

City of Biddeford
Conservation Commission
January 30, 2025 at 4:15 PM
City Hall Council Chambers & Zoom

Attendees:

Richard Rhames, Erik Heumiller, Peter Robbins, Denis Rioux, Mike Lowell, Patrick Conlon

Staff:

Adi Iriqat

Call to order: 4:24 pm

1.
Adjustment(s) to Agenda

2.
Secretary Report

- 2.a Nov. 18 and Dec. 16 minutes to be approved.
- Edit to 11/18 - “traffic commission” changed to “traffic committee”
 - Motion to approve: P. Robbins, Second: D. Rioux, Vote: Unanimous

3.
Presentations/Discussions

- 3.a Solar Ordinance Updates
- Draft Review & Discussion
 - Next steps: draft gets a vote at the Planning Board, and then recommendation goes on to City Council to deliberate
 - Public Advocate Report discussion
 - R. Rhames seeking clarification from the Policy Committee about whether the Planning Board can review proposed solar installations based on the cost to ratepayers as well as proposed land use, or if they are limited to just land use.

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3.b Swan Pond Brook - Conservation Easement (Map 1, Lot 19)

- Background - City of Biddeford acquired the lot in 2019
- Review change to law
 - Supreme Court decision complicates how this land can be handled going forward
 - Process for distributing funds from sale of tax lien acquired land to the original land owner
- Looking at the 250' buffers around Swan Pond Brook and Buzzell Brook would negate roughly 20 acres +/- of the 26 acre parcel.
 - The remaining 5-6 acres are comprised of vernal pools and wetland areas, meaning there is not much development opportunity, making a conservation easement the best path forward.
 - Also contains lady-slippers, trillium, and other plants of statewide importance.
 - Great horned owls, woodpeckers, and nesting wood ducks.
- A conservation easement on this parcel would also expand on existing areas of undisturbed conservation easements.
 - Links key habitat together and should be considered a high priority for the city.
- Guest: Rebecca Lowell shares comments in support of placing this parcel into a conservation easement.
- BCC to draft a recommendation/memo to send to the City Council to encourage the transfer of the parcel at Map1, Lot19 to a conservation easement in fee.
 - Include notes from this meeting.
 - Motion: M. Lowell, Second: P. Conlon, Vote: Unanimous

3.c Clifford Park Conservation Easement

- Discuss Richard's memo to the Policy Committee
- To schedule a joint workshop with the Recreation Committee
 - BCC would like to see a management plan come out of the conversation
 - Lisa Thompson (Rec. Dept. staff) to work to schedule this

3.d Citizens' Climate Lobby

- Update on the possibility of a City endorsement
 - Mayor Grohman not interested in advancing it to City Council
 - Sustainability Commission dropped the item

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- 3.e Saco River Corridor Commission Issues
 - Hearing about an affordable housing proposal out near Rotary Park
 - Historical documents list that area as a floodplain
 - Currently under review by the SRCC
 - Biddeford's commissioners terms may have expired in Nov. 2024
- 3.f Dam Relicensing Update
 - Comments submitted to FERC on Dec. 18, 2024
- 3.g Internship Update
 - City cut budgets for interns and is of the opinion that we cannot have interns unless they are paid
 - There may be conflicting decisions based on other committee/commission internships (RE: Sustainability Commission)
 - We should seek clarity from the City in a way that is applicable to all commissions within City government
 - Could pursue interns through other organizations that fund the interns payment
 - UNE contacts have still inquired about opportunities
- 3.h Election of Officers
 - Chair — Richard Rhames
 - Motion: P. Robbins, Second: M. Lowell, Vote: Unanimous
 - Vice Chair — Peter Robbins
 - Motion: P. Conlon, Second: E. Heumiller, Vote: Unanimous
 - Secretary — Erik Heumiller
 - Motion: P. Robbins, Second: P. Conlon, Vote: Unanimous

4.
Other Business

- 4.a APEX Youth Connection
 - Looking to get involved with Clifford Park trail maintenance
- 4.b Project Canopy
 - Funds through the Inflation Reduction Act have been paused

5.
Adjourn

Next meeting scheduled for Feb. 26th, 2025
Motion to Adjourn: P. Robbins, Second: P. Conlon, Vote: Unanimous