

Biddeford Conservation Commission

Thursday, December 18, 2023

6:05pm

Attendees: R. Rhames, D. Rioux, M. Atlas, P. Robbins, E. Heumiller, and P. Conlon

Absent: M. Lowell

Staff liaison: D. Galbraith

Meeting called to order: 6:05p

- I. Secretary Report – Minutes were not submitted in time to be included. They will be included in the next round
- II. Adjustments to the Agenda
 - A. Add Solar Farms to the “other business section
 - B. Add proactive planning to the January meeting agenda
- III. Discussion:
 - A. Biddeford Beaver Policy
 1. City is working to have the beavers trapped
 2. They are impounding the Richardson Brook which leads to Thacher Brook
 3. Impoundment provides habitat for fish and other water critters
 4. State has some oversight in the matter
 5. Waiting on permits to begin taking them down
 6. “Beaver deceiver”
 - a) Allows beaver to “work their magic” in particular areas, they are attracted to the sound of rushing water, lay pipes to lower water but the beaver won’t notice the lowered water level because of the lack of sound
 - b) Could cause the impoundment to expand which is often not favorable in urban or urban adjacent areas
 7. Erik has received two communications reporting beaver activity and concerns
 - B. EPA Public Engagement Message
 1. If there are matters endangering the public sphere
 2. The EPA will have a finding meeting to take a look at the issue
 3. Boston Globe reported that the EPA was considering taking a look at leaded fuels at small airports near cities
 4. FAA policy is that they pay for the first tank but you have to pay for additional tanks
 - C. BCC November Meeting is not posted online
 - D. Climate post-COP 28
 1. General disappointment in outcomes and goals
 - E. UNE community-based projects for senior capstone projects
 1. They are not collecting data but are writing reports, synthesizing data, or creating outreach materials
 2. Project Ideas –
 - a) GIS mapping projects
 - b) Land use + conservation mailers
 - c) Developers guide for conservation in Biddeford
 - d) Political history of Thacher Brook

e) Looking at the remaining large blocks of undeveloped land

3. Next steps – Erik will send Pam a list of ideas, ideally she can attend the next meeting

F. Website content -

1. How will people engage with the site:

a) How do we want people to use our site

b) If I have land and want to put it in conversation

c) If I think there is a beaver somewhere – what are the options?

d) Developer – how to engage with Biddeford

2. Richard would like the site to be a close reflection of the BCC charter

3. Richard and Erik to get a mostly final draft of the site layout so we can try to approve in January

G. Mobile Home Park Overlay

1. Last planning board meeting there was a workshop discussion at the request of the developer

a) Developer has changed the project significantly

b) Expected to submit a final in the New Year

H. River Monitoring Updates

1. Limit sampling to two water bodies

2. Preview swamp pond brook monitoring was 2005 and in only one area

3. Some highlighted language suggestions on doc page 9 explaining the lack of background and desire to collect data in part due to development pressures

a) 3 sampling sites on West Brook

b) 2 sampling sites on Swamp Pond Brook

4. They primarily look for data May - August

a) Monitoring once a week or every 2 weeks

5. They have specific points they measure, we could consider adding some data points if they are important to us

6. Erik as lead and POC for this project

7. Consideration of adding another spot on Swamp Pond Brook (closer to Denis' property)

IV. Other Business -

A. Recreation Commission – the director has been asked to publish meetings, still working on how and when

B. Saco watershed referenced a potentially helpful document: *Innovative Use of the State Revolving Funds for Source Water Protection*

1. Community preservation act in Massachusetts

2. Studied a couple communities, led to legislation that led to a fund for the purchase of land for conservation

3. Bring back the idea of working on a buildout scenario

4. Cost of community services study

C. Solar Farms -

1. Currently not a permitted use

2. If the Mayor wants to utilize Andrew Road for a solar site it could potentially open the flood gates for developers

a) Recommend a cap of either percentages or total acreage

b) Recommendation for priority sites (ie prioritize gravel pits over farm land)

3. Prevent sites that have been deforested within 10 years – no rights to use that area

a) Prevents people from clearcutting to make it easier in the future

D. Proactivity and planning

1. Do we want to consider having subcommittees for specific topics
2. Subjects
 - a) Gridded map of Biddeford to think about conservation land in each quadrant of the city to assess ratios of conservation
 - b) GIS maps – ag soil clarity
 - c) Climate Action Plan
 - d) Clifford Park -
 - (1) Trail traffic
 - (2) Trash
 - (3) Critters
 - (4) Dogs
 - (5) Signage
 - (6) Conserving the park

V. Next meeting 1.22.24

VI. *Motion to adjourn - E. Heumiller 8:14p*

A. Second P. Robbins

1. No discussion

B. Unanimous