

Bar Harbor Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 11, 2023
Bar Harbor Town - 3rd Floor Conference Room
5:30 - 7:30pm

I. Call To Order/Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 5:38pm by Acting Chair Jacquie Colburn.

Members present: Acting Chair and Secretary Jacquie Colburn, Christian Barter, Ted Koffman, and Lars Larson. Members not present: Lucian Smith

Guests present: Ken Cline Professor, COA and Aishwarya Devarajan, Student, COA

Ms. Colburn welcomed Mr. Cline and Ms. Devarajan and thanked them for attending the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves.

II. Excused Absences

There were no excused absences.

III. Public Comment

Other than the guests from COA, no other members of the public were present.

IV. Review of the Agenda

The members reviewed the agenda and to accommodate the COA guests, agreed to swap Items V and VI to discuss the COA projects first.

V. Review of Notes and Minutes

No notes or minutes were prepared so none were reviewed by the members.

VI. Ongoing and New Business

• COA Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Research Projects

To start the discussion, Ms. Devarajan said that she had spoken with the Bicycle Coalition of Maine and other individuals, organizations, and businesses in Bar Harbor regarding these research efforts. COA students produced report cards for walking and riding the streets of Bar Harbor and they developed paths of bike routes used by residents. They also presented the results of their research to the Town Council and the Planning Department and then took them for a bike ride. Mr. Cline said they also met with the Climate Emergency Task Force, and while interested, the Task Force had other projects that it was working on. Mr. Cline offered to send a list of the attendees from past presentations.

Ms. Devarajan pointed out that the story map, which accompanies the presentations, has examples of other towns in the US where bicycle and pedestrian paths have been successfully established. Mr. Barter asked what avenues have been pursued to get some of the recommendations implemented and has Maine DOT been involved? Mr. Cline said students could conduct “tactical urbanism” and accomplish some of the easy pieces. Other ideas to make biking/walking safer include things such as raising the West Street sidewalk. Mr. Barter asked how other towns got this work done. Ms. Devarajan said getting feedback for smaller elements was important. When asked if the Commission could take a leadership role in fulfilling the recommendations, Ms. Colburn explained that the Conservation Commission falls under the purview of the Planning Department so talking with the department would be necessary. Mr. Larson said that the economic data included in the projects was very good, but questioned whether data regarding traffic accident reduction, air quality, emissions reductions had been compiled. Ms. Devarajan offered to check for air quality data. Mr.

Cline talked about the location of bike racks in town. He said that Stephanie Clement with FOA has been involved historically. And maybe Nynka Ham, a COA student, could attend future meetings, Mr. Cline will check.

Ms. Devarajan asked if the town could establish a bicycle pedestrian task force. Members thought that this project might best be addressed by a coalition made up of existing committees and groups. Mr. Barter explained some of his efforts to connect the Park with the town, including the Great Meadow Loop. Mr. Barter asked if and where any objections may come from regarding implementation. The group agreed that the blockages to trail use should be identified. Mr. Larson asked about the status of Cottage St. streetscape design. Mr. Barter asked how well the proposed one-way loop of downtown was received. Ms. Colburn asked about the Bloomfield access and Old Gurney Path along Route 3. She also asked whether any data had been collected regarding the use of the multi-use path along Route 3.

Ms. Colburn asked about the timeline for student projects. Mr. Cline explained that the COA senior project is a 10 week effort, amounting to 450 hours' worth of work. An independent study is 150 hours' worth of work. Ms. Colburn asked Ms. Devarayan about tactical urbanism and smaller projects. Any such projects would need to be determined by this fall as she will not be here in the winter. Commission members discussed who should oversee this effort. Should it be a task force or a collaboration of various existing organizations? Or do different groups take on different tasks? Everyone agreed to ask other experts and interested parties to attend future meetings. Members also agreed to write down ideas about what next, what more do we need to know and who should participate.

- Follow-up to Prior Commission Discussions Regarding Topics/Items Of Interest
Since much of the meeting focused on bicycle and pedestrian use, other topics/items of interest were not discussed.

- Other Possible Opportunities to Collaborate – BH Climate Emergency Task Force
Ms. Colburn explained that she had emailed Ruth Poland, Chair of the Task Force and the Task Force would like the Commission's input regarding Strategy 4 (Land Use) of the draft Climate Action Plan. The members agreed to review and discuss the Plan at the October meeting.

VII. Regular Business

- Election of Officers

Ms. Colburn made a motion to elect a slate of officers including: Ms. Colburn-Chair, Mr. Koffman-Vice Chair, and Mr. Larson-Secretary. Mr. Barter seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Commission Work Plan

Since so much time was spent talking with Mr. Cline and Ms. Devarajan, the members did not discuss or make any changes to the draft work plan but agreed that it would be appropriate to do so at a future meeting.

- Commission Membership and Budget

There was nothing new to report regarding membership. Ms. Colburn stated that to her knowledge, the Commission budget stands at \$500.

- Update: Comprehensive Planning Committee

Ms. Colburn stated that at the most recent CPC meeting (August 9), Ms. Gagnon, Town Planner, discussed the ongoing effort to work with other communities in the region. She also reported that the Planning Department has started meeting with various focus groups to determine if some components of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan are still applicable. The committee revisited the proposed Vision Statement for the 2035 Plan and made some additional revisions. Finally, the consultant reviewed the project timeline and next steps for the remainder of the year, which will include meetings between the committee and the Planning Board.

VIII. Items for the Next Agenda

Members discussed changing the date of the October meeting from the 9th to the 16th.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jacquie Colburn, Secretary*