



Auburn, Maine
Conservation Working Group
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Minutes of the March 15, 2022 meeting

Community Room, Auburn Hall

The meeting was called to order at 6:06

1. Roll Call

Commissioners present: Sam Boss, Dave Griswold, Adam Platz, Jane Costlow, Rhyanna LaRose

Members of the public: Chris Carson, Neria Douglass

2. Gracelawn rezoning

Item 6 on the agenda was shifted so that Ms. Douglass could share her concern regarding the Gracelawn rezoning.

Ms. Douglass was on the City Council in the mid-90's when concerns arose regarding methane leaking from city dump. According to documents at the DEP website, Auburn city managers in the 90's considered but ultimately decided against applying for EPA superfund status. There is a long history of dumping waste at the site, including from shoe factories in 30's and 40's. Ms. Douglass expressed her concern about hazardous materials and heavy metals that may be buried there, and what the impact might be of filling the property, whether that might change the hydrology. The Commission discussed possible ways we might convey her concerns to the City Council.

Rhyanna made a motion, seconded by Adam and passed unanimously, that Sam would draft a letter from the Conservation Working Group regarding concerns about the Gracelawn property, based on Jane's notes from the committee discussion.

3. February minutes

These will be reviewed at next month's meeting.

4. Updates & Discussion

Sam reported briefly on the newly created Sustainability and Natural Resource Management Board, and expressed his hope that the new structure will give us more flexibility and breadth.

Sam asked Commission members to think about who might be good to bring onto the Conservation Commission.

Dave reported that there were approximately 35 people on the Browntail Moth webinar with Alison Kanoti, and approximately 12 for the in-person training event at the Auburn Mall parking lot.

5. Planning/Work in Progress

a. Great Falls Dam FERC relicensing

Sam gave a brief update on the status of studies proposed by Brookfield in response to community requests. For the most part Brookfield has agreed to requests. He noted that some questions have been raised about the canals and the extent to which they're part of the project.

b. Little Androscoggin and Littlefield Dam

Sam reported on exciting opportunities for funding the dam's removal. It is anticipated that funds will be released in the next 4 – 5 months, at which point applications could be submitted. Sam also noted discussions with a representative from NOAA, Bjorn Lomberg, and a site visit to the dam with various NGO and government representatives. There was general discussion about what additional considerations might be needed in restoring that stretch of river, including pursuing conversations with nearby landowners. It was decided that the best approach would be to convene a small group to work on the project. There was also brief discussion of a possible paddle on the Little Andy this summer, in connection with the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act.

c. Earth Day events

There was brief brainstorming about Earth Day events, including community clean-up, and possible tours of MWAC, which Dave will look into.

6. Discussion of policy items from Planning Board, City Council, and State Legislature

Dave made a quick update on the proposed Street Tree ordinance. He has talked with Councilors Whiting and Staples, who brought it to Phil to get into a Council workshop.

Dave made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Rhyanna.
The meeting adjourned at 8:04.