

Hallowell Conservation Commission January 17, 2022 7pm - Meeting Minutes/Zoom Call

Attendees: Rosemary Presnar, Chair; Kat Schweikert, Ben Godsoe, Maureen Drouin, Jean McWilliams, Karen Simpson, Secretary)

Minutes

1. No public comments and one addition to the agenda (Budget discussion #12)
2. December minutes approved as written, moved by Kat, 2nd Ben
3. New members - Maureen Drouin and Jean McWilliams- introduced themselves and were welcomed to the group. Jean has lived in Hallowell for 16 years and has worked on the Ped/Bike Committee and in the past worked on issues involving ownership of Clary Lake Dam. Maureen is the Director of Maine Conservation Voters. They were both sworn in at January's City Council meeting. There are still 3 open seats remaining on the Commission.
4. **Browntail Moths.** A presentation is planned at City Hall on February 2 by Tom Schmeelk of the Maine Forest Service. At the end of February or early March HCC will try to cut webs in heavily affected neighborhoods and public spaces. We will update our door cards from last year as we get more info from MFS. Rosemary will order additional cards as needed.
5. Review of 2022-23 priorities
 - The updated **Comprehensive Plan** has been presented to the Planning Board and the Council and is open for public review. It outlines a plan for future land use and open space protection in the City. Other key points include: continued quality testing of the Vaughan Brook Watershed, a plan to address climate resiliency and ways to ensure that our community is welcoming and attractive to young people and families. Kat and Maureen met with City Council member Patrick Wynne to determine steps to apply for grant money to build climate resilience in the city. They described a three step process to join the **Climate Resiliency Partnership**: a survey of concerns, a public meeting and a resolution of intent. Rosemary confirmed that the partnership's strategies fit with the Comprehensive Plan. Deadline for grant submission via the CPR is September 2022.
 - **Vaughan Watershed study.** A meeting with DEP was held January 6 to review data collected during the summer from 8 key spots in the watershed. Next steps include continued water quality monitoring, applying for grants to further extent the study, expand our efforts and keep the public informed about our work and findings. A grant for water quality study is due in April 2022.
 - Continued advocacy for **open space/resource protection**
 - **Invasive species** - education, management and control
6. **Brownfields Property** A final report has been submitted per the January 2022 City Manager's Report. HCC has not seen a copy to date. Interest in how the Buckeye Property was assessed, if it was.
7. **RES/National Guard parcel.** An appraisal was completed in November. Upon approval by the state legislature (LD1852, public hearing on January 28) the property would become available for purchase by the city. There are ongoing questions about the accuracy of the appraisal which still need to be resolved. The NG parcel would be significant to the RES because it would provide alternate access or right of way to the trails (from Granite Hill Road) and reduce overuse of the Town Farm Road access. The Property Committee reviewed the purchase at its January 6th meeting. A new issue emerged at that meeting. Colonel Dionne from the National Guard had reviewed the maps and found an additional 5 acres available for purchase. This would require a second appraisal and a decision by the city whether to go ahead with the 2 acre purchase and consider the additional acres at a later time or to wait and purchase all the property together.
8. **RES/City Forest - beaver issue.** Ben Nugent from USDA, accompanied by Chris Buck of HPW, evaluated the culverts on Reservoir Road for placement of beaver control systems. Ben and HPW will work on the project in the spring. HCC will assist with payment for Ben's time and equipment.

9. **Grow Green Healthy Hallowell** is continuing to meet and work to draft an ordinance banning synthetic pesticides in the city. They are in contact with city personnel in Blue Hill, Portland, South Portland and Ogunquit, where ordinances have already been approved, for advice and templates. They are meeting weekly to facilitate the process so that a draft of the ordinance can be presented to the City Council this spring. A website is in the works.

10. **Granite City Park Working Group.** Several members of the group met in December at GCP with Deb Perkins of First Light Wildlife Habitats for ideas and advice about restoring the riverfront as usable outdoor space for the city, attractive to wildlife and pollinating insects. She submitted a report with recommendations for native plants, shrubs and trees to be planted as knotweed is subdued. Tree Board and HCC members of the group will meet later this month to sketch out all ideas to date on an enlarged laminated map of the property. The map will be presented to the whole group when they next meet on March 1.

11. **Effie Berry Conservation Area.** Winter workdays will be scheduled to remove invasives, especially in areas around the pond which are easier to reach when the ground is frozen. All winter weather dependent.

12. **Budget report (July 2020 - present) expected expenditures to date**

- Large, laminated maps for ongoing Granite City Park work
- Assistance with Beaver project at the RES
- Updated RES map posting with additional trails
- Kiosk at the RES
- Loppers and HCC safety vests, already purchased, are sufficient for our current needs

Adjourn - next meeting February 21st at 6:30 (Note new start time)

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Simpson