

## **Finalized Minutes**

### **St. George Conservation Commission for Thursday December 9, 2021**

**Attendance:** Members: Dan Verrillo, Ken Oelberger, John Meyer, John Knuerr, Dale Pierson and Tom Gorrill; Also: Ingrid Mroz, Anita Siegenthaler, John McIlwain, and Tammy Willey (SB).

**Public Comment:** None

#### **Announcements & Communications: (Ken)**

- Newsletter deadline is December 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Ron Desrosiers (USDA NRCS Belfast Office) will attend CC's next meeting to talk about the ways that NRCS can support the Conservation Commission including their Aquatic Organism Passage program.

**Modifications to Agenda:** None

**Minutes:** Motion by John M. to approve last month's minutes. Seconded by Dale. Unanimously approved.

#### **Old Business**

##### **Footpaths: (Tom/Ken)**

- Work Trips: None.
- All trails walked and are cleared. Parking lots staked for plowing.
- Meadow Brook: Swale will be completed next spring.
- Jones Brook closed until January 1<sup>st</sup> by request of the landowner.
- Fort Point:
  1. Deeds signed by Town. Abutters will sign soon.
  2. Completing boundary pins and signs but plantings to discourage trespassing will have to wait till Spring.
  3. Lindsey May (Maine Conservation Corp) walked the trail to help determine their potential role in the project. She will talk with Erin (trail designer).
  4. Ken contacted Doug Beck. He expects to get back to us next week with a possible decision on the project grant.
  5. CC members agreed that trail will be closed until further notice due to unsafe conditions caused by the recent rains. Signs and tape are ready to post and the website was updated.

##### **Land Trust Coordination: (Ken).**

- MCHT: Kate Stookey is the new president starting in February. She is a Maine native and is currently executive director of Revels, a national cultural arts nonprofit based in Watertown MA.
- GRLT: Volunteer get-together was planned for December 11<sup>th</sup> (postponed).

**Education:** (John K.) Nothing new.

**Invasives** (John K.) Will submit a new article for the newsletter dealing with Brown tail moth eradication during the winter.

**Website Update** (John M.)

- Updated trail closures. Posted new boardwalk pictures.

**Climate Change:** (Dan)

Sea Level Rise:

- Volunteers took pictures of the King tide on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Pictures were collected and put in a file available with permission from Richard Bates.
- Will work with John M. on a database to keep track of the pictures

Solar: Latest Legislation

Bill LD 936: Requires solar projects with 2 megawatt to 5 megawatt power output to meet criteria by certain dates before they are approved, including a signed interconnection agreement with an electric utility such as Central Maine Power or Versant Power.

- The Maine Public Utilities Commission has estimated that projects producing a total of 1,500 megawatts of capacity would cost ratepayers about \$230 million per year, with an estimated delivery rate increase of 31 percent. The rate effect would be lower if fewer projects were approved. (Thus the bill may lead to fewer solar farms for subscribers),
1. CMP wants to raise rates because net metering credits do not compensate CMP for delivery costs.
  2. Solar expansion requires more infrastructure.
  3. Rates may increase 30% because of solar expansion bills in 2019. Rates may increase by 80% next year but this is mainly because of pandemic related doubling cost of natural gas. (*This will affect community farm rates but not array owners.*)
  4. May incentivize owners of arrays but these are wealthier citizens. The less wealthy have lower taxes and therefore will not benefit from tax rebates offered by feds.
  5. Disincentive to non-solar owners to go electric with vehicles and heating because electric rates are not as competitive to carbon based fuel. (*This will probably not be the case because it is the high cost of carbon based fuels that is driving up electric rates.*)

Benefits not considered:

1. Solar provides electricity during the day when more energy is required thus reducing the necessity for infrastructure expansion.
2. Jobs created disproportionately benefits less wealthy citizens.
3. Rebates could be in cash rather than tax offsets. (Working on legislation).

4. Mitigation of global warming which benefits poorer populations that can't easily escape SLR.

Bill LD936 528: Sets goal for power storage at 300 mega W by 2025 and 400 mega W by 2030. The system is not specified. The likely purpose is to use excess solar and other renewables to pump water to reservoirs that can be used at times of need to provide hydroelectric power. Although this is not as cost effective as hydroelectric directly produced for the grid from dams or rivers, it offers resiliency from climate changes that cause temporary demands on the grid.

- Most likely system is Pumped-Water Hydroelectricity (storage). This system is cheaper than batteries on a large scale.
- Only used when electrical demand is low and generation is high. Examples: Power from hydroelectric dams if demand is low and reservoir capacity is high (otherwise would have to use spillways). Nuclear plants, wind power at night. Solar during summer months.
- It's all about balancing the grid.

#### **Associate Members (Ken)**

- Asked CC members to suggest candidates for the new positions.

#### **New Business**

**FY-23 Budget** (Ken): will discuss at next meeting

**Select Board Update:** (Tammy) Working on completing deeds for Fort Point.

**Planning Board Update:** (Terry) Not here.

Motion by Dan. to adjourn meeting. Seconded by John M. Approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Dan Verrillo