

Hallowell Conservation Commission Minutes– October 28, 2024

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

Members Present: Rosemary Presnar, Jean McWilliams, Cam Dufty, Maureen Druin, Hilary Neckles

1. Introduce guests: Sara Hodgkins, Judith Graber as future HCC members; Nick Lagasse and Ryan Coughlin of Perennial Renewables; Deb Fahy of Hallowell Arts and Cultural Committee

--Update on Park Petroglyphs Project by Deb Fahy, Hallowell Arts & Cultural Comm (HACC)

Deb presented an update and budget on the Petroglyphs of chimney swifts at Vaughan Field by Kevin Sudeith. He will do a workshop in the spring when he finishes at Vaughn Field, and more are planned for possibly the Reservoir and other locations. Discussed opportunities to partner with HCC to encourage residents to go out to the trails and enjoy green spaces, with one such possibility being a petroglyph hunt or sightings. The petroglyphs are done on existing granite pieces, but more granite could be brought to a site, if desired in the future phases of project. HACC will follow up with HCC in Feb or Mar 2025 timeframe on next steps.

--Presentation by Nick Lacasse, Perennial Renewables (PR), on city's solar project approach. Nick provided background on Perennial Renewables and the proposed City solar project off of Central St. Term with the city for \$8000/year, initial term of 20 years for up to 35 years. 100% of Hallowell's public power will be generated. PR has several small projects throughout the area. They anticipate applying to the Planning Board in Nov 2024 and hope to begin construction in 2025. In the current approach, there seems to be protection of existing wetlands; no changes made to the existing road; and PR will build a new access road to solar field on an old logging road. Minimal need to cut existing trees; expect to add pollinators and other native plants to site. HCC offered help with invasive species identification and disposal, native plant selections, and soil testing as needed. (New business - Nick noted it is easier to work with municipalities that have solar ordinances, since expectations are known up front. Does HCC want to recommend to City Council/ORC the need for a comprehensive solar ordinance around land use/siting/etc.?)

2. Establish quorum (4 voting members); 5 members present. September minutes approved; Jean will be meeting recorder; FY25 budget expenses to date report.

--Rosemary noticed on current City budget report at Oct Council Meeting, HCC is showing over \$700 in expenses to date. No one on HCC is aware of these expenses. Rosemary and Hilary will meet with City Treasurer once WindowDressers project budget is completed to ensure incoming grants and any HCC expenses are known, approved, and tracked correctly against budget allocations.

3. Old Business/Ongoing HCC Updates

- a) Member recruitment planning for January 2025. There are 4 open spots. Rosemary may extend for an additional year in one of the slots. There are several interested people to fill open positions; future terms and dates were reviewed.
 - b) Open Space District Ordinance revision w/Ordinance Rewrite Committee: no news as it didn't make the October council meeting agenda.
 - c) Vaughan Brook Watershed-Based Management Plan development Project
- Need 1 or 2 members for consultant RFP response reviews after Oct 31 (Hilary and Judith volunteered). The city signed the contract with DEP in October. A steering committee is being formed and expect project kickoff in January 2025.

- d) Howard Hill & Berry Conservation Areas KLT All Accessible Trails. Rosemary will give an update next month. KLT aims to raise \$1,000,000 to complete this.
- e) Planning Board: no agenda items this month of interest to HCC.
- f) "Conservation Options – A Guide to Maine Landowners" event planning on hold until Open Space District Ordinance effort is complete.
- g) Tree Board Forest Mgmt Plan – RES/City Forests. Rosemary has talked with Wes and there has been no change or activity since Environmental Steward left in June 2024.
- h) PFAS & HWD: Community Q and A may be in January, 2025. Current level in Hallowell is higher than EPA guidelines. There were questions about with freezing temperatures coming up if HWD filtered water access would be impacted & has any information gone out to residents on interim home filtering options? Rosemary will give HWD office a call.

3.1 New Business – HPW contacted Rosemary about knowledge of grants towards culvert road resurfacing on Vaughan Rd, stream crossing by Spinoli Lane. After several hours of research, sent HPW and City a Manager a list for consideration. Assumption is part of costs is protection of construction debris/sediment entering Vaughan Stream

4. Hallowell Climate Action updates

- Hilary reported on the Window Dressers program. 250 inserts were coupled. There was good community support, providing both workers and food. May try to combine with Augusta next year.
- There was a discussion about the Front Street area and needs to improve bank stabilization which was a priority collected during July community event. Since city hall heat pump CRP grant is complete, city can apply in the next CRP round, due in mid December.
- Maureen noted the State's Infrastructure ReBuilding & Resilience Climate Commission draft report will be released in November; draft is posted online.

5. **Grow Green & Healthy Hallowell** – Landcare Management Ordinance - just a reminder enforcement starts as of January 2025.

6. Upcoming Events or feedback on past events...

- Oct 20 – Granite City Park Celebration & Volunteer Appreciation Event hosted by Vision Hallowell – great event and turnout; Vision Hallowell is working on a follow-up display for a downtown window, possibly Gallant building.
- Oct 23 – HDHS Day of Caring – Lots of good work completed at Granite City Park with students and Tree Board/HCC volunteers spreading compost and mulch; minimal communication with school and hosts caused a bit of a slow start...students showed up 15-30 minutes before park volunteers!
- 2025 KLT Lyceum Series – March 13, 20, and 27 – Hallowell City Hall Auditorium

Adjourn at 8pm

2024 HCC Meeting Reminders:

- Nov 18
- Dec 16

Recorders: Jean McWilliams/Rosemary Presnar