

TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
March 2, 2021  
6:00 P.M.  
Skowhegan Community Center

PRESENT:

Tristen Hinkle, Chairman  
Kate Drummond, Vice Chairman  
Corey Hinkle  
Barry Sites  
Kevin McFadden  
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Dylan Engler, Corey Johnson

PUBLIC PRESENT: Matt Keister

**1) QUORUM:**

Conservation Commission meeting called to order at 6:00 PM, quorum was present.

**2) MINUTES OF THE December 1, 2020 CONSERVATION MEETINGS TO BE APPROVED:**

Motion by Tristen Hinkle to approve the December 1, 2020 Conservation Committee minutes as written.  
Seconded by Kate Drummond. Motion passed 5-0.

**3) OLD BUSINESS:**

-Trails Work Update

-Somerset environmental local working group meeting review.

Tristen said she did listen in on the Somerset Regional Working Group meeting and there was a lot of interesting information about grants that are available in Maine. They had mentioned other topics that they would like to learn more about which falls online with the online presentations that they want to do.

**4) NEW BUSINESS:**

-Environmental Virtual presentations

-Conservation Commission section on the Town of Skowhegan website

Tristen said that she will be putting up their mission statement online and still needs the little write ups that she had asked everyone to about themselves to put on there. The only one she got was from Barry. Everyone said they will work on them.

-Discussion of the proposed dam removal

Tristen invited Matt Keister to come to the meeting and talk a little bit about what might be happening. Matt is a teacher at the Skowhegan Middle School and has done a lot of research and work regarding fish movement and conservation. He has studied the history of fish movement throughout the waterways in Maine. Tristen said she has spoken with a few people regarding the possible dam removal and has heard some major concerns about it. People are worried about their property values along the river as well as the economic impact it could have on businesses such as Sappi. Matt Keister said he has spoken with some people as well in regards to Sappi. He said that Sappi currently draws their water from the Kennebec River by the Shawmut Dam. If these dams were to be removed that would have a severe impact on Sappi because the water level would drop drastically. He said that DEP and the state had

opened this discussion up to public comment and he isn't sure if the timeframe to receive comments has closed yet. Matt said they are discussing removal of 4 dams in total to allow for the fish conservation purposes. He believes that Brookfield has set aside a large amount of money to put towards installing fish lifts. Kate said that the original date that they were going to hold a meeting to listen to public comments was postponed due to a storm. The new date is March 15, 2021. She said public comments are still being accepted and you can join the link for the zoom meeting as well.

Matt discussed further what would work best as far getting the Atlantic Salmon up river around the dams instead of removing them and severely impacting the economy of the surrounding towns. Tristen said from what she had heard is that the lease for Brookfield is up this year and that is why there is such a big push on this now.

Kate said the really big picture they have to look at as well is the health of the oceans which are fed by rivers like the Kennebec. She also said that the Kennebec river is viewed as very special because of the number of different species of fish that can survive in it. She said she thinks this will be another point being made at the public hearing being held by the state.

Kate asked Matt if he had done any work on the Whitten Brook project here in town as well. Matt said he had started with a group of kids from his class and quickly discovered that unless these kids are truly into the science aspect of these types of projects, they aren't going to even understand what they are looking at. He said some of the work that was being done around that project was very scientific and all he had worked on is the fish passageways within the stream.

Tristen said that when she started on the commission; they were just finishing up the Whitten Brook project so she didn't have an opportunity to work on it much. She has just been informed that the 10-year restoration plan for Whitten Brook is up this year. So, the Conservation Commission needs to decide if they are going to look at further doing restoration work there and applying for more grants and such. She said that is something they will need to look into and discuss more. She said it is quite a big plan and she isn't sure where to even start on it. Kate said she would like to read that plan before they decide on if they want to apply for further grants. She said she had spoken with Jeff Dennis at DEP regarding Whitten Brook and he basically told her that there were aspects that hadn't been finished yet as well as checking to make sure everything that was put in is still working properly.

Matt said he will pass along further digital information to them all as well.

**5) UPCOMING WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES:**

None

**6) ADDITIONAL MEMBER & STAFF ITEMS:**

-Kevin- Comprehensive Plan

Motion by Tristen Hinkle to adjourn at 6:55 pm. Seconded by Kate Drummond. Motion passed 5-0.  
Next meeting scheduled for April 2021

Minutes approved \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

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Chairman