

Sustainability & Natural Resources Management Board

Minutes: October 2, 2025

Attending:

Community Forest Working Group:	Dave Griswold
Conservation Working Group:	Jane Costlow
Natural Products & Agriculture Working Group:	Kathy Shaw & Chris Carson
Sustainability Working Group:	Brian Cullen
Mayor's Representative:	none
City Council Representative:	Tim Cowan
Planning Board Representative:	Bob Hayes
Staff:	Eric Cousens
Guests:	None

Recorder: Chris Carson

Call to Order: 6:02pm

1. Meeting call to order/introductions

2. Minutes

- a. July 10 minutes were approved

3. Update on Solid Waste, Recycling & Organic Waste

- a. Organic waste: Garbage to Gardens
 - i. Weekly collection at 21 school facilities
 - ii. 2 drop off locations are in place ("public works" and "engine 2" open for dropoff)
 - iii. Slow rollout for school facilities
 - iv. 2nd phase: park ave, walton, east auburn

- v. 3rd phase remaining schools
- vi. Most schools have started composting at least kitchen scraps (some are composting student meals)
- vii. Chris Pearcy is spearheading the Garbage to Gardens program
- viii. Future curbside pickup?
- b. Solid waste recycling
 - i. Casella new contract
 - ii. Weekly solid waste collection
 - iii. Bi-weekly recycling - next year weekly recycling
- c. QUESTIONS:
 - i. QUESTION: ERP program questions - any update?
 - ii. QUESTION: Recycling was expanded to include glass and metal???? Is this true? The new contract says it IS accepted... has this changed?
 - iii. QUESTION: Is there a plan to promote Garbage to Gardens?
 - iv. QUESTION: Kathy: is there the potential for more dropoff locations?
 - v. QUESTION: will there be a subscription option for Garbage to Gardens?

4. Comprehensive Plan update

- a. Comprehensive plan community meeting was successful
- b. Working on vision statement - workshop to take people's responses and work them into vision statements
- c. Moving into the discussion of future land use planning
- d. Identify "growth areas" within the city (where is particular growth appropriate and not appropriate)
- e. There needs to be a "growth area" and a "no growth area" according to the state
- f. Presentations will be made to Planning Board and City Council on progress
- g. Good community input, and participation from the schools
- h. Inventory is done and available to the public
- i. Next meeting is October 28th
- j. Housing report was just done by the ad-hoc housing committee -
 - i. Key Takeaways -
 - 1. of the target of 1,300 new housing units within 5 years, housing is misaligned with the size of families.
 - 2. Auburn actually has a reasonable supply of affordable housing units

5. Proposed New Working Group Members

- a. Brian nominates Catherine Mardosa for the Sustainability Working Group. Catherine was approved by a vote of the board.
- b. Natural Products and Ag Group is putting forth Chloe Myers & Grant Roberts as new members. Chloe & Grant were approved by a vote of the board.

6. Working Group updates

a. Sustainability: Brian Cullen

- i. Brian is planning on holding a Sustainability meeting
- ii. Currently Brian is the only member of the committee
- iii. Brian is creating a Reduce, Reuse & Recycle facilities directory
 - 1. Potentially a Web resource
- iv. Catherine discussed creating a “repair cafe” as a volunteer group experience
 - 1. Jane suggested connecting with the Auburn Public Library and Donna Wallace
 - 2. Eric Cousins: The city has two neighborhood trailers with yard maintenance equipment that will be available for checkout

b. Conservation: Jane Costlow

- i. Conservation focusing energies on Pollinator Gardens (Pettengill Park) will be working with Auburn Public Library to put one there too
- ii. Major focus on recreational opportunities along Little Androscoggin River
 - 1. Dovetails with the Littlefield Dam removal
 - 2. Barker Trail rehabilitation
 - a. Bridges have been moved by large floods
 - b. Invasive maintenance
 - 3. Kathy mentioned the Soil and Water Conservation District is interested in doing an event on the Little Androsoggin

c. Community Forestry Board: Dave Griswold

- i. Since 2001 Community Forestry Board has been a joint board with Lewiston
- ii. Maine Chestnut Foundation has a program called Chestnuts Across Maine to get chestnuts out in public view (so people see them)
 - 1. Maine has the most blight resistant Chestnuts in the country
 - 2. Eva Butler represents the Maine Chapter
 - 3. CFP wants to do a project to plant Chestnut Trees behind the PAL Center
- iii. \$20,000 grant matched by the city to improve the tree nursery near lake auburn community center
 - 1. Deer fence installed
 - 2. New sign
 - 3. Established in 2016 - many trees have been used along city streets
 - 4. Approximate value of trees is \$40,000
 - 5. Diverse species - more hardwood than softwood

d. Natural Products & Agriculture: Kathy Shaw

- i. Moving forward with planning 2025 fall farm & forest tour - October 18 - 10am to 2pm
 - 1. Ten or more sites throughout the city
 - 2. Print materials are being prepared
 - 3. Trying to add a craft element at the farms
- ii. Good Food Council gave a small grant to the Natural Products & Agriculture group
- iii. Monthly meetings

7. Littlefield Dam Removal

- a. Eric Cousens
 - i. NOAA grant for Dam Removals
 - ii. Sam Boss stepped up and did a lot of work on the proposal
 - iii. 2023 application resubmitted
 - iv. Grant received \$3.5 million grant - feasibility dam and construction to remove the Littlefield Dam
 - 1. Will also look at fish passage at three smaller dams as well
 - 2. Once those dams are removed fish passage to the atlantic ocean will be possible
 - v. Little Androscoggin has been a barrier for some migratory fish
 - vi. The fisheries management plan prioritizes the Little Androscoggin
 - vii. The Lower Barker Mill Dam has some requirements to contribute to recreational
 - viii. We are at the 50% design phase
 - ix. Pioneer Plastics will provide an access road for dam removal
 - x. Martindale owns the dam and is open to having it removed
 - xi. Maybe be able to use some extra funds for fish passage to Taylor brook
 - xii. Katie Boss will be new special projects grant manager

8. Rail Trail Rehabilitation

- a. Eric Cousens
 - i. We've been awarded the money
 - ii. We have a draft design with an Engineering firm
 - iii. Expect engineering work to happen this year, construction in 2027
 - iv. Washington Street currently serves as a barrier
 - v. It will likely be paved
 - vi. 8 or 10 feet wide - similar to riverwalk

9. Officers for 2026

- a. We will check with the Working Groups to see if they have anyone interested in joining the SNRB
- b. Student representatives?

- c. New Chair: ?
- d. New Secretary: ?
- e. New officers will be elected at the January 8th meeting

10. Public Participation: None

11. Adjourn at 7:25pm. Next Meeting: January 8, 2026 6:00PM