

Arrowsic Conservation Commission: March 18, 2025

Members present: Clarke Cooper, Phine Ewing, Karen Robbins, Jesse McMahon & Paul Schlein
Public present: Abby Westberry, David Dobbs

Called to order at 5:35.
Previous minutes accepted.

Mail: No mail

Annual report: At Jesse's recommendation, Phine asks whether the ACC should identify next steps for their work on identifying vulnerable habitats. Phine thinks this is unnecessary as the report summarizes activities completed, not to be completed. Commission members made other small adjustments.

Budget request: Phine reviews that water tests are the same price as last year (chlorophyll \$40, E.coli \$27, phosphorus \$45). Commission members discuss how many tests they should do this year: 3-5. Karen suggests following DEP & Lake Stewards of Maine protocols of either doing the tests every month or once annually in August. Commission members agree to keep the testing at 5 tests annually & keep their budget request at \$550, like last year. Commission chair salary: Karen emphasizes this is important as other committee chairs are provided with a stipend & the lack of recognition for the ACC chair may present the commission's work as less valuable. Phine explains that last year the town paid her \$500 for chairing which she then donated to the Alewife and Water Access funds, so she is bothered that the town paid \$41 in FICA and Medicare taxes in order to transfer \$500 to itself. Point granted, but members decide to claim the \$500, with Phine abstaining.

Roadside cleanup: Members schedule dates for the clean-up. April 26th from 930-1130 is selected. Phine will be coordinating with the Recycling Commission for this effort.

Pesticides: Paul explains that he contacted 14 other towns & organizations to see if they have ever conducted surveys around pesticides. Paul reviews that two towns responded (South Portland & Falmouth), but both towns have their own existing ordinances. Paul explains that this effort wasn't too helpful with providing Arrowsic on guidance for conducting their own survey. He suggests for next steps that the commission reviews the AI-generated survey that he developed. Karen says that the AI survey looked good & thought that she didn't support the inclusion of questions about pesticides inside the home. Jesse agrees & makes a small suggestion that maybe they could ask fewer questions. Paul agrees that, ideally, fewer questions might be desirable, but, in the case of the AI survey, all of the categories included were essential in gauging pesticide use in town. Members then further discuss length of survey, focus of survey on outdoor/indoor pesticide uses, etc. Most members agree that the conservation commission's task aligns with the management of outdoor pesticide use. This effort has been inspired by the increasing use of pesticides to control pests like ticks & mosquitos on their property. Jesse agreed to do a draft for the ACC to review at the next meeting.

Bioblitz: Phine explains that she contacted Dr. George Jacobson, who was pleased Arrowsic plans to do a re-study of the marsh used in the original work but hasn't yet provided guidance as to how to conduct the study. Members suggest several options for how to conduct the bioblitz, with a focus on the marshlands inventoried in the original Jacobson study. Members discussed scheduling their first blitz, with a focus on capturing bird activity. Members tentatively propose June, July, & September for Blitz times.

Fish Commission update: Karen summarizes that they will have another celebratory/provisional harvest this year on May 10th. The commission also received a \$25K grant that they're working on & plan to take eDNA samples to identify what species are in the pond, using the culvert and Sewall Creek. The Fish Commission has been collaborating with the Bigelow Labs in East Boothbay on the eDNA study. Karen proposes this issue to the Commission given that the Alewife Fund is co-managed by ACC + fish commission, so the ACC needs to approve the cost of the project. The Alewife fund has approximately \$8.7K & the proposed study costs from \$3-4.5K. Karen motions for the ACC to allow the Fish Commission to spend no more than \$4.5K on this study, with the caveat the 'the Fish Commission be really mindful' on how they spend the money. Motion passes.

Webpage: Members review new ACC webpage & make suggestions about improvements (i.e. updating members & commission activities).

Nature notes:

Jesse is reading a book on road ecology and notes that it's roadkill season. She heard a howl that she thinks must be more substantial than a standard coyote.

Phine spotted snowdrops on the 15th, and has a lot of turkey scat.

Karen spotted red-winged blackbirds on the 8th.

Meeting adjourned 6:55.