

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 March 13, 2013
from 4-5:45 p.m.

Introductions:

Beth Della Valle, IPS Project Team member 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, Mary LaFontaine representing Ward 3 Council, Carol Segal representing Mount Apatite Farm, Frank Piffath, a resident on Mine Road, Phil Savignano representing Auburn Recreation Advisory Committee, 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: Kevin Norcross representing the Andy Valley Sno Gypsies, Jeff Benson representing Auburn Suburban Little League and Mike Peters representing Mac's Grill. Others in attendance included: Frank Perham, Woodrow Thompson, and Jeffrey Morrison.

Overview:

Beth asked everyone to introduce themselves because we had guests Frank Perham and Woodrow Thompson present for this meeting to speak with us. She noted that the Agenda would need to be shortened today as our room had been booked at 6:00 p.m. and stated that the natural resource inventory would be presented at the April meeting. She asked if anyone had any thoughts on what was discussed at the February meeting if there was anything that needed to be brought before the group. No one had any comments to note.

Beth asked John Blais and Eric Cousens to give a brief update regarding the status of contact with the Army Corps of Engineers. John stated that the MEARNG has

submitted a Real Estate Action Plan to the Army Corps of Engineers and it is in their hands now. To date there has been no response. The packet included maps of the area and showed the parcels of land involved.

Frank Perham spoke to the committee

- Frank has over 60 years of mining experience. He graduated from Bates College and is a geologist.
- He feels very strongly that Mt. Apatite should remain open to the public. He owns a few quarries that he keeps open to the public. He does have a few rules: “no fires and don’t fall into the pit”.
- It is upsetting to him when he hears there may be “possible encumbrances to access” of any mine or quarry and warned us that **“if you change the use and infringe on public access, it will be lost forever”**.
- Mt. Apatite truly is just a bump on a topography map, but it is a **national treasure**. He has been coming to Mt. Apatite since the 1950’s. He isn’t sure if Auburn is truly aware of it, but a silent minority does know what a treasure it is.
- He hopes the city realizes that it costs money for people to get there and that they do spend money in the area while they are here. They buy gas and eat in local restaurants.
- There is another place to go for mining and mineral collecting. Poland Mining Camps; it is private not public and you have to pay to get access.
- **He felt that if any of changes are made to the Mt Apatite Park include mining restrictions , the public will never get the same access back again.**

Woodrow Thompson of the Maine State Geological Survey spoke next:

- He has been collecting minerals since he was a kid.
- Geological features of Mt. Apatite contains pegmatites, quartz, feldspar and mica. It was economically feasible to mine for feldspar because there were large pieces of it. There are also pegmatite rocks, some of which are highly enriched ones like tourmaline. Mineral deposits have historical significance. Some world class specimens from Mt. Apatite can be found in museums and private collections around the world.

- He said we used to have plenty of open places to mine but as a result of liability and development many of these locations have been closed to the public. The access is steadily decreasing.
- Mt Apatite is a multiple use property. It is not just for mineral collectors. However, there are opportunities for mineral collecting for students and hobbyists. It is important to keep that opportunity available.
- The dumps have been well picked over. Mining usually utilizes blasting to get underneath the surface. That would be dangerous. He wondered if it would be possible for the City to have patches of the waste areas turned over because he was sure that many minerals would be uncovered. It could work wonders to expose the minerals that we are not currently allowed to dig deep for. Eric will inquire with the City to see if it would be possible to have that done. He wondered if any local mineral clubs might be interested in helping fund the project. Someone mentioned that it may be a good training opportunity for the MEARNG.
- Tourmaline is found in Maine and California and only a handful of locations in Maine have the mineralization of Mt. Apatite. Purple tourmaline from Mt. Apatite is the most desirable. If anyone would like to look at photos, go to www.mindat.org. Some really rare minerals are only visible with a microscope. He closed by repeating Frank Perham's warning that **we need to be aware that any limited access will never come back to public use.**

Phil Savignano gave a presentation for the Auburn Parks and Recreation Advisory Board:

- They are an Advisory Board that meets once a month.
- They review existing programs of the Parks and Recreation Department and the planning of revised, supplementary or new programs to meet the present and future needs of the City.
- They coordinate the existing programs and facilities with volunteer and charitable organizations and those of other government facilities.
- They develop recommendations for more efficient use of the present facilities and personnel.
- They investigate federal, state and private programs for financial assistance and the development of recommendations regarding participation in such programs.

