



December 6, 2023

Maine Department of Transportation

16 SHS

Augusta, Maine 04332-0016

Dear Commissioner Van Note,

First off, I want to thank you and your staff for your work and commitment to the Cobbossee Trail Project here in Gardiner. What has been completed here in Gardiner is fantastic and it would not have been possible without the continued support of the Maine Department of Transportation.

Enclosed with this letter you will find the final report from the Cobbossee Trail Committee and the subsequent acceptance of that report by the Gardiner City Council. The Council and the Committee have decided that it is time to close that project and look into the future of Gardiner. I am aware that the project still has Department of Transportation funds that have remained unspent. I am writing to you today to formally request consideration that the money stay in Gardiner and be transferred to Phase 1 of the Downtown Sidewalk Improvement Project funded under the Maine Department of Transportation's BikePed Program. We have an active committee that has Department of Transportation members that is working to move the sidewalk project along efficiently and effectively. I believe that this money will be incredibly valuable to the future of the Gardiner Downtown's safety and economic development.

I look forward to hearing from you and your team regarding this request. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Carlton", written over a white background.

Andrew R. Carlton

City Manager

**City of Gardiner Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee**  
**Summary Report and Recommendations**  
**11/15/2023**

In 2005 and 2006 the City of Gardiner was awarded grants from the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to develop the **Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail**, a pedestrian and bicycle trail that would connect the Cobbossee Stream Corridor and adjacent neighborhoods with the city's downtown, the Kennebec River Rail Trail, and other community resources, such as Waterfront Park. This active transportation infrastructure would be one piece of a comprehensive effort to spur mixed-use economic development along the Cobbossee Stream Corridor. The Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail would also celebrate the natural beauty of the stream and highlight its history as the industrial heart of the city. The city incorporated the Cobbossee Corridor Master Plan, prepared by Kent Associates, as part of its application to MDOT.

Between 2007 and 2009, the city worked with MDOT on the planning and preliminary design for the trail. The city contracted with Malone & MacBroom for preliminary design engineering services in 2007. In 2009 the city council approved the preliminary design report. At that time the cost for the trail project was estimated at \$1.35 million, with a required local match of 20 percent. However, before work on the trail could begin, economic conditions changed, and the city lacked sufficient local resources. The plan was put on hold. (Please see attached timeline.)

In 2012, the city and MDOT discussed the possibility of beginning the trail as part of the replacement of the Maine Avenue and Bridge Street bridges, slated for 2014-2015 and 2018-2019 respectively. The new estimated cost of the project in 2012 was \$1.42 million.

In 2016 the city and MDOT began Phase One of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail project, working with the Bridge Committee consisting of city officials, citizens and MDOT. As so much time had elapsed since the preliminary design for the trail, the city in 2018 obtained an updated opinion from Malone & MacBroom on the current condition of the timber railroad trestle that spans the stream. (Please see attached report.)

Phase One of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail begins at the Gardiner terminus of the Kennebec River Rail Trail at the corner of the Hannaford parking lot on Maine Avenue, continues with a wider sidewalk and enhanced striping along Maine Avenue, over a beautiful pedestrian bridge running parallel to the new Maine Avenue Bridge, turns right from Maine Avenue onto Arcade Street, and follows the stream through the Arcade, to the new Bridge Street Bridge. (See attached maps)

In January of 2021, the City Council established the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee of city officials, staff, and citizens, to work with MDOT, to develop a plan to complete Phase Two of the trail, which would take the trail north on Water Street, turn right up Winter Street, left onto Summer Street Extension, cross over the stream, and along the state's railroad right of way on the southerly side of the stream, and finally back out to Route 126. Members of the Bridge Committee were recruited to be part of the new committee.

In the fall of 2022, while conducting research and planning for Phase Two, the trail committee oversaw construction of the final trail section that continues under the new Bridge Street Bridge, bringing the trail back to the downtown just upstream from the intersection of Bridge and Water streets, completing Phase One. The construction costs for this final section of trail were more than \$400,000, or more than double the original budget estimates. (MDOT absorbed the excess costs.)

