

Comprehensive Planning Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2024 at 6:00 pm

Present: David Asmussen, Chair; Yvette Meunier, Staff; Laura Arnold, Jason Lamoreaux, Buddy Schott, Bill Stanton, and Greg LeClair, Guest Speaker.

Absent: Jan Marks, Peggy Christian

The meeting was called to order at 6:00, with David presiding and Bill recording the minutes.

The November minutes were read and approved. No items were added to the agenda.

Greg LeClair, Habitat Program Director and Municipal Planning Biologist with DIFW, opened the meeting with a slide presentation on Open Space and Growth Management in Bowdoinham. He pointed out the uniqueness of the habitat in Bowdoinham because of Merrymeeting Bay, the only freshwater of its type in the world. It is tidal, and the rivers that enter it drain 40% of Maine's land mass. Several rare plant and animal species make their home here.

He talked about various animal and plant species in general, their habitats, and need for access. Some large animals like moose and bears require more than 500 acres of undeveloped space to live in, smaller species like hawks, deer, and reptiles require at least 100 acres, and song birds, small animals like squirrels, and most reptiles can survive on 19 acres or less. They all need to be able to move between habitats. Much wildlife has been lost because of development and the inability to move around due to blockages in movement paths.

Greg brought along large geographic maps of Bowdoinham and talked about the need for the town to inventory its various open spaces, plan for how to care for them, and thereby save the wildlife that live within them. He produced an aerial map showing how rapid development in Scarborough and lack of planning has resulted in destruction of much of its habitat. He showed another map that illustrated how Brunswick is protecting the habitat through the profuse use of overlay zoning in its rural district. Each overlay is accompanied by restrictions on how the land can be used. The committee then practiced identifying and outlining critical open spaces in Bowdoinham on a large map that Greg supplied.

Following that there was much discussion on how the committee should go about producing an open space plan, similar to Brunswick's systematic approach. The consensus was that creating an open space plan like Brunswick's will involve a lot of time-consuming detail work. A good way to start might be to look at simpler open space plans that some small towns have done. Greg emphasized that whatever we do should involve the town citizens each step along the way. This is the only way to ensure town buy-in.

In the minutes remaining, the committee discussed how to incorporate a tree management program into the open space plan. The consensus seemed to be that it may not be practical to try to deal with both issues at once.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Recorded: Bill Stanton