- The City acquired the 300 acres that includes Mt. Apatite in the early 1970's as an open space for future recreational use. It was intended to be a green space.
- The development of the area has been minimal since its purchase. The city received a \$2,500.00 grant in 1976 for construction of snowmobile trails, a snowmobile shelter and sanitary facilities. The effort was coordinated with the Andy Valley Snow Gypsies Snowmobile Club because they had an interest in the development of inter-city snowmobile trails.
- In 1993 a timber harvest was done. No future harvests are planned at this time.
- In 2005, the Maine Conservation Corps performed general trail maintenance, culvert repair and applied trail tread material.
- In 2011, Cub Scout Pack 111 won a National Conservation Award for their work improving a 100 foot section of wet trail with ditching, stone lining and timbers.
- On-going maintenance of brush cutting, tree trimming and trail maintenance is done by the snowmobile club and volunteers.

The Advisory Committee's main area of concern is access to the park and how it can be improved. They would like to see the park used in the same manner it is now: hiking, biking, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, walking, etc. **It is their hope that these uses are not inhibited when site improvements are undertaken.**

The challenges they have in taking care of the property stem from the fact that they do not have adequate resources to care for the park/trails as needed. They have relied on volunteers and the snowmobile club to perform maintenance tasks in the park.

February Minutes

Beth asked if there were any questions or concerns about the February minutes. They were approved with no corrections.

Open House Discussion

- We need to set a date(s) for an open house. It was decided that a weekday evening sometime during the weeks of May 13th or May 20th is the best

time. The City and consultants will check the community calendar to avoid conflicts in dates with major community activities. Also decided that a central location for the forum would be better than an outlying site.

- As a group, we need to come up with something to show the public before we have an open house
- Several formats: **A** Trade show, **B** Issues Booths, **C** Engaging Visitors we need to determine which format, or combo of formats to use.
- Do we need an Open House? We asked people to do a survey and have invited them to meetings? (The purpose of the Open House is to give a preliminary look at recommendations in the plan.)
- Need to have issues identified before we have forum.
- Consider opening and closing the open house with some sort of presentation
- May not be worth the time to create new power points, but could have old power points on continuous loop for visitors to look at
- How to gather feedback? More structured? Sticky Notes? General Suggestion box? Blank sheets for comments?
- Have copies of Survey Monkey for them to complete, or have laptops set up for people to do at the open house
- How to announce? Add to the list of suggestions, announcements at Public Meetings and posters at access sites at Mt. Apatite and other city locations like Auburn House, schools, libraries, bike clubs. Also send notices to Committee members and they will distribute them to groups they are associated with.

Discussion:

1. Jeff Morrison mentioned that some of the items that have come out of Mt. Apatite have actually been very valuable. He believes that there is a piece of tourmaline from Mt. Apatite in the Smithsonian.
2. Frank Piffath asked Frank Perham if he knew if, in the past, the Mine Road was the main access point to Mt. Apatite. Mr. Perham said he didn't know, ever since he has been coming (1950's) he has always used the National Guard entrance to access the Park. Frank Piffath stated that he has a map from 1919 that shows the Mine Road as the main access road to the Park. Jeff Morrison stated that he believes they would have gone through the Hatch Road because they were bringing the materials to the railroad for shipping.

3. Frank Piffath mentioned that he goes out with a screen and water to look for minerals and stones.
4. Frank Perham mentioned that in the 1920's, someone who worked at Mt. Apatite went into his father's place and told him how when they were mining for feldspar, they found a huge quartz deposit. They blew it up because the feldspar was more valuable. There were pink and green crystals flying everywhere. Looking back, they lost more money from blasting those crystals, than they ever made mining for feldspar.
5. There used to be a fire pit, lean-to, and outhouse on Mt. Apatite but they were destroyed. Only the base of the outhouse remains.
6. There used to be a nice stone sign at the entrance to the Park, but it was destroyed during the hunting season following the fire pit, lean-to and outhouse vandalism.
7. It would be a good training exercise for the MEARNG to use their heavy equipment to turn over the dump site.
8. The land between the ball fields and Minot Road doesn't seem to be practical for MEARNG usage.
9. Carol Segal is a caterer.
10. It would be nice to have a list of what we have already decided to do.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on April 10, 2013, at Auburn Hall in the 2nd Floor Conference Room.

The next meeting will be extended! We will begin at 3:30 and end at 6:30.