

Auburn, Maine

Conservation Commission

60 Court Street | Auburn, Maine 04210

www.auburnmaine.gov | 207.333.6601

Agenda - December 17, 2019

6:00 pm

- 1) Roll Call
- 2) Public Comment/Guest Visitors
- 3) Work Completed
- 4) Work in Progress and Subcommittee Updates
 - a) Parks/Cemeteries
 - b) Lewiston Auburn Community Forest Board
 - c) AGRP
 - d) LA Trails
 - e) Mt. Apatite Group
 - f) Strategic Plan
- 5) New Business/Commissioner Comments
 - a) Conservation Commission Logos
 - b) Upcoming Events
 - c) Event for Winter Fest
- 6) Adjourn

Next meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2020 in the Community Room at 6pm



Conservation Commission Auburn Maine <auburn.me.conservation@gmail.com>

Fwd: Fw: Another dimension of Ag Zone protection

3 messages

Sam Boss <aboss@bates.edu>

Mon, Dec 9, 2019 at 5:03 PM

To: Conservation Commission <auburn.me.conservation@gmail.com>, Maurice Keene <mrkn983@yahoo.com>, Tizz Crowley <tizzcrowley@yahoo.com>, Jane Costlow <jcostlow@bates.edu>, Rhyanna Larose <rhyannalarose@gmail.com>, Michelle Melaragno <whistleridge@roadrunner.com>

Hi all,

At Councillor Lasagna's request, I wanted to share this important message from the Royal River Conservation Trust about the value of the land in South Auburn.

Sam

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Holly Lasagna (Council)** <hlasagna@auburnmaine.gov>

Date: Mon, Dec 9, 2019 at 4:45 PM

Subject: Fw: Another dimension of Ag Zone protection

To: Sam Boss <aboss@bates.edu>

Sam,

Can you distribute this to the Conservation Commission? Not sure what can be done now in terms of the Ag. Ordinance but I think it is important to have this information and the CC seems the right place to address this.

Holly

From: Sarah Strong <sstrong@bates.edu>**Sent:** Friday, December 6, 2019 3:20 PM**To:** Holly Lasagna <lasagnho@cmhc.org>; Holly Lasagna (Council) <hlasagna@auburnmaine.gov>; Belinda Gerry <bgerry@auburnmaine.gov>; Robert Hayes (Council) <rhayes@auburnmaine.gov>**Subject:** Another dimension of Ag Zone protection

Hello Councilors,

Many thanks to all three of you for your efforts to ensure that changes in the Ag Zone ordinance are made in a way that is informed, studied and well thought out.

Someone in South Auburn, concerned about the pending ordinance changes, reached out to Alan Stearns, Executive Director of the Royal River Conservation Trust asking his take on the debate in Auburn as a conservationist in a watershed with origins in South Auburn. He responded with the following (see below). I feel his perspective adds an additional to dimension to the debate, and wanted to pass his words on to you. (Perhaps you have encountered this from other sources.)

Gratefully,
Sarah Strong

The Royal River Conservation Trust has followed with interest -- but at a distance -- recent zoning dialog in the City of Auburn.

A significant portion of the Royal River and its watershed located within the City of Auburn has benefited from Auburn's current rural zoning. Low-intensity zoning has governed vast blocks of forest and habitat, and resulted in only low levels of development or threat near streams, wetlands, and riparian zones that benefit both Auburn and also downstream or adjacent communities and ecosystems.

Ironically or counter-intuitively, the deflated values of the land in Auburn and the lack of recent development threat due to current Auburn zoning all contribute to the anomaly that Auburn's portion of the Royal River watershed benefits from extraordinarily low amounts of permanent conservation protections. That lack of permanent conservation protection is concerning, and should be concerning in any scenario moving forward.

Maine DIFW's Beginning with Habitat program uses the term "undeveloped habitat blocks" to describe blocks that today are relatively intact, not fragmented by roads or development. Different species of wildlife require different scales of habitat. https://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/the_maps/map3-undev_habitat.html

These blocks are easily viewed here, by town, with acreages.

