

Hallowell Conservation Commission Meeting Notes – April 22, 2024

Hallowell Fire Station, Coos Lane, 6:30pm -- In Person.

Attendees: Rosemary Presnar, Cam Dufty, Hilary Neckles

Agenda

1. No Public comments or guests in attendance
2. Agenda Add - discussion on any actions HCC can recommend or assist with in regard to riverbank erosion on Front St after 2023 and Jan 2024 storms. Concern brought up by Jean McWilliams via email. -- Rosemary shared she and Sabrina were invited to meet with Nick Lacrasse (condo owner on Front St.) and a DEP representative he invited to tour the riverbank on April 12th. They met on Front St. and the DEP rep noted adding vegetation or erosion matting is a good interim option until a long-term plan is developed; was highly against removal of any material or existing vegetation even invasives. Sabrina was going to follow-up with the DEP rep on any next steps for a broader audience information session. HCC can assist or gather volunteers if asked by property owners.
3. Old/Ongoing Business
 - a) HCC membership – a) Malena resigned due to moving out of state with fiancé; she will be missed! Rosemary will inform Clerk’s office. b) Based on the Grassroots Fund demographic survey for representation of community, a suggestion was made that we approach residents with accessibility needs as potential HCC members; Rosemary will follow up on a lead. c) Rosemary also talked to two potential residents that may be interested in joining HCC after retiring from professional careers. d) Rosemary will repost HCC reference & background documents relevant to HCC mission and goals.
 - b) Open Space District Ordinance revision w/ORC – Council McKee noted he is reviewing backlog and HCC is on the list. He will be scheduling meetings soon.
 - c) Vaughan Brook watershed-based management plan grant application – application is due May 8 and the Steering Committee & key City stakeholders will have at least a week to review draft before their final meeting on May 2. No outstanding issues and application tasks are on track.
 - d) Berry & Howard Hill Conservation Areas – a) KLT All Accessible Trails Project: KLT presented at City of Augusta Council meeting on 4/11/24 to start promoting a timeline and fundraising plan for the trails from the Augusta and Hallowell parking areas. See Figure 1 for timeline as of 4/11. b) HCC will coordinate KLT and Matt Morrill meetings on trail routing options since the City of Hallowell access to Berry is over Stevens Commons property.
 - e) HWD on Winthrop St – PFAS free water available: initial feedback is filling area may be a bit difficult for elder or challenged residents. Needs a longer filling hose and a table to hold containers. Hilary will follow up.
 - f) Planning Board review – HCC agreed to alert Planning Board of wetland on Lot 19/54 on the April PB meeting schedule for conditional use approval for landscaping business with potential “salt shed”. Rosemary will draft email and forward for comments prior submission to Board.
4. Maine Sustainability & Water Conference feedback – a) Hilary had great feedback on her “Community-Driven Resilience Action: Getting Started” panel representing Hallowell Climate Action in regard to citizen-government partnerships and engaging underserved populations, an example being the first Hallowell/Manchester WindowDressers event. b) Several members from Grow Green & Healthy Hallowell attended the “Improving Biodiversity Yard by Yard” track and connected with a UMASS researcher on lawns and the S. Portland 100 Resilient Yard program creator.
5. “Conservation Options – A Guide to Maine Landowners” is a guide developed by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Based on our work to protect City owned “park” used property to be zoned locally as Open Space, the next step is to provide education and information to private landowners. Rosemary

will reach out to KLT and MCC to see if they want to be involved in planning a winter/spring 2024-25 event with panel discussion on the options covered in the guide.

6. April 20 Earth Day feedback – a) about 18 volunteers worked at the park and picked up trash in the downtown areas in the rain. Very little community traffic for informational tables so HCA did not even set up. They will regroup for Old Hallowell Day or another opportunity. b) highlight was the Spiral Dance Collective performance at 4pm under a sunny sky with dance, music, eagles, community, and art. Kudos to Christine Little, The River Studio, for organizing the event.
- a) HCA/2024 WindowDressers update – a) Grassroots Fund grant application for \$4k is in final reviews. b) Measurers are now out taking care of orders and Community Build will be in mid October. More details to follow.
7. Vaughan Brook Water Quality Monitoring – 2024 planning for Volunteer River Monitoring (DEP) & Stream Explorers programs. Rosemary will share dates for DEP training sessions and will publish volunteer calendar by end of May for 7 to 8 sessions between Jun and Sept. Stream Explorers will be later in August.
8. Upcoming Events...
 - [July 15](#) – Eco-Friendly, Chemical-Free Yards for People, Pets, and Pollinators (FirstLightHabitats) at City Hall Auditorium; sponsored by HCC/GGHH
 - Oct 02 – Bio-Diverse Yards/Planting for Climate Resilience (WildSeedProject); sponsored by HCC/GGHH/HCA; location TBD.

