

Hallowell Conservation Commission February 21, 2022 6:30pm – Meeting Minutes/Zoom Call

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

Guest: Jane Kennery (general public)

Minutes

1. **Guest Introduction:** Jane Kennery moved to Hallowell a year ago. She has farmed in South China and worked at Dig Deep Farm. She is interested in finding out more about the Commission.
2. January minutes approved as written. Moved Jean; 2nd Ben
3. **Browntail Moth Update:** Presentation on February 2 by Tom Schmeelk of the Maine Forest Service was attended by about 30 people. HCC will cut webs in affected neighborhoods and public spaces on two consecutive Sundays, March 20 and 27th. Rosemary asked HCC members to scout and report on heavily infested areas. 100 additional door cards have been ordered.
4. **Vaughan Brook Watershed study.** Applications for DEP Water Quality Monitoring grants open March 9 and are due April 28. Funds will be available in October. Next steps: get a more detailed watershed map, prepare materials about best water quality protection practices to distribute to property owners and extend the study into VB Watershed extensions into Farmingdale.
5. **Open Space Zoning Updates as called for in the Comprehensive Plan.** Jean will work with Rosemary to update the open space parcels (conservation land) listed in the 2007 Open Space Plan. They will review current zoning to determine which parcels need to be moved to the Conservation layer on the city GIS map, Berry Field for example. Ben suggested adding additional parcels with resource value, vernal pools for example.
6. 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 by the City Council. Rosemary confirmed that the partnership's strategies fit with the Comprehensive Plan. Deadline for grant submission via the CPR is September 2022. Some possible changes under way include an electric car for the police and downtown charging stations.
7. **Brownfields Property** A final report has been submitted per the January 2022 City Manager's Report. HCC will request copies of the report to determine what (if any) next steps.
8. **RES/National Guard parcel.** The Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee met on January 28 to approve selling the RES/National Guard parcel to the City (LD 1852). HCC submitted a statement in full support. The transfer was approved in committee and now needs to go through the full legislature. The Property Committee and the City Manager also support acquisition of the property to add to the City Forest (RES).
9. **Grow Green Healthy Hallowell** is continuing to meet weekly to draft an ordinance banning synthetic pesticides in the city. They plan to present the ordinance to the City Council this spring. A website is also in the works. An additional area of concern is finding an alternative to spraying of herbicides by DOT along the railroad tracks that pass close to city residences.
10. **Granite City Park Working Group.** A map of proposed trails and sculpture placement has been developed. It has become apparent that the current snow dump extends over much of the proposed trail

area, impeding planned updates. Rosemary, perhaps joined by other group members, will meet with the City Manager to explore possible alternative sites for dumping snow.

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 work is weather dependent.

Effie Berry Conservation Area accomplishments in 2021:

- Three year partnership with Kennebec Land Trust has been beneficial to both parties.
- A mowing plan has been adopted where 1/3 of the field is mowed each year, allowing 2/3 of the field to remain untouched as habitat for pollinators.
- Kiosk signs have been updated as needed
- Hubbard Free Library has posted a storybook walk along the entrance trail from Stevens Common. It has been removed for the winter.
- The Page/Pleasant Street trail has expanded access to the field and Howard Hill trails
- HCC members removed 100+ invasive multiflora roses from the field in Fall 2021
- The pond has been named - Polliwog Pond
- Public Works has assisted with invasive plant removal
- Two benches, built as a Boy Scout project, have been placed in the upper field

12. State Boat Launch

Changes to the property, proposed by the state, have been on hold since November 2020.

Rosemary met with Councilor Peter Spiegel and Sue Bell in February to discuss any next steps. There is strong support against expanding the parking lot or tree removal when (if) the issue comes up again. The dock still needs repair.

Adjourn - next meeting March 21st at 6:30 (Note adjusted start time)

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Simpson