<https://webapps2.cgis-solutions.com/beginningwithhabitat/map3/>

The simple fact is that southern-most Auburn's mapped undeveloped habitat blocks (typically overlapping with New Gloucester or Durham forests) stand out as regionally significant, through a simple prism of acreage, and more so when considering the lack of permanent protections of most land in these blocks. Considering the proximity of other large blocks (typically separated only by rural low-volume roads easily crossed by wildlife, some still gravel), the significance of the habitat is greater.

The mapped 2708-acre habitat block in Auburn (mostly) and New Gloucester and Durham surrounding Meadow Brook stands out as notable, and proximate to other notable blocks in southern Auburn, Durham, Pownal, and New Gloucester. While most of my organization's recent work has been in Durham, Pownal, and New Gloucester, we are driven by a realization that the forests and streams in this intersection of towns is among the last remaining opportunity for large-scale conserved green spaces in the triangle created by growing Portland, growing L-A, and growing Brunswick. The Town of Gray has a comparable opportunity which is the subject of dialog by municipal leaders.

I use the term "regionally significant" in the context of RRCT's work in towns to the south of Auburn. Certainly Auburn's forests are significant in the context of the Royal River watershed, greater Portland towns, Cumberland County, and southern-most Androscoggin County. Certainly areas of Maine that are north of Auburn retain vastly larger habitat blocks.

My impression is that the City has proposed proactive steps to protect agricultural values, even if zoning is amended. I would ask whether the City has proposed or would consider comparable proactive steps to protect habitat and riparian values -- especially the protection of large unfragmented habitat blocks.

The nature and extent of the "steps" or "tools" I leave for others, or invitations for further dialog. Certainly rezoning creates an opportunity for teamwork or collaboration to secure permanent protections. Failure of rezoning, similarly, would create need for dialog. Certainly RRCT and other land trusts are prepared to come to the table with the tools we use and our proven track record of success.

Thanks,

Alan



**Royal River
Conservation Trust**

Alan Stearns, Executive Director

P.O. Box 90, 325 Main Street | Yarmouth, ME 04096

www.RRCT.org | Alan@RRCT.org | (207) 215-8315 (cell); (207) 847-9399 (desk)

[Preserves & Trails](#) | [Conserved Working Farms](#) | [Access for All People](#)

Sarah M. Strong

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sstrong@bates.edu

<http://www.bates.edu/asian/faculty/japanese/strong-sarah-m/>

Please visit my "Maine Haiku Almanac" at:

<https://mainehaikualmanac.wordpress.com/>

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Sam Boss, Ph.D.
Assistant Director of Community-Engaged Learning and Research
Harvard Center
Bates College
207-786-8319

Conservation Commission Auburn Maine <auburn.me.conservation@gmail.com>

Mon, Dec 9, 2019 at 6:02 PM

To: Sam Boss <aboss@bates.edu>

Thank you Sam,

I will include this in our agenda packet for this month's meeting.

Jordan

[Quoted text hidden]

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Conservation Commission
City of Auburn, Maine

Michelle Melaragno <whistleridge@roadrunner.com>

Mon, Dec 9, 2019 at 9:00 PM

To: aboss@bates.edu

Cc: rhyannalarose@gmail.com, jcostlow@bates.edu, mrkn983@yahoo.com, tizzcrowley@yahoo.com, auburn.me.conservation@gmail.com

Sorry - I thought I had forwarded this to all Conservation Commission members as well, but I guess not!

The email below from Alan Stearns was sent to me after a lengthy & informative phone call I had with him and our subsequent email exchange.

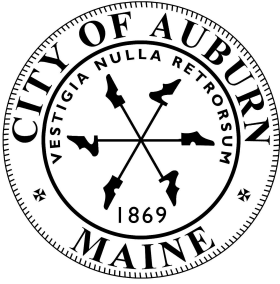
In addition to the AGRP Zone discussion, I inquired about the work and events of the RRCT. They seem to have an active following and a dedicated group of volunteers. They regularly host hikes along the Royal River and other community educational events. These seem in line with some of the ideas our group shared, so maybe we can tap into their experience of hosting/planning events and generating interest/involvement. Since we've discussed having speakers, I did mention it to him. He's quite willing to come speak to the group if we are interested.

