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Conservation Commission Meeting, December 11, 2024
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

STCC Commissioners present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerme (via Zoom), John Poirier, Leslie Spear, Sondra Wallace

STCC Commissioner not present: Henry Spencer

Associate Members present: Neil Cambridge (also STCRC Chair), Sally Merchant (both via Zoom)

Other Attendees: Lauren Swartzbaugh--Owls Head CC Chair (in person). Erv Curtis--Planning Board Chair. Nancy Goslin, Wes Pratt--STCRC Members (all three on Zoom).

I. Call to Order. Sondra Wallace, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:03PM.

II. Adjustments to Agenda. Agreed to discuss New Business Item V.a. (planetarium school program) before Old Business. Rachel Snow's interest in becoming a Commissioner was added to New Business.

III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: October 9 and November 13. Regarding October 9, Catherine Lerme made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by S. Wallace, then unanimously approved by those who had attended. Re: November 13, S. Wallace asked that the final sentence in Old Business item F. read "There was a brief discussion **at the STCRC meeting** as to if and how we should combine STCC and CRC efforts - some attendees want to keep things separate, others do not." Linda Garat agreed to amend it as requested. John Poirier made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by Leslie Spear, then unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business.

- a. Update on South Thomaston Forest Preserve. S. Wallace indicated that there was not much to report. At the November 26 Select Board meeting, S. Wallace explained the need for an easement across the Town lot to "unlandlock" the Preserve. The Select Board approved obtaining a survey of the easement, and the working group (S. Wallace, C. Lerme, and S. Merchant) and SB Chair John Spear will meet with surveyor Nate Beal on December 16. S. Wallace added that our attorney recommends that the Town deed itself the five parcels of land as a single parcel.

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- b.** Update on Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring program. S. Wallace spoke with Theo Pratt and informed her that a WQM report will be needed by February for the Town's Annual Report. S. Wallace will provide an outline of the information required. T. Pratt affirmed that she will provide this data on time.
 - c.** Report on KCCC-WG November 23 Dark Sky program. L. Garat, C. Lerme, and S. Wallace attended the program, and agreed that it was informative, and well-attended, although there was no sign-up sheet for participants, which would have been a good idea. C. Lerme remarked that there are many people who have never seen the Milky Way because there is so much light pollution. Katahdin Woods and Waters is one of the only places left where one can really see a dark sky. S. Wallace said that this program would probably be a good fit for the students at Oceanside High School.
 - d.** STCRC proposal: South Thomaston/St. George shared Climate Action Plan (NOTE change of name from Shared Sustainability Coordinator); request for support letter. The STCRC has now further clarified that the final package is called a "Collaborative Climate Action Planning Proposal," with corresponding changes to the text. The grant sought would fund the costs, including the part-time services of a professional, of developing a climate action plan based on efforts to identify and address the problems in our region, taking into account the unique aspects/needs of each town. St. George is the grant applicant and will deal with all the managing, etc. Neil Cambridge stated that we are formally putting ourselves in an advance position to be prepared to respond to climate change, as opposed to merely reacting to it. S. Wallace emphasized that the STCC wants to have a seat at the table, and that community engagement should not just consist of a meeting held every once in a while.

S. Wallace also asked for approval of her draft letter to Ashley Krulik, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, which cites STCC support of the proposed collaborative Climate Action Plan. C. Lerme moved to accept the letter, which she said was very well-written, L. Spear seconded the motion, and it was then unanimously accepted. The STCRC has also drafted a support letter from the Select Board, which will be considered for sign off by the Select Board at the meeting immediately following our meeting.

- e.** Update on Maine Coast Seafood (hazardous abandoned property). This issue is on the Select Board agenda for December 11. L. Spear noted that there remains quite a bit of work to be accomplished at the site.
- f.** Update on Wilson Quarry, Land Use and Planning Board Ordinances, by-laws, etc. S. Wallace conveyed, in the words of the Town's attorney, that our land use ordinances are woefully inadequate. The process of approval for operating a quarry or other businesses involving resource extraction or potentially polluting activities, is not clear. The STCC needs to look at this and other town ordinances, and work with the Planning Board and Ordinance Review Committee to change the parameters.

V. New Business.

- a. Owls Head CC invitation to co-sponsor Northern Stars Planetarium school programs. Lauren Swartzbaugh, Chair, Owls Head Conservation Commission, attended the first part of the STCC meeting. She is working with the Principal of the Ash Point Community School to schedule four mobile planetarium shows, for Grades PK to 5 on February 25. L. Swartzbaugh also mentioned the possibility of presenting programs at Beech Hill Preserve during the warmer weather, encouraging a wider demographic (more people, more towns) to benefit from Mr. Meader's astronomical, earth and life sciences expertise.

One reason that L. Swartzbaugh wants to accommodate the entire Ash Point student body is to avoid unhappy children and parents whose grades in the past might not have been included in educational presentations. C. Lerme suggested that we leave it up to the teachers to decide what they want to show to whom. The total cost of the Northern Stars Planetarium school program, including John Meader's \$40 travel fee, is \$690. S. Wallace is not sure if there are any fees that the STCC has to pay for the Dark Sky Program, which would affect what we could contribute to the school program.

The Commissioners were in agreement that the Northern Stars Planetarium school programs are worthy and in keeping with the mission of the STCC. J. Poirier made a motion to be a sponsor if we have the funds, L. Spear seconded it, then it was unanimously approved. Whether or not any of the other CCs of the KCCC-WG are interested in becoming a sponsor, and have the budget to do so, can be discussed during the zoom meeting scheduled on December 12.

- b. Sally Merchant is proposing Rachel Snow to be a Commissioner. She has known Rachel and her family for many years, and Rachel's brother John was our Code Enforcement Officer. C. Lerme added that Rachel is a doer, a good communicator, and a professional who worked for the United Nations all over the world. Rachel has to be appointed by the Select Board, but first the STCC must ask the Select Board to appoint her, and Rachel must inform the Select Board that she is willing to be appointed. S. Wallace made a motion that we request that Rachel be appointed, J. Poirier seconded it, and it was unanimously approved.

VI. Correspondence.

VII. Items for next Agenda.

VIII. Adjourn. Without objection, S. Wallace adjourned the meeting at 6:12PM.

STCC APPROVED ON JANUARY 8, 2025