

Bar Harbor Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 6, 2022
Zoom Meeting
5:30 -7:30pm

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 5:31pm by Co-Chair Kim Zdenek.

Members present: Jacque Colburn, Secretary, Christian Barter and Ted Koffman.

Guests present: Michele Gagnon, Town Planner.

II. EXCUSED ABSENCES

Co-Chair Kaitlyn Mullen.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public present.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The members reviewed the draft minutes of the April 11th meeting and no revisions were needed. *A motion was made and seconded to accept the April 11, 2022, minutes as presented. Motion was unanimously approved (4-0).*

V. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Co-Chair Zdenek asked for any revisions or additions to the agenda; none were requested. *A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda as presented. Motion was unanimously approved (4-0).*

VI. ONGOING BUSINESS

• Open Space Plan – Conversation with Michele Gagnon

Co-Chair Zdenek explained that at the last meeting, the members talked about and would like to know what information from the Open Space Plan would be of the most use to the Planning Department. Ms. Gagnon asked if the members had seen/read the draft Existing Conditions Report that had been developed as part of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan process. The Commission members were sent a link to the report shortly after it was released. Ms. Gagnon said that affordable housing is the highest priority, and that Bar Harbor is meeting with surrounding communities to discuss and determine a way to best address this need. Further, she said that the large lot sizes that are required in some areas of Bar Harbor don't serve the town well because it encourages sprawl. The existing regulations, specifically for the Northeast Creek watershed require nitrogen calculations be performed to determine septic systems and lot sizing. So, how do we balance open space and affordable housing? Mr. Koffman mentioned the Jones Marsh development incorporates conservation planning but it is just one project. Ms. Gagnon stated that providing water and sewer to areas of Bar Harbor beyond the downtown may be a more effective way to develop, but it comes at a cost.

She asked the members if they could look at the Open Space Plan and focus on what should be preserved versus what may be impacted. Co-Chair Zdenek stating that since housing is such a significant issue, may be the Commission should review and revise the OSP goals that encourage smaller lot sizes. Mr. Barter asked how we provide more housing without increasing traffic, congestion, and parking along with more polluted runoff. The town should emphasize biking and walking and more buses to move more people.

Ms. Gagnon said the town needs to zone for the future, not to capture what already exists. If there is a special resource, worthy of protection, then possibly create overlay districts. Co-Chair Zdenek asked about extending the towns' water and sewer infrastructure and Ms. Gagnon said that the capacity of the

water treatment facility needs to be factored into any future growth. Ms. Colburn asked about the existing zoning and land use regulations. Ms. Gagnon stated that the existing regulations need to be addressed because the Planning Department often seeks legal clarification when applying the regulations. The regulations should be revisited up as part of the comprehensive planning process.

Ms. Colburn asked if there are other tourism based communities across the country that could be used as a model to address the housing problem. Ms. Gagnon suggested that incentives to developers are a possibility, i.e., paying a fee to Island Housing Trust. Mr. Barter asked what if affordable housing is constructed and then it is bought-up by investors. Ms. Gagnon said that a housing fund could be established, and the Town could partner with Island Housing Trust and MDI Housing Authority. Mr. Barter pointed out that some residents rent out their homes for a few weeks to be able to pay their property taxes. Ms. Gagnon acknowledged this and stated that there are those who need to be able to rent a year-round home and those who can afford to purchase 7-8 rental properties.

Co-Chair Zdenek asked what product can the Commission provide to the Planning Department? Ms. Gagnon requested that the Commission help the department focus on ordinance language – how do we ensure what is most important to protect when housing is being proposed. Ms. Colburn suggested that GIS mapping be used to help identify where building density is most feasible and to add this exercise to the comprehensive plan process. Finally, members discussed what they can do for the next meeting, which included: review the draft Comprehensive Plan Existing Conditions Report, specifically those sections that pertain to housing and revisit the Open Space Plan to review and possibly revise those goals that relate to housing.

- Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Colburn told the members that the next meeting of the Comprehensive Planning Committee would be Wednesday, June 8th and that the Committee would continue its discussion of the draft existing conditions report that the consultants had prepared. Additionally, the public forum/session tentatively planned for September will be discussed.

- Membership

Liz Graves, Town Clerk, confirmed that the July meeting will be the last for Co-Chairs Zdenek and Mullen.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business came before the Commission.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

The date of the next meeting is Monday, July 11, 2022. As allowed by the Commission's Remote Participation Policy, the meeting will be held by Zoom.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jacquie Colburn, Secretary*