Alan said the RRCT has had NO involvement from anyone in Auburn, or regarding Auburn property along the Royal, until last year's donation of land from the Fralich family. They are New Gloucester residents, but about 25 acres of the land they donated is in Auburn. He is interested in generating some involvement from Auburn residents to help support the work of RRCT, and to add Auburn to the list of towns actively protecting the Royal.

Thank you,
Michelle

Sent from my Verizon Motorola Droid

[Quoted text hidden]



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Conservation Commission

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Minutes- November 19, 2019

- 1) Roll Call
 - a) Called to order at: 6:05pm
 - b) Present: Jordan Tate, Maurice Keene, Sam Boss, Tizz Crowley, Jane Costlow, Michelle Melarango
 - c) Absent: Rhyanna Larose
 - d) Staff: Tony Beaulieu
 - e) Guests: Paula Everett and Suzanne Roy
- 2) Public Comment/Guest Visitors
 - a) Paula and Suzanne came to talk about parks
 - b) Looking at potential overlap between parks and rec board and conservation commission parks subcommittee
 - c) Conservation Commission Parks subcommittee inactive but would be interested in collaborating. Tizz will schedule a parks subcommittee meeting in January
 - d) Sam Boss reiterated need to improve information sharing with other boards and city staff. Potentially add them onto minutes and agendas distribution
- 3) Work Completed
 - a) Tizz motioned to take items out of order, seconded by Jordan, unanimously approved
 - b) Met with Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission staff Lauren Olsen to discuss opportunities for collaboration and citizen science ideas
 - c) Attended Big Three Watershed FERC Relicensing Workshop
- 4) Work in Progress and Subcommittee Updates
 - a) Parks/Cemeteries: none
 - b) Lewiston Auburn Community Forest Board: none
 - c) AGRP
 - i) Tizz: current draft ordinance doesn't protect watershed overlay. LAWPC passed a resolve in spring that any changes do not apply to watershed overlay district, in order to protect the water filtration waiver. Tizz suggests the Conservation Commission create a resolve in addition to support the LAWPC's resolve.

- (1) Overlay meaning where ever AGRP intersects the watershed protection
 - ii) LAWPC had not heard back from the City since April on the resolve
 - iii) Sam expressed concerns that if we issue support for the resolve, it could subject the remainder of the zone to more substantial change/effects
 - iv) Letter from the Conservation Commission supporting protecting surface water quality and drinking water quality, and deferring to the LAWPC as the body of knowledge for how to best do that. (maybe also reference survey). To send it to commissioners for review
 - (1) Jordan motioned
 - (2) Sam seconded
 - (3) Unanimously approved
 - d) LA Trails: none
 - e) Mt. Apatite Group: none
 - f) Other
- 5) New Business/Commissioner Comments (Open session for future agendas)
 - a) Vote on officer roles
 - i) All nominated have been elected by unanimous decision for one year terms
 - ii) Jordan Tate re-elected as chair
 - iii) Rhyanna Larose re-elected as vice-chair
 - iv) Jane Costlow elected as secretary
 - v) Sam Boss elected as Treasurer
 - b) Strategic Planning 2020-2024
 - i) Add distribution list to strategic plan
 - ii) Come up with a way of communicating
 - iii) Inform the public on what natural resources are generally and specifically in auburn
 - c) Upcoming Events
 - i) Festival of lights participation? December, 150th event
 - ii) Winter festival
 - (1) ALT snowshoe walk-winter shrub ID
 - (2) Bird club walks
 - (3) PARks and rec coordination
 - (4) Revisit at December meeting
 - d) An "alert the commission" on the website for members of the public to bring to our awareness
 - e) Homework assignment
 - i) Re-evalutate our ordinance changes and then resubmit after any changes
 - f) Solar in AGRP Zone
 - i) On city's agenda
 - ii) Potential to move quickly
 - iii) Should/How to get involved

- iv) Maurice suggests establishing workgroup for renewable energy in long term
- 6) Adjourn
- 7) Jordan motioned to adjourn, sam seconded, unanimous

Next meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2019 in the Community Room at 6pm