

Town of Scarborough Conservation Commission

July 24, 2024 | 6:00 pm | Town Council Chambers B and Virtual via Zoom

Minutes

Present in-person

Staff: Jami Fitch, Autumn Speer, Emerson Goodrich

Commission: Bennett Flanders, Abel Plaud, Jessica Sargent, Pete Slovinsky, Marla Zando

Town Council: Karin Shupe

Present via Zoom

Commission: Cathleen Miller, Maggie Vishneau

Staff: Angela Blanchette

Town Council: Jean-Marie Caterina

A recording of this meeting is available online: [Conservation Commission – 7/24/24](#)

Call to order

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.
2. Jessica offered a land acknowledgement to recognize the Wabanaki People as traditional stewards of Scarborough.
3. Pete motioned to accept the minutes from the June meeting, Abel seconds. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Jami calls attention to the Open Space Workshop which is on 7/25 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

Public Comment

- Jamie, who lives in the 3rd district in Portland, has been commenting at Conservation Commission meetings in multiple communities. He mentions Scarborough's connection to Casco Bay by way of Silver Brook, and that there is money to remove dams that are plugging streams and rivers such as the Stroudwater Dam in Portland. He notes the poor water quality behind the dam and the vitality that could return if the dam were to be removed. He hopes to invigorate people to weigh in on Portland's decision
- Stannis, who lives in Scarborough and will be directly impacted by the Maine Turnpike Authority's (MTA) Gorham Connector project, speaks of the project and issues pertaining to congestion in North Scarborough. He notes that nearly 20 years ago, the Maine Turnpike took control of the area and can only build turnpikes, rather than improving existing roads or considering other alternatives. He highlights the Maine Sensible Transportation Act that requires reasonable transportation alternatives be considered and improvements to existing roads take precedence over new construction. Studies demonstrated that the Turnpike will on the whole impact commute times minimally. He offers to donate the portion of Red Brook on his property to the Scarborough Land Trust or the Town if the project does not proceed.

Engineering & Technical Services

Updates

1. Town Council Update (moved from later in the agenda as it relates to the Gorham Connector project)
 - The Commission was provided with the South Portland Conservation Commission's memo in opposition to the Gorham Connector. Karin recommends the Commission look at the proposed route, issue an opinion, and has a draft memo.
 - Stannis adds that a third party review the project, especially to evaluate the environmental impacts. GPCOG/PACTS may be able to provide support.
 - Jessica clarifies that the Conservation Commission could provide input to the Town Council. The Council could in turn pass a resolution regarding their past endorsement of the project.
 - Autumn adds that if a public meeting were to be held in September, it would be a good opportunity for all of the committees to weigh in.
 - Angela, a member of PACTS, adds that through a 2015 PACTS study and the public comment that came from that study the neighborhoods explicitly wanted a new route to move traffic from the Gorham area to Portland. Angela suggests it would be helpful for PACTS to revisit the study now.
 - Pete calls into question both the impacts to Red Brook and the Greenhouse Gas Emission reduction findings on page 2 of the MOA between Scarborough and MTA.
 - Karin asserts that she believes sooner rather than later would be helpful for the Commission to issue an opinion on the Connector project, as no public process has begun or been scheduled.
 - Angela notes it would be helpful to discuss impacts with MTA, which can later be referenced in the opinion issued by the Commission.
 - Jessica suggests an information request as an intermediate step before issuing a recommendation.
 - Marla inquires about who could consider and evaluate alternative courses of action for the project given that MTA cannot legitimately consider alternatives to building the Connector.
 - Jean-Marie supports returning to GPCOG/PACTS to revisit their study and adds that MTA is still faced with an extensive regulatory process and other delays.
 - Angela adds that MaineDOT is approaching the project from a study/planning perspective and does not have any capital funds to contribute to the project.

Old Business

1. Environmental Standards
 - Autumn notes there's a round table meeting planned with developers, engineers, and representatives from the Commission (Pete, Randi, and Karin) on 8/28/24.
 - Jessica asks if materials can be provided in advance of the meeting, such as the scientific basis and the standards of other peer communities.
 - Autumn suggests the Commission consider the conflict between the land bond and conservation requirements without the purchase of land.
 - Pete notes that the Environmental Standards were produced with the possibility of settling for a middle ground, and Autumn underscores that areas of compromise help in moving the process along.
 - Jean-Marie adds that the Environmental Standards are penciled in for the Ordinance Committee in September, but questions if the timing is right in regards to the Land Bond and the conflation of the two topics.
 - Angela notes that in the SEDCO meeting, discussing real life construction sites and issues resonated with developers in terms of articulating the reasoning behind the environmental standards. Pete suggests looking at a few case studies in preparation for the round table meeting.
 - **ACTION: JAMI will schedule a meeting with Pete, Randi, and Karin to prepare for the 8/28 roundtable.**
2. Parks and Conservation Land Bond

- Jessica provides an update on the Town Council workshop, and the \$6M request for the land bond passed unanimously at first reading. A public hearing will be held in August. Jessica underlines the importance of showing up in support, as there was discussion of lowering the amount or implementing spending requirements. The suggested spending requirements are already met through the Town's existing process. The second reading is on 9/4 and will be the last opportunity for comment. Jessica suggests that public education is crucial, and there will be a communications plan.
 - Pete suggests noting the 214% increase is justified due to the increase in land values since 2019's \$2.5M land bond.
 - Cathleen notes that she and Marla can work on social media content and other communications.
 - Marla and Jessica underline that the \$6M investment could leverage up to \$23M in matching funds.
3. Planning Board Submittals
- Autumn provides a brief update. There are no submittals pertinent to the Conservation Commission this month.

Updates (continued)

1. Promoting Citizen Stewardship
 - Marla reminds the Commission of the presentation on the science of salt marshes on 8/6 at 6:30 pm. It is co-hosted with Maine Audubon, Scarborough Land Trust, and Scarborough Public Library.
2. Town Council
 - Karin notes upcoming events such as the Open Space Workshop on 7/25, Council Corner Live on 8/7, and the developer roundtable at the end of August.
 - Karin additionally mentions there will be three openings on Town Council on the November ballot. She also underlines the impact of those who serve on Town Council.
3. Sustainability Committee
 - Jami adds additional important dates including the Public Meeting for the Vulnerability Assessment on 8/12, and the neighborhood meetings for Higgins and Pine Point in September.
 - Emerson is coordinating a Coastal Meetup on 8/22 at 2:00 pm at the Eastern Trail parking lot on Pine Point Road. Details will be posted on the Town website.
 - Jami notes Sustainable Scarborough is on 10/6.

Next meeting: September 25, 2024

Meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm.