



Auburn, Maine

Conservation Commission

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Minutes - Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Called to order at 6:04 via Zoom

1) Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Sam Boss, Jane Costlow, Tizz Crowley, Rhyanna Larose, Amy Dieterich, Michelle Melaragno

Commissioners Absent: Ian Campbell (excused)

Guests: Chris Carson; Dave Griswold (Community Forest Board); Ed Friedman (Friends of Merrymeeting Bay).

2) Public Comment

Ed Friedman gave a brief update on the bill to upgrade the Androscoggin to Class B, and a recent meeting with waste water treatment staff from towns along the river (up to Mechanic Falls), Rep. Nate Libbey & Sen. Ned Claxton. No public hearing is scheduled as yet. Ed's group regards this as a "non-discretionary upgrade."

Sam asked for clarification on DEP's position on re-classification; Ed noted that DEP will be part of an upcoming follow-up meeting with waste water staff.

Rhyanna asked what role major (100-year) floods might play in considerations on waste water; Ed responded that flooding events like that do not get factored into classification (waste water regulators get an exemption in those situations).

Regarding the other bill in Augusta, revisiting ESA classification [LD883], Ed gave a brief overview for commissioners who were not at the February meeting, and explained that there are management tools that could be used to increase the likelihood that salmon would spawn; state listing drives the management plan. Ed offered an opinion regarding why, in the 1990's, parties were against listing Atlantic salmon, primarily connected to the fear that major employers might have to shut down. Rhyanna asked whether the salmon fish farming industry had also played a role in the decision. Ed answered probably not, given that all the salmon farms are off shore in ocean waters. Dave noted that private landowners and the Sustainable Forestry organization have done lots of work voluntarily to improve culverts.

Commissioners thanked Ed for his presentation and continued discussion of the two issues.

Amy will develop a short resolution on reclassification of the river for the Commission to vote on in April. Jane will investigate the salmon reclassification issue and asked commissioners to send her questions they might like more information about. Commissioners will discuss the issue at the April meeting.

3) Amy moved to approve the February meeting minutes as amended; Rhyanna seconded. The minutes were approved on a roll call vote, with Tizz abstaining.

4) Work Completed/Updates. Commissioners reported on work completed on issues of concern.

Sam has been in touch with Sean Seary from LAWPC regarding ongoing work around invasive species and plans for an informational walk. He has also been hearing from Sabrina Best, who would be happy to build collaboration between the Commission and Parks and Rec. They are interested in making improvements to the Tot Lot, hoping to make it a welcoming space for families. They would like to have a member of the Conservation Commission join that working group; Tizz said she would be happy to participate.

Sam also reached out to Brian Wood about neighborhood clean-up and the possibility to coordinate local activities with Earth Day. While there was enthusiasm for this idea, there was also realization that the Earth Day date will be upon us at the next meeting. Individual commissioners will see what they might undertake in their own neighborhoods.

Amy had agreed to take on two topics:

1) Tracking ongoing legislative matters. Amy reported that the Natural Resources Council of Maine has a terrific bills tracker, and picked out a few to highlight: on the Androscoggin upgrade, once there's a hearing we could think about offering testimony in support. She also plans to keep an eye on LD437, a healthy soils program (promoting healthy sustainable habitat), and finally LD324, a bill that would limit public land ownership in Maine, a topic that seems very pertinent to our charge. The proposed bill would place limits on the amount of land that can be put into conservation, and could be a strong impediment to conservation if passed.

2) look at our ordinance. She hasn't yet had a chance to do this.

Jane: Reported that she had passed on Dave Griswold's concept for a Conservation Commission logo to Liz at City Hall; hopefully we will be able to discuss it at our April meeting.

Tizz: National Walk in the Park day will be March 30. Tizz will send information and particulars to Jane to get to Liz for broader distribution. Decoration/Memorial Day will also be coming up in cemeteries; flags will need to be placed, the Conservation Commission may be able to help. Tizz noted that it might be possible to schedule a walk

on Memorial Day itself, and to sponsor a planter project for Oak Hill Cemetery, also connected to Memorial Day?

Rhyanna: Hopes to have more information on Fishing Days in collaboration with Dag's.

6) Subcommittee/Related Interests Updates

a) Community Forest Subcommittee Update (Dave Griswold).

The CFS will sponsor Story Walk during the Month of May. Rosemary Moser is helping Dave to get several maps ready, including the location of public woodlots, street trees and trees of particular significance.

Friday last week a grant proposal to Project Canopy was submitted, requesting \$8,000 for 12 Autumn Gold ginkgo trees to be planted on the open median on Washington Street. The city provides a match in the form of planning and a year's worth of maintenance.

Tizz asked whether it would be possible to have a Memorial Tree program in Auburn. Dave suggested that perhaps next year a COVID-19 memorial grove could be planted. In response to question from Sam, there is no budget for trees in Auburn budget, all planting is supported by grants.

There was brief discussion of the possibility of highlighting some of the amazing work of the Forest Board in various local newspapers.

b) Updates on relevant community partners' work

Travis Sparks from the ALT board will be looking over Conservation Commission minutes to see if there are areas of potential collaboration.

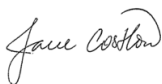
7) New Business and Upcoming Agenda Items. None.

8) Upcoming Events

Tizz reminded the Commission that Farmers' Market starts in May, and that we might consider hosting a table.

Tizz: moved to adjourn; Amy seconded. Adjourned at 7:47.

Respectfully submitted,



Jane Costlow (Secretary)