); a large portion of that will go to EV stations. The question was raised about who the target users of EV stations are – local residents or those passing through, perhaps to ski resorts or mountain recreations. There was also brief discussion of ways to incentivize installation of EV chargers at apartment complexes, perhaps as part of the Planning Board review process.

9. **SNRB's role in advising city decisions.** There was brief discussion of how the working groups increase public engagement about the issues we deal with and increase the public's being informed about the matters. Phil noted that he has just launched a podcast, which can be found here:

<https://absolutelyauburn.buzzsprout.com/?fbclid=IwAR1kZAt2MwoYSDokK9cBW9vYnSdUf73cOa6UpAN6PkNNDoh5-mpQkLJBwZg>

10. **Brief reports from the Working Groups on matters of interest**

- a. **Natural Products & Agriculture Working Groups Updates:**

Chris noted the many activities that the Working Group has been involved with in the last few months: supporting the Local Food Action Plan launched by GFCLA; promoting community gardens; helping to publicize City Ag grants; exploring the possibility of a local food expo, with possible connections to large institutional buyers; the ongoing GIS mapping project; and a Land Use Forum in May.

- b. **Conservation Working Group Updates:**

Jane gave an update on a project that would increase recreational access along the Little Androscoggin for paddlers, including a preliminary meeting with Jonathan LaBonte to discuss options where the city owns land that might provide access. Jane did a site visit with Ferg Lea in early May at sites off Hotel Road and Washington Street. There are funds available through the Boating Facilities Fund (at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry), for which Ferg submitted preliminary paperwork.

- c. **Community Forest Working Group Updates:**

Chris noted the brief report which Dave Griswold had submitted via e-mail: recent projects include submitting Project Canopy grants; Arbor Week planting; and SFI Urban and Community Forestry Standard Development

- d. **Sustainability Working Group Updates:** as noted above, the SWG has been busy working on solid waste and recycling issues.

Meeting adjourned at 7:39

The purpose of Auburn's Sustainability & Natural Resource Board is to advance Auburn's commitment to sustainability by serving as a research, advisory and advocacy group on environmental issues and natural resource management within the city. The SNRB is created with the purpose of improving the relationship and communication between City Council, existing committees, and staff with the aim of creating more effective organization of city sustainability efforts. Working groups of the SNRB include the: Natural Products & Agriculture Working Group, Conservation Working Group, Community Forest Working Group, and the Sustainability Working Group.