In addition to increases in overall costs for the project, time has taken its toll on the historic Cobbossee Stream railroad trestle. The original design for the trestle was to repurpose it into a stunning 700-foot pedestrian and bicycle bridge crossing a dramatic bend in the stream. The 2018 Malone & MacBroom analysis of the trestle's condition suggested that using the trestle as the crossing for the trail might not be feasible due to advanced deterioration and cost increases.

After an RFP process assisted by MDOT, The Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee asked the city to commission Stantec engineering, which had designed the Maine Avenue pedestrian bridge, to recommend alternative stream crossings. Perhaps not surprisingly, the February 2022 report indicated the cost for an alternative pedestrian/bicycle bridge was estimated at between \$1.5 and \$2 million. (Please see attached Stantec report.)

The Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee has determined that, with the increased construction costs, and the estimated costs of a new bridge to cross the stream, the funds remaining from the original MDOT grant are insufficient to complete Phase Two of the trail as originally designed. After completion of Phase One of the trail in 2022, only \$595,000 remains in the original transportation grant, which includes the city's required 20 percent match. MDOT is now anxious to close out the project.

**Honoring the spirit of the original vision while bringing the current project to a reasonable conclusion, the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee recommends the following steps be undertaken by the city to construct more of the trail in smaller sections, as funds allow. The committee also recommends that the city request of MDOT that the funds remaining from the city's grant be used for enhancements to the completed Phase One of the Cobbossee Stream Trail and for other active transportation priorities in the city.**

It should be noted that the city's Comprehensive Plan and the "Heart of Gardiner: The Future of the Downtown," both cite the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail as a priority for the city. With more than 20 years of work and planning, with this level of community support, it is our hope that the city will find a way to complete this trail, as well as implement the other economic development strategies that will develop this corridor as once envisioned.

The full committee report attached to this summary includes a preliminary funding plan for completion of the project when the city deems it feasible, and a case for support for the project. Background information, and the above-mentioned Stantec preliminary design for a new stream crossing, are attached as appendices. There are also descriptive maps of the area prepared for the city by Colby College "Jan Plan" students in January 2023, under the direction of the committee.

Therefore, it is the consensus of the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee to recommend that:

1. The city builds a small park or scenic overlook along Cobbossee Stream at the end of Summer Street Extension, on city and Maine DOT rail right of way property near the beginning of the historic train trestle that spans the stream. This would provide access to view the stream and observe wildlife, celebrate the natural beauty of the stream, and encourage its conservation. If feasible, the city could establish adjacent parking on city property (map 33 and lots # 67 & 68) as a trailhead for that portion of the Cobbossee Stream Trail, obtaining permission or easements if necessary.

Until the city builds this park or scenic overlook, the neighborhood around Winter and Summer streets would be the interim terminus of the Cobbossee Stream trail, enhancing connections between this neighborhood and the downtown and city amenities. The city might also consider if there are enhancements that would improve the view of the stream from the Winter Street bridge crossing.

2. That the city, with MDOT guidance, establish a bicycle lane north on Water Street with road striping, and install signs from the current end of the Cobbossee Stream Trail at Water and Bridge streets, to guide trail users along the existing sidewalk and the new bicycle lane on the stream side of Water Street, to the park mentioned in item 1, or the Winter/Summer Street neighborhood as an alternative temporary terminus. (Gardiner Main Street currently has a \$15,000 grant from Bicycle Coalition of Maine to enhance bicycling in the city, which perhaps could be applied here.)
3. That the city conduct a more comprehensive study of the sidewalks and walking paths throughout the city, perhaps with assistance from Kennebec Valley Council of Governments for a facilitator or other planning assistance, to make recommendations for city-wide sidewalk and trail improvements and active transportation interconnectivity. State and federal programs such as Safe Streets and Roads for All, could be accessed.
4. That the city considers an application for a MDOT Planning Partnership Initiative grant (a 50/50 match is required) to create a city-wide comprehensive plan to identify priority active transportation corridors and to improve access for pedestrians and bicyclists in the city.
5. That the city should support active transportation interconnectivity with regional trails using unused assets studied by the MDOT's Rail Use Advisory Council, and other trails of state and national significance, such as the East Coast Greenway.
6. That the current Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee assist the city and MDOT during the completion of the trail work outlined in these recommendations.
7. That the city continues to build community support for and seek funding to complete Phase Two of the Cobbossee Stream Trail, across a pedestrian/bicycle bridge (such as the one designed by Stantec under the auspices of this trail committee) near the historic

trestle, proceeding north and utilizing the remainder of the state's rail right of way along the Cobbossee Stream, connecting the trail back to Route 126.

