

Policy Committee Meeting Minutes
City of Auburn JLUS
For Area Surrounding
Mount Apatite Recreation Area &
Maine Army National Guard Training Facility
Held at AUBURN HALL
On February 13, 2013
from 4-6 p.m.

Introductions:

Kat Beaudoin, IPS Team Project Manager, opened the meeting with introductions. IPS Project Team members included: Beth Della Valle and Patty Castonguay. Policy Committee members present included: John Blais and Lane Wiggin of MEARNG, Eric Cousens, City of Auburn, Kevin Norcross representing the Andy Valley Sno Gypsies, Carol Segal representing Mount Apatite Farm, Frank Piffath, a resident on Mine Road, Phil Savignano representing Auburn Recreation Advisory Committee, Jeff Benson representing Auburn Suburban Little League, Dana Little representing Taylor Pond Association and the Androscoggin Land Trust, Ann Martel, resident of Cedarwood Road, Stephen Bouchard, resident of Pond Crest Lane. Absent were Policy Committee members Mary LaFontaine representing Ward 3 Council and Mike Peters representing Mac's Grill. Others in attendance included: John Ackerman, Gary Haskell, Richard Paul and Marcel Gagnon.

Overview:

Kat introduced our new Policy Committee members, Ann Martel and Steve Bouchard and provided an overview of the agenda. She asked if everyone had time to review the minutes of the January 9th meeting. It was noted that the minutes incorrectly stated that the high usage time for National Guard Training coincided with high usage time for the Ball Fields. The minutes were corrected to note that Little League high season is from April thru June.

Presentation for the Auburn Suburban Little League was given by Jeff Benson

Auburn Suburban Little League has been a fixture in the community for over 55 years providing opportunities for boys and girls to play baseball and softball. The

2012 season saw ASLL offer 20 teams for baseball and 11 teams for softball servicing 370 kids. The facilities at ASLL include:

- (1) Senior Field(Austin Field) used for baseball by Babe Ruth, 9th, JV and Varsity teams from EL as well as Auburn Middle School, AAU, Over 30, Twi-Light League, Legion and also serves as home field for CMCC. Only lighted baseball field in the city.
- (2) Other baseball diamonds exist in the city, Pettengill Park and St. Doms, but are limited in their availability due to weather conditions, field conditions and access during the summer.
- (3) Major Baseball Field(Benson Field) is used by Little League teams
- (4) Major Softball Field (Sweetser Field) is used by Little League softball teams, EL, Auburn Middle School and travel teams.
- (5) (1) Minor Baseball Field on the right side of the complex which is owned by the city is used for baseball.
- (6) (1) Minor Softball Field on the right side of the complex is also owned by the city and is used for softball. During the fall these two fields have been used as practice sites for soccer and football.

These fields are all maintained by ASLL. ASLL has been at the complex since 1990-91. Press boxes at the three fields and dugouts at all five fields add to the value of the fields. Storage areas either under the press boxes or in the press box itself are utilized in the off season. Maintenance garage houses the equipment used to maintain the grounds. Large two story building used for concessions and restroom facilities on the first floor with storage for equipment and a meeting room on the second story is the center for all activities during the season.

The fields serve an important role as they function daily for the schools from April through June and for ASLL nightly from April through the first of July. Due to the excellent site work these fields are the first to be played on in the city during the spring. When looking at the impact of the populations that use ASLL from the schools, outside leagues and ASLL itself, the impact is over 500 players who use the fields. ASLL has a rich history and tradition in the baseball and softball realms in Maine, and has hosted State Tournaments, District Tournaments and charity events.

Parking lot accommodates 50-75 cars with room for an additional 25-30 cars towards the minor league fields.

John Blais suggested that the study consider the economic impact to the City from the people who visit and play at the ball fields. Eric Cousens noted that some baseball families may not have considered answering the survey thinking it may only apply to the hiking trails/mines. Only 12% who responded so far have stated that they were there for baseball. Eric will forward a link to Jeff and he will make sure it gets out to baseball families.

Presentation on behalf of Taylor Pond Association was given by Dana Little.

