

Biddeford Conservation Commission

Thursday, December 18, 2023

6:04pm - 7:48pm

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

Absent: E. Heumiller

Guests: Thacher Carter (MFT), Eric Freeman

Meeting called to order: 6:04p

I. Delaying the vote on meeting minutes until people can review

II. Thacher Carter – MFT Comp Plan Implementation

A. Current priorities

1. Cultivating Maine's Agricultural Future (second edition being updated and almost ready to be released)

a) In the near future there will be five virtual forums to share the information with the public

2. Direct technical assistance to municipalities to help implement comprehensive plans

B. Presentation:

1. Implementation of comp plan: assign parties to the task of implementation

a) Engagement (BCC Agricultural sub committee to help implement strategies)

b) Design a farmer forum to help get interest and feedback from farmers, pass out comp plans and workshop it together

2. Exemplary plans - Gorham

3. Suggestions for Biddeford

a) Farmland inventory

(1) Look at the city of Auburn farmland inventory to help us implement

b) Goal to increase conservation land

(1) Put details to this and draft a resolution

(2) Present the resolution to the Council

c) Promote land owner enrollment for current use tax programs

(1) Town of Monmouth could teach us some things about how to do this

(2) Organize forum with city assessor to do a presentation about these tax programs and see if farmers have questions

d) Support/promote farming and working forest through amendment to RF Zone

(1) Agricultural subcommittee

e) Agritourism

(1) Gorham and Eliot are good examples

(2) Farm enterprise overlay zone

4. BCC Comments:

a) M. Lowell – conserve forest canopy

b) M. Atlas – how do we follow through on these suggestions. Do we build a calendar? Do we assign one of these topics to each of us and carve out time each meeting for proactive work versus all the reactive work

c) What tools are helpful to making arguments to council to prioritize

(1) Buildout scenarios

(2) Cost of community services

5. Solar farms

- a) On 5+ acres on high value land need a permit starting Sept 2024
- b) Developments of 20+ acres on high value land will be subject to a fee
- c) Defining “high value” is TBD

III. Clifford Park

- A. Request from the city to get more information about what happened to lead to a lawsuit so that we can continue to be an advocate for future such projects
- B. Usage of acquired land – can we be proactive in terms of how the land is used

IV. Website – Erik and Richard will met in early December

V. Meeting Date:

- A. Preference for a 6pm start time
- B. There is some openness from commission members to a Monday meeting
- C. Holidays as a barrier?

VI. Solar Ordinance

- A. Is the BCC willing to sit down and have a workshop to identify out goals for a solar ordinance
- B. Potentially a joint workshop with the planning board
- C. R. Rhames would like to include the Public Works Director
- D. Request that we find time as a group to determine out goals on the matter

VII. Community Forest –

- A. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>
- B. Holistic view of the city to spread out conserved and open spaces
- C. Potential funding opportunities for this
- D. Applications are in January
- E. R. Rhames recommends alternatively applying for Land and Water Conservation Fund
- F. Approach:
 - 1. Send a mailer and have people self select if they are interested in putting land in conservation to get a sense for volume, geography, and interest

VIII. Volunteer River Monitoring

- A. Monitoring tool has been returned
- B. Need to decide what monitoring areas we want to keep monitoring

IX. Articles referencing leaded aviation gas – there is no safe level

- A. <https://earthjustice.org/press/2023/epa-issues-endangerment-finding-for-leaded-aviationgas>
- B. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/10/18/lead-aviation-fuel-epa--toxic-pollution>
- C. EPA issues a finding of public endangerment regarding leaded aviation fuel
- D. Potential issue due to proximity of Biddeford airport to schools

X. Other Business:

- A. Telecasting of our meetings – is there a cost to us? If so, why?
- B. Eric will follow up with Nan

XI. Discussion topics for next meeting:

- A. Comp Plan action items – strategize and calendar our next year so we can focus on proactive projects
- B. Solar farm ordinance discussion
- C. Staff update re: telecasting BCC meetings

XII. Motion to adjourn - M. Atlas 7:53pm

- A. Second - E. Heumiller

B. Unanimous