The committee also suggests that the Cobbossee Stream Trail could eventually be connected to the Harrison Avenue Nature Trail via a third pedestrian bridge across the stream, between the old Gardiner Paperboard and Kruger dams, at approximately the location of former Dam 5. (Map 30, lot 36) When Upstream is successful in restoring fish passage, this would be an excellent observation location.

8. That the city continues to work with community and environmental organizations, such as "Upstream," to protect and enhance the natural beauty and promote the ecology of the Cobbossee Stream as a key natural feature of the community.

Recommendations for the City to request of MDOT under the current agreement:

1. We suggest that, as soon as possible, the city work with MDOT to review the project deliverables for the closeout of this project. Use remaining funds (\$595,000) for this project to finish the deliverables as listed in the original work plan, including but not limited to lighting, plantings, and signage. The city should work with MDOT on the removal of invasive plant species along the banks of the stream, which took hold during the bridge construction period.

Signage, and perhaps ground surface painting, should make it evident to trail users that the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail is connected to the Kennebec River Rail Trail via the Maine Avenue pedestrian bridge, and that it continues along Arcade Street, under the Bridge Street Bridge, and back to Water Street. Landscaping for the completed trail would entice people into the area and enhance the experience as an actual trail, not just a sidewalk along a stream.

**Any remaining funds from the original grant should be used for active transportation projects in Gardiner.**

2. We recommend that the city request that MDOT takes whatever steps the department deems necessary to prevent public access to the old train trestle.
3. We also recommend that the city confirms to MDOT its intention to utilize this railroad right of way corridor for completion of Phase Two of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail when funds allow. We also recommend that the city should request that MDOT communicate with the city if the department plans to sell, convey, or in any other way dispose of the state's railroad right of way along Cobbossee Stream. If there is an agreement between the city and MDOT, we recommend that the city council consider review by the city's solicitor.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve the city with this Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail through completion of Phase One and stand ready to assist with the completion of Phase Two whenever the city is ready.

The Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail:  
Committee Report, Case for Support and Funding Suggestions  
November 15, 2023

**I. Introduction**

Recognizing the potential of an interconnecting trail system for alternative transportation and for recreation, in 2016 Gardiner and the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) began the Cobbossee Stream Trail project, Phase One, in conjunction with the replacement of two bridges over the Cobbossee Stream. This first half-mile-long section of the Cobbossee Stream Trail now connects to the Kennebec River Rail Trail, with a new pedestrian bridge and improved connections west along the Cobbossee Stream, behind the city's downtown.

In January of 2021, the Gardiner City Council established the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee, comprising citizens and city staff whose charge was to work with MDOT to make recommendations for Phase Two of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail, along with funding recommendations. The vision of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail is to connect the neighborhoods adjacent to the stream with the downtown and with an existing interconnecting system of trails along the Kennebec River, including the Kennebec River Rail Trail and the Merrymeeting Trail. The trail would be a key part of a comprehensive effort to spur economic development in the Cobbossee Corridor.

This report is the result of the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee's work, and the basis for the committee's recommendations to the Gardiner City Council, which are summarized below.

The members of the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee appreciate the opportunity to serve the city and to make recommendations regarding completion of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail. Because of the passage of time and increased costs, and the decision to not rehabilitate the trestle as originally planned, the original grant from MDOT will not allow us to continue the trail as envisioned at this time, but our recommendations provide for a reasonable conclusion to the project until the city has additional resources to continue the trail. We believe the information in this report will allow the city to pursue completion of the trail when additional funds are available.

**Members of the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee**

Andrew Carleton, City Manager

Patricia Hart, Mayor

Gay Grant, Committee Chair/City Council

John Cameron, Public Works Director

Melissa Lindley, Economic Development Director

Dakota Hewlett, Maine Department of Transportation Active Transportation Planner

Kate Carnes, citizen

Sara Maschino, citizen

Tom Reeves, citizen

Allison Wells, citizen  
Greg Ponte, Upstream  
Tamara Whitmore, Gardiner Main Street  
Kelly Hare, Recording Secretary/Public Works

## **II. A Case for Support**

### **Background**

The City of Gardiner, Maine, in Kennebec County, 45 miles up the Kennebec River from the coast, is located less than an hour from Portland, the state's economic hub. The city is also situated on the Interstate 95 corridor, and only minutes from the state's capital of Augusta.