- They have a Board and their annual meeting is in July of each year
- They have been monitoring water quality since 1974.
- Taylor Pond is most vulnerable to phosphorous caused by poor land management practices from nonpoint source pollution.
- Laid out trails in the late 1980's
- Goals: Improve public knowledge regarding Mt. Apatite about park signage, parking and trails. Improved some trails, expanded others. Long term protection, conservation easements. Good watershed – Pond – Best Management Practices - connected to other open spaces in the City
- 17' deep (MEAN), 40' deepest, great for use, but not cold water fishery
- Oxygen depletion occurs below 5 meters makes it prone to algae, unpleasant fish kills are possible.
- BMP's for timber harvesting and development to help preserve the quality of the watershed.
- When asked what he meant by a potential threat to the road, Dana suggested there had been a past proposal for a road connection through the area.

Presentation on the Androscoggin Land Trust (ALT) was given by Dana Little

- They promote the Androscoggin Greenway a conservation education, outdoor recreation and appreciation of our natural heritage.
- ALT first came together in 1987 to protect 1990 acres of river frontage in Turner.

- Over the next 6 years ALT secured 4 grants from the Land for Maine's Future program to create the Androscoggin Riverlands State Park which has 2,675 acres.
- They currently manage over 34 different parcels of land located along the Androscoggin River from the Jay and Canton area down to Lisbon and Bowdoin.
- When the City of Lewiston wished to develop industrial land near the turnpike entrance they had to mitigate their filling of a wetland. The Trust received the Garcelon Bog as compensation for the loss of wetlands to the turnpike project and placed it in permanent protection.
- They are currently working on their largest project ever to permanently protect over 1300 acres of land in Jay and Canton along the river.
- ALT raises money primarily through the Land for Maine's Future Fund, willing landowners, private endorsements and individuals.
- They have also received lands as wetland mitigation compensation in Auburn, Buckfield, Lewiston and Sabattus. They protect the water supply for Lewiston
- They are currently working on obtaining a 1200 acre parcel in Jay.

John Ackerman is willing to loan the City the illustrations that he did in the past for this effort.

Discussion:

1. Mt. Apatite used to have good low bush blueberries
2. In the past there was a problem with mining that went beyond a hobby with vehicles driving up to the area. It is good that the MEARNG closed off the road to cars, etc.
3. When the city looks at signage, they will need to take into consideration what the Androscoggin Land Trust is providing for signage. The City of Auburn is budgeting funds for signage.
4. Land Swap considerations? Is Garfield Road the best access or would Minot Road make a better entrance? Would there be an entrance on Hatch Road? Want to maintain continuity to the North. Will there be another way for the public to access the Park/Facilities/Trails than the ones that currently exist? Is there any way to eliminate military vehicles using the current access?

- The Department of Defense may have funds available for a compatible use buffer program. It is the same funding channel as this project uses.
- The 27 Acres where the ball fields exist are owned by the federal government. The MEARNG, built the fields and intended to have a land exchange with the City. It did not happen due to the wet lands mitigation. That delayed the exchange. When the project was started there were no restrictions, but they came into play during the construction phase of the project. John Ackerman stated that when the ball fields were built they tried to put them in the sandy area and leave the wetlands intact, so only a couple of acres were actually affected. It would make sense to have the ball fields be in City ownership.
- We need to involve the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) before a land swap could be done. They are the “real estate agents” for federal land. There is a fee for their services. Eric asked if the City may approach the ACOE without incurring a bill? At this point we are not sure what a land swap would entail. Would they use the current appraised value of the improved ball fields, or would they use the valuation that the land had before the improvements were made? MEARNG has no control over what the ACOE determines. Kat asked Eric to see if the City wants to pursue a conversation with the ACOE. Eric and John will check with their supervisors to see if they want them to go forward with the conversation with the ACOE. The Policy Committee was supportive of the City doing this as a next step so we will be better able to understand available options.
- Dana asked if a land swap would affect the trail system. John Blais stated that any existing trails would not necessarily end with a land swap. MEARNG would need to see what restrictions the City would like to have in place before a determination could be made.
- Kat suggested that we try to locate older aerial photos of the area.
- Jeff Benson noted that originally there were only 2 ball fields, but a third was added for softball.

Beth did a presentation showing the Preliminary Data – Demographics /Physical conditions of the area. The City will post the power point to the web site.

There were no questions on the Fact Sheet that was distributed.

Eric provided some details on the survey responses to date. We are trying to reach as many people as possible.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Definitely need more signage on the road to show how to access the Park and within the Park to show the trails.

Traffic concerns with people always turning around in private driveways while they are trying to locate the access point to the Park

It would be nice to have the power point with the map of deed restricted areas posted to the web site.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on March 13, 2013, at Auburn Hall in the 2nd Floor Conference Room.