RECREATION AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Agenda

Thursday, February 19, 2026 – 6:00 pm
Westbrook Community Room - Spruce Room
Westbrook, ME 04092

ITEM
Opening Commissioners Present: Andrew Krantz, Bruce Wallingford, Warren Lain, Matt Brunner, David von Seggern Staff Present: Rebecca Spitella
Public Comment - No public comment
Commission Comment - Bruce Wallingford asked for an update on Community Center bike rack. Staff to report back
Staff Update Staff reported that the effort to build an ice rink behind the community center had challenges that prevented use this winter season, however the City intends to revitalize the idea for the next 2026/2027 winter season. Ice skating is functional at the East Bridge St. lot. Financials - Election of 2026 WRCC Officers Motion to elect Matt Brunner as 2026 chair made by Paul Drinan and seconded by Warren Lain. Motion passed 6-0 Motion to elect Paul Drinan as Vice Chair made by Matt Brunner and seconded by Warren Lain. Motion passed 6-0

Beaver Pond

- As requested by the Commission, Staff reached out to MDEP and DIFW regarding water quality and the use of an aeration system to address algal blooms. Staff was advised that an aeration system does not require specific permitting, however it also does not address algal growth and could actually increase growth due to disturbed sediment and redistribution of nutrients. The City performed a water quality report in Fall 2025 which showed higher than normal levels of ammonia and low levels of oxygen which is consistent with a previous test completed by USM. It was recommended that the City work to identify the source of pollution entering the pond/wetland, understanding that part of the challenges are the warm summer waters caused by a general lack of flow.

  Currently Beaver Pond is stocked during the spring. Summer stocking would not be recommended due to water temperatures not be compatible with aquatic life. Beaver Pond could potentially have a late fall/winter stocking, however the pond classification would need to be changed to support this. To change the pond classification the City would need to provide DIFW with water quality reports from the beginning of frost season, end of frost season and then monthly during the summer. There is capacity to complete these reports by the Sustainability Coordinator, who estimated a need for $2,500 for the purchase of water quality equipment. Staff is seeking commission support for the use of open space funds for this purpose.

The Commission asked Staff to see if area partners could assist with this work instead of purchasing the equipment and asked Staff to reach out to Presumpscot Regional Land Trust for more information. Staff to report back

- Legal review for permitted/prohibited uses

  Staff spoke with legal counsel regarding the use of Beaver Pond for ice skating and was advised that the City should not promote the use of the pond for ice skating unless the City is able to perform regular inspections of ice thickness and maintenance, which the City is not currently able to do. The public may skate on the pond, however that is under the discretion/responsibility of the individual to determine ice safety.

  Further legal review of the WRCC Ordinance and use of open space funds to occur with counsel.

- Spring 2026 trail building – Funding Request (Portland Trails)

  Staff reached out to Portland Trails to obtain a quote for the installation of an improved walking trail to access Beaver Pond from the cemetery and the end of Church St as identified during the June 2025 site walk. Portland Trails provided an estimate and included additional trail access to the cemetery from William Clarke Drive and Cross Street as well as wayfinding signage for $7,416. The Commission requested the addition of a bench along the pond along with the proposal presented. Commissioner David von Seggern expressed concern with the increase of public access to the pond and impacts to abutting property owners. Staff confirmed the pond is currently public and the trail improvements are in locations where existing unimproved trails exist.

  Motion to approve the use of $8,000 in open space funds to include proposed improvements and add a bench made by Matt Brunner and seconded by Warren Lain. Motion passed 5-1

Next Steps

Public Comment – No public comment

Commission Comment

- Bruce Wallingford requested a process for funding/project closeout to report back to the Commission to demonstrate project was implemented in the manner that was presented/approved.
- Matt Brunner stated the planned sledding party did not occur however Portland Trails held an outdoor recreational summit at their property located behind Conant St. and it was successful

Adjourn

Adjournment of Recreation and Conservation Commission meetings may be no later than 8:30pm.
Any agenda items that have been discussed will be placed on the next WRCC agenda.