Founded in 1754 by Sylvester Gardiner as Gardinerstown Plantation, at the place where the Cobbosseecontee (Cobbossee) Stream flows into the Kennebec River at its head of navigation, Gardiner flourished. The 130-foot fall of the Cobbossee Stream in its last mile, ideal for waterpower for mills, helped the town grow steadily, and eventually eight dams were built on the stream. (Three dams remain.)

By 1850, when it was incorporated as a city, Gardiner was home to 6,486 people, multiple mills, factories, shipbuilding facilities, businesses, and shops. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of steady, post-industrial decline, but the tide has begun to turn. In the 2020 Census, the city saw an increase in population for the first time in 30 years, with its population rebounding to 5,961. Today's Gardiner residents once more hope to capitalize on their city's location and natural resources, with a focus on *appreciating and preserving* the beauty of the landscape and its quality of place.

This statement covers the area of the city detailed as the **Cobbossee Stream Corridor** in the City of Gardiner's [Comprehensive Plan](#). The vision of the trail is to celebrate the unique natural beauty of the Cobbossee Stream, expand opportunities for active transportation in the corridor, and enhance the city's walkability. The trail will connect the city's downtown with neighborhoods that include three city schools and the local Boys & Girls Club.

### **Gardiner's Future Envisioned**

As the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee met, a group of other citizens, city staff, local businesses and economic development professionals was engaged in developing a new plan for the revitalization of the city's historic downtown. In December of 2021, the City Council endorsed the new [Downtown Master Plan](#). The Downtown Master Plan's key recommendations include the completion of the Cobbossee Stream Trail. The Cobbossee Stream Trail's connection to the Kennebec River Rail Trail and the Merrymeeting Trail offers the city a unique opportunity to make its location at the confluence of the Cobbossee Stream and the Kennebec River as important to its future as it was to its past.

This network of trails is part of the East Coast Greenway, a 3,000-mile network of trails, paths and shared roadways that will connect all the major cities of the Atlantic Coast,

from Key West Florida to Calais, Maine. The Downtown Master Plan emphasizes the city's green spaces and walkability. "The more that Gardiner can extend its network of trails to service this corridor, the more it will become a destination, drawing recreation-based economic value from its strategic position in this national resource." (p. 27 Heart of Gardiner, Downtown Master Plan, December 2021)

### **The Cobbossee Stream Corridor**

The Cobbossee Stream Corridor's natural beauty and historic character make it a local and a regional asset. The core vision begins with the development of a bicycle and pedestrian trail and preservation of open spaces along the Cobbossee Stream. The reasons for the development of the Cobbossee Corridor Trail are multi-faceted and include:

- Bringing people into the corridor by enhancing the city's walkability and open spaces with a trail through the Cobbossee Stream Corridor, connecting to the Kennebec River Rail Trail, and connecting the downtown, adjacent neighborhoods, and schools.
- Promoting mixed-use economic development in the corridor, including housing, recreational and light commercial activity.
- Recognizing the stream as "a revitalization asset," highlighting its natural beauty, promoting its conservation, and honoring its significance to the city's history.
- Expanding opportunities for active transportation in the city.

### **Progress Toward the Vision**

The City of Gardiner adopted the [Cobbossee Corridor Master Plan](#) in 2005. In 2006 the city signed a Transportation Project Agreement with the MDOT, and federal and state funds were assigned to the project. In 2009 a preliminary design for the pedestrian/bike trail estimated the cost of the project at \$1.42 million. During the ensuing years, economic downturns and other city projects put the project on the back burner, but in 2015, MDOT and the city revived the project. At that time \$727,804 in federal funds were still available for the project (requiring a local match of \$181,951).

The city established a bridge advisory committee and in 2016 the city passed a resolution to fund construction of the trail. In 2016 Phase I of the trail project was created in the MDOT system. In 2019 the new Main Street Bridge project was begun, and with it, Phase I of the Cobbossee Corridor Stream trail.

