



# South Portland Conservation Commission

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2024

*"The purpose of the Conservation Commission shall be to serve as a research, advisory and advocacy group on environmental and conservation issues relating to the City."*

~ South Portland Code of Ordinances, Sec. 2-77

### Membership Updates

#### **Current Membership (as of December 2024):**

- Peter Wilson – Chair; OSAC Representative
- Christopher Payne – Vice Chair; CPC Representative
- Caleb Abbott – Secretary
- Allison Springer
- Peter Ryan

#### **Committee Appointments & Resignations:**

- Elizabeth Morin – resigned September 2024
- Kathy Perkins – resigned October 2024
- Barbara Dee – resigned November 2024
- Peter Ryan – appointed November 2024

### Key Activities

#### **Projects**

- Developed proposal for use of Freshwater Wetland Compensation Fund for Barberry Creek water sampling in collaboration with WRP and MDEP
- Began initial discussions with City staff regarding eligible Freshwater Wetland Compensation Fund projects and potential updates to freshwater wetland ordinance (Ch. 27)
- Christopher Payne organized neighborhood cleanup of Barberry Creek

#### **Outreach & Education**

- Held 20 public meetings of the Conservation Commission
- Hosted joint workshop with the Open Space Acquisition Committee to discuss potential merger of two committees
- Participated in the City Council workshop on coastal resilience and storm damage in February 2024

#### **Advisory Comments & Recommendations**

- Sent memo to City Council recommending against merger of SPCC and OSAC
- Sent memo to City Council thanking them for their support of alternatives to impervious surface area expansion and wetland impacts associated with Portland Jetport expansion
- Sent memo to City Council recommending sign-on to support letter for the \$30M Maine Trails Bond (LD 1156) to be placed on state ballot, leading to City Council signature and eventual approval of bond by Maine voters in Nov. 2024

- Sent memo to City Manager regarding Facilities Committee report on future use of Mahoney Middle School urging that the property be tiered under the City’s tiering ordinance prior to any sale or development of the property
- Submitted comments on the draft South Portland 2040 Comprehensive Plan city-wide policies and Key Land Use Policy Area (KLUPA) strategies related to conservation, environmental protection, and open space preservation
- Sent memo to City Council recommending the City withdraw from the MOU supporting the Gorham Connector due to unreasonable environmental impact
- Sent memo to City Council urging City adoption of a “30x30” goal for 30% of conserved land by 2030

## 2019 Open Space Plan Implementation

<b>Table 9.1 – Open Space Implementation Action Plan</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>4. Protect Existing Open Spaces</b>		
4.1. Tiered Protection System for City-owned Lands	Ongoing	
4.2. Maintain a Geospatial Database of Existing Public Lands	Ongoing	SPCC to work with City staff to update existing mapping / database of public access lands in 2025
4.3. Establish Open Space Zoning District	Complete	Park & Open Space zoning districts created in 2021
<b>5. Acquire Additional Open Space</b>		
5.1. Private Property Acquisition Guidelines	Complete	Acquisition guidelines adopted by Council in 2022
5.2. Acquisition and Conservation Methods	Ongoing	
5.3. Partnership Opportunities	Ongoing	
<b>6. Preserve and Enhance Natural Resources and Wildlife Habitat</b>		
6.1. Natural Resource Mapping	Ongoing	See 4.2
6.2. Support Efforts in Natural Resource Protection	Ongoing	
6.3. Recognize the Role of Open Space in Climate Resiliency	Ongoing	Open space conservation as climate resilience strategy currently under consideration for 2040 Comprehensive Plan update
6.4. Hire a City Arborist	Complete	Hired August 2024
<b>7. Improve Connectivity and Access to Open Space</b>		
7.1. Improve Open Space Access	Ongoing	
7.2. Improve Open Space Connectivity	Ongoing	
7.3. Strengthen Planning Partnerships	Ongoing	
<b>8. Finance the Protection and Acquisition of Open Space</b>		
8.1. Revisions to Land Bank Ordinance	Complete	
8.2. Expand Financial Strategies	Ongoing	Annual funding of Open Space Fund currently under consideration for inclusion in 2040 Comprehensive Plan update
<b>9. Implementation</b>		
9.1. Open Space Plan Adoption	Complete	
9.2. Appointment of City Staff	Complete	
9.3. Conservation Commission and Appointed Subcommittees	Complete	