Adjourn – 8pm

Figure 1 – Howard Hill & Berry CA Universally Accessible Trail as of 4/11/2024

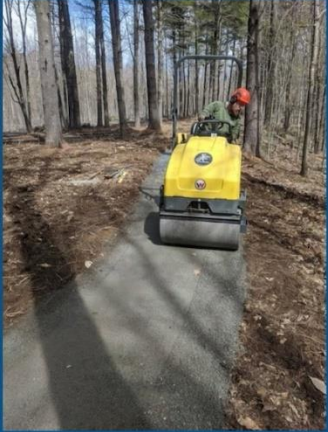
Current project tentative timeline:

2024
KLT, Cities of Augusta, and Hallowell develop scope of project, budget, fundraising plan, secure pledges from key partners.

June 2025
•submit RTP and LWCF grants
•grant apps to other foundations
•public outreach to community donors, businesses, KLT supporters

Summer/Fall 2025
City of Augusta builds parking lot off Ganneston

Late Spring/ Summer 2026
Trail construction starts



Submitted by R L Presnar

Hallowell Conservation Commission Meeting Notes – May 20, 2024

Hallowell Fire Station, Coos Lane, 6:30pm - In Person.

Present: Rosemary Presnar, Chair; Jean McWilliams; Hilary Neckles (recorder); Wes Davis, Hallowell Tree Board (Guest); Sabrina Balabuszko, Hallowell Environmental Steward (Guest)

Notes

1. **Guests:** Wes Davis, chair of Hallowell Tree Board, and Sabrina Balabuszko, Hallowell Environmental Steward, attended to inform HCC of plans to update the City Forest Management Plan.
2. **April Minutes:** adopted without changes.
3. **Hallowell Champion:** Summer issue content deadline is May 28th. Rosemary secured a \$4700 grant from the Maine Community Foundation to assist with publishing. Rosemary will follow up with Bob McIntire on environmental topics within a “Sustainable Hallowell” section. This could include articles contributed by HCC, HCA, Tree Board, Recreation Commission, Recycling Committee, etc.
4. **City Hall listserv:** Sabrina will follow up with Dep. Clerk Dan Kelley on whether the City’s Constant Contact system could be adapted to distribute regular conservation notices.
5. **Granite City Park volunteer days:** Rosemary is working on the schedule with Tree Board.
6. **City Forest Management Plan:** Sabrina is leading an effort to update the current 2012 plan for the City Forest (within the Hallowell Recreation Area) in collaboration with the Tree Board. The update will be prepared by Two Trees Forestry, the Winthrop-based business that developed the current management plan. Plan will embrace multiple-use management and net revenue from light timber harvest expected to be earmarked for needs in the Recreation Area. Sabrina suggested the plan incorporate concepts from ME Audubon’s “Forestry for Maine Birds” to ensure that forest management reflects ecological and wildlife habitat values; the town of Cumberland’s “Management Guiding Principles” for their town forests is as an example. Hilary suggested further that the plan incorporate best management practices for carbon sequestration and climate adaptation; she will provide Sabrina and Wes Davis with written guidance from the Governor’s Maine Forest Carbon Task Force and other sources. Rosemary added that the plan should also include historic preservation as needed, e.g. rock walls, granite quarry. Process: establish Hallowell relevant “guiding principles” to incorporate into any forest or park management plan; create an updated draft plan; engage public via a July/August panel discussion with Two Trees Forestry, ME Audubon, and other relevant experts. Sabrina will learn the subsequent steps for City adoption.
7. **New Members:** HCC needs a new rep to the Recreation Commission, please let Rosemary know if interested.
8. **Open Space District Ordinance revision:** Rosemary reported this is still in the Ordinance Rewrite Committee.
9. **Vaughan Brook watershed-based management plan:** Grant application to develop a Watershed Management Plan (WMP) submitted on May 3 with expected award announcements in Fall 2024. Total project cost \$64,960 (\$40,887 grant request + \$24,073 match over 2 yrs). Grant request was written by Ecological Instincts under contract for \$2650, with consultation by a volunteer Steering Committee (SC). Thanks to Rosemary, Hilary Neckles, Deb Sewall, and Judith Graber for participating on SC. If awarded, the resulting WMP would be in effect for 10 yrs.
10. **Berry Conservation Area & Howard Hill KLT All Accessible Trails:** Rosemary reported on a meeting with Matt Morrill & KLT at Stevens Commons on May 13 on possible trail routes to Berry CA from Coos Lane. The grade of the current trail is too steep for accessibility, so they are discussing