Phase I of the trail now connects with the Kennebec River Rail Trail, featuring a pedestrian bridge across the stream adjacent to the new bridge, a sidewalk north along the stream beside the Arcade Parking area, under the Bridge Street Bridge, back out to Water Street. This was completed in the fall of 2022.

Plans for Phase II are to continue the trail north to Winter Street, across the stream to the end of Summer Street, taking a left along the former railroad right of way to a new



pedestrian bridge high across the stream, affording a spectacular view of the whitewater coming around a sharp curve in the stream. The original plan called for the reuse of the old railroad trestle, but engineers have determined the trestle to be too deteriorated, and MDOT has plans to remove it in conjunction with this project. The trail will continue along the MDOT railroad right of way and connect back with State Route 126 just beyond the building currently used by a distillery and a pump manufacturer.

Since 2005, several of the improvements outlined in the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Master Plan have been accomplished, including sidewalks connecting the middle school and upper Water Street and the New Mills Bridge replacement, as part of MDOT's "Safe Routes to Schools" program.

A [Historic Downtown Walking Trail](#) has been established around the city's downtown, and the city and Kennebec Land Trust have acquired property along the north shore of the Cobbossee Stream. A group of local volunteers organized by the Gardiner Rotary has developed a [Nature Trail](#) on the Harrison Avenue side of the Cobbossee Stream that goes to the American Tissue Dam. Another group of citizens, called "Upstream," are working with state and federal agencies to restore anadromous fish to their native spawning grounds in Cobbossee Stream and its watershed.

### **Environmental Significance**

The Cobbossee Stream has provided abundant, rich resources for generations of people and wildlife. This meandering twenty-mile stream, along with the dozens of lakes and ponds of the Cobbossee watershed that drain into it, was once home to millions of alewives and other native sea-run fish species. More than a dozen different fish species including American shad, American eel, blueback herring and alewife can be found here.

Upstream, the many birds that feed on these fish, like the Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Herring Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, and Belted Kingfisher have rebounded. Mammals flourish here as well, such as mink and otter. Perhaps most dramatic is the alewife as they migrate from the ocean up the Kennebec River, and into the stream, where they congregate by the score as they attempt to return to their ancestral spawning grounds above three dams that currently block their passage.

Alewives are important baitfish for Maine's lobster industry, and to the health of the Gulf of Maine, where it is a tremendous food source for cod, halibut, tuna, haddock, and other great ocean species. For this reason, alewives are vital to Maine's ground fishery and the jobs and economic benefits it provides.

The alewife ties rivers and streams such as the Cobbossee to the ocean, bringing important marine nutrients and creating a healthy, vibrant ecosystem. The alewife is a keystone species that feeds us all, and Upstream has been working diligently for restoration of this species back into the Cobbossee Watershed. Members of the group have been part of the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee.

### **History of the Cobbossee Stream**

Native American tribes named the stream “Cobbosseecontee,” or “place of abundant sturgeon,” to describe the stream’s productive waters. The stream attracted early colonial settlers who needed process power for their sawmills and gristmills. In 1761 workers rerouted the flow of the stream to turn paddles and wheels providing an engine for industry and preventing millions of sea-run fish from migrating to Cobbossee watershed.

Pond Town (Winthrop) was devastated by this loss and petitioned for fish passage to implore what was then called Gardinerstown Plantation to allow the alewives to pass the dams, as state laws required. The courts favored the dams and a total of eight granite dams were built in downtown Gardiner. Not a single returning alewife has been able to swim freely to its ancestral home since 1761.

According to records in the Gardiner Public Library Archives, in 1866, 30 manufacturing sites occupied the eight dams in downtown Gardiner, employing 410 workers and generating \$2,000,000 in annual product, as cited in “Water Powers of Maine”. Three dams remain today, though the stream is no longer used for manufacturing. Today the dyes and chemicals that once made the stream an open sewer are gone, and the burying of hazardous waste along its banks is finished.

With millions of returning fish, Herman Wanningen of the Netherlands, and founder of World Fish Migration Day, stated Cobbossee Stream would be the largest alewife restoration in the world. The ecological and economic benefit that would result would be a tremendous boost to local economies as well as the wildlife. Communities such as Damariscotta Mills and Benton, where fish passage has been restored, are already reaping great benefits even as they contribute to the greater good of the Kennebec River and the Gulf of Maine. (From materials provided by Upstream.)