alternatives. A recent [article](#) on KLT's effort to construct a universal access trail appeared on Spectrum News.

11. **Planning Board April review:** HCC Chair submitted letter to Planning Board for alert on an existing wetland on map lot 19/54 proposal for landscaping business with "salt shed", but then learned that applicant withdrew the application.
12. **Conservation Options – A Guide to Maine Landowners:** Rosemary reached out to KLT and Manchester CC to host a regional event and panel discussion on conservation options available to private landowners, received positive response. Rosemary will also contact Litchfield Conservation Commission for interest. Please let Rosemary know if anyone is interested in coordinating the informational regional panel discussion in winter/spring 2024-25
13. **2025 Fiscal budget update:** A City Councilor is recommending to consolidate budgets for HCC and Tree Board under Recreation. HCC and Tree Board will advise against this, but rather maintaining these entities as separate budget line items. Losing line items in the budget would hinder future grant opportunities and diminish perceived value of these activities to the City, grantors, and community.
14. **Hallowell Climate Action (HCA) update:** Hilary reported that (a) the 2024 WindowDressers (WD) Community Build is currently about 80% full. A \$1,000 sponsorship has been secured from MSCU; Hilary and Rosemary will accept the check, check transfer will be photographed for joint promotion on social channels. WD volunteer signup will commence in June. (b) HCA will host a "Celebration and Community Engagement" July 31, 6-8pm, City Hall Auditorium. Live music by The Mediocre Craftsmen; heavy hors d'oeuvres; and dot exercise to engage community in prioritizing next steps for climate resiliency, which will support the City's reenrollment in the Community Resilience Partnership.
15. **Vaughan Brook Water Quality Monitoring:** Received two DO meters May 17th during onsite training from DEP coordinator Amelie Jensen. Rosemary will develop the 2024 monitoring schedule considering trade-offs involved with dividing route into two concurrent teams – allows later start while still finishing by 8am; but, creates other logistics and monitoring complexities.
16. **Rez pond monitoring plan:** Sabrina reported that Lake Stewards of Maine will create a monitoring plan.
17. **HCC annual gathering:** Rosemary will schedule end of year dinner celebration at downtown establishment, week of June 10th. The June 24th meeting is canceled.
18. **Upcoming Events**
 - June 03 – Accessibility Panel with Enoch Glidden on City Parks. Cohen Center, 5:30pm
 - June 11 – Inland Shoreline Stabilization and Erosion Best Management Practices, 5:30pm
 - [July 15](#) – Eco-Friendly, Chemical-Free Yards for People, Pets, and Pollinators (FirstLightHabitats) at HFS; sponsored by HCC/GGHH
 - July 20 – Old Hallowell Day, HCA Treasure Hunt
 - July 31 – HCA evening "Celebration and Community Engagement" July 31, 6-8pm, City Hall Auditorium
 - Aug 13 & 14 – KLT annual meeting evening walks; one will be at Berry/HH
 - Oct 02 – Bio-Diverse Yards/Planting for Climate Resilience (WildSeedProject)
 - 2025 KLT Lyceum Series – March 13, 20, and 27 – Hallowell City Hall Auditorium

Adjourned 8pm

Respectfully submitted by Hilary Neckles.