### **Birds of the Stream**

Throughout the year, the waters of Cobbossee Stream, from where it disgorges into the Kennebec River to the lower reaches of Pleasant Pond upstream, support an amazing diversity of bird species. Waterfowl, including Hooded Mergansers, Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, Ring-necked Ducks, American Black Ducks, and Mallards, are found here in fall and spring migration and even in winter in pockets of open water.

In early spring, when there is little insect food available for the first arriving land bird migrants, birds like Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, and Chimney Swifts swirl over the stream, often in great numbers, to feed on the emerging aquatic insects that help them survive the harsh conditions. From April through May, the shrubby edges of the stream and the forest along the upstream portion, provide critical stop-over habitat and food for significant numbers of brightly colored migrant warblers of several dozen species, along with other songbirds such as vireos, flycatchers, orioles, and sparrows.

The Harrison Avenue Nature Trail on the north side of the stream has become a destination for birders each spring because of the concentration of warblers including species that can be hard to find during migration. These include Cape May Warblers,

Bay-breasted Warblers, and Blackpoll Warblers, to name a just a few species often seen here in spring.

Even the narrow edge of trees and shrubs along the lowest portion of the stream between the A1 Diner and the Kennebec River can host surprising numbers of migrant songbirds in migration. In summer, riparian species that specialize in habitat along the shore of streams, rivers, and lakes—species like Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, and Eastern Kingbird—nest and raise their young here.

The forest blocks between Harrison Avenue Nature Trail and the Winter Street Bridge provide not only habitat for nesting year-round resident birds like Hairy, Downy, and Pileated Woodpeckers; Black-capped Chickadees, and Tufted Titmouse, but also species found here only in summer such as Red-eyed Vireo, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-and-white Warbler, and American Redstart.

### **Economic Significance**

Expanding opportunities for active transportation and improving connectivity and walkability are key elements for the economic development of the city. Quality of place attributes such as bike access, walking trails, access to nature, and quiet, tree-lined residential streets are important to attract younger people to the region. These are key elements when businesses are considering relocation, and studies show it is essential, especially in technology businesses which specifically seek communities with access to the outdoors.

Economic impact studies of trails across the country have shown that properties adjacent to trails increase in value by five to ten percent. Realtors in the Kennebec Valley have seen this to hold true along the Kennebec River Rail Trail and frequently highlight access to the trail in their advertisements for property. The completion of Gardiner's trail networks holds significant placemaking and economic activity potential for downtown Gardiner.

Linking the Cobbossee Trail with existing recreational assets such as Waterfront Park and the Kennebec River Rail Trail can make Downtown Gardiner a destination, attracting businesses and tourism to the local economy, while improving the quality of life for Gardiner residents. The connection of the Cobbossee Stream Trail to the downtown businesses and Waterfront Park is recognized in the city's Comprehensive Plan as an important potential contributor to the growth of the City of Gardiner.

### **Recreational Opportunities**

In addition to those who come to the Cobbossee Stream to experience its rich and diverse natural wonders, the stream also draws sport fishing, kayakers, and whitewater rafters. In fact, the stream is the only place in this region where there is whitewater that is also accessible to a downtown.

Four years ago, the Gardiner Rotary Club led the effort to develop the Harrison Avenue Nature Trail on the north bank of Cobbossee Stream. This thickly wooded trail meanders

along the stream, through a quiet residential neighborhood that includes Gardiner Area High School and Gardiner Regional Middle School, as well as the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Kennebec Valley. Sidewalk improvements have increased pedestrian access among these key community assets, and there is potential to create a web of trails and sidewalks throughout the city, connecting to the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail, the Kennebec River Rail Trail, and the Merrymeeting Trail, as envisioned in the 2021 Downtown Master Plan.

### **Transportation Infrastructure Connections**

Multi-modal transportation opportunities in interconnected trails systems have been shown to increase public health through the reduction in greenhouse gasses and increased physical activity and are key elements in the state of Maine's Transportation Improvement Plan as well as MDOT's Active Transportation Plan.

The Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail will have significant regional impact through its connection to the Kennebec River Rail Trail, and its connection to the Merrymeeting and the East Coast Greenway system of trails. These trails will improve Gardiner and the region's status as tourist destinations. Connecting the valley communities and their amenities will spur the right kind of development along the stream, benefiting Gardiner and the region.

The Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail is also connected to Gardiner's Waterfront Park, with its docks and boat access to the Kennebec River. Increasing recreational river traffic once again makes the City of Gardiner's location at the confluence of the Cobbossee Stream and the Kennebec River at its head of navigation a key to its growth and development. A trail system providing pedestrian and bicycle access to the heart of the city through the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail will support healthy transportation alternatives and increase eco-tourism to the region.

### **Historical Significance of the Cobbossee Corridor**

While other municipalities may be situated on rivers, Gardiner is unique in having both the Kennebec River and Cobbossee Stream. Honoring the history of the stream is an important part of the development of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail. Presenting the history of the diverse groups who have lived on its banks encourages the inclusion that makes a community strong, resilient, and welcoming. Our shared history gives us a natural touch point with each other so we can build those relationships.

For some, the Cobbossee Trail will be a place to take in the many natural wonders it has to offer, for others it may be a place to walk, bike, or sit in the peace of the early morning, perhaps join friends, or fish along its banks. The Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail will also be Americans with Disabilities Act compliant and will allow people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the Trail.

In 2018, as the bridge replacement projects were underway and the trail was begun, a sub-committee was formed by the city to address enhancements to the Cobbossee Stream Trail. It was important to provide those using the trail with some sense of the history and

natural resources of this remarkable area. From the beginning the sub-committee was interested in maintaining, as much as possible, the natural beauty of the area and to allow for traditional uses such as fishing and observing wildlife. It was important to keep the plantings natural and to use existing materials, such as granite from the area, for new purposes such as benches. Throughout this process, the sub-committee worked closely with the Landscape Architect from the MDOT.

Those who use the Cobbossee Stream Corridor Trail will progress through the many changes and uses that have occurred on the stream. To help inform those using the trail, several placards have been developed. A placard celebrating the Native American settlement of the stream was developed through MDOT, in collaboration with James Francis, the Penobscot Nation's Tribal Historian, and illustrator.

Placards give the history of the industrialization of the stream in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Between 1754 and 1917 mills flourished and at one time eight dams controlled the water flow. These dams powered many industries including the manufacture of wood products, shoes, paper, tools, and clothing. This growth in industry fueled a robust economy and a growth in population. Two other placards celebrate the natural gifts of the fishery, specifically the importance of the alewife population, which supports a robust population of eagles and ospreys.

From its inception, the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee considered the Trestle Bridge to be a major attraction for potential users of the trail. The Trestle Bridge provided rail connection for manufacturers along the stream, to move their goods and supplies more efficiently and economically. For many years the concept of a spur track from the main railroad to the paper mills was discussed. The Trestle Bridge was seen as an incentive to keep the manufacturers in Gardiner, and thereby benefit the city by creating a vibrant economic base.

The discussions for this spur were in the works before 1885. On December 22, 1899, the *Daily Reporter Journal* noted that the blasting of the ledge and the building of the retaining wall had been completed. And an article in the *Reporter Journal* dated February 23, 1900, announced the completion of the rail spur project, including the Trestle Bridge. As with many manufacturing businesses in Maine, their fortunes waxed and waned and eventually many of the mills and businesses associated with the stream ceased to exist.

Over time the Trestle Bridge fell into a state of disrepair having been last used in 1982. Although the original dream of refurbishing does not at this time seem feasible, the desire to have a pedestrian and bicycle bridge to cross over the stream remains. A new Pedestrian Bridge will take pedestrians over this dynamic and beautiful stretch of water. The trail committee will work with MDOT to see if any portions of the Trestle Bridge can be salvaged as a memorial to the city's industrial history.

### **Potential Sources of Funding**

As part of its charge to the Cobbossee Stream Trail Committee, the City Council asked the committee to consider and recommend a funding plan for the completion of the project.

In conjunction with our partners at MDOT, and city staff the committee has drawn up a plan that includes a mix of federal, state, and local transportation improvement funds. In addition to public funds, the committee recommends that the city apply for grants from public and private foundations for support for the project (a list of potential funders is included below) and to consider a public campaign for donations from local businesses, foundations, and private citizens for the project. We believe there will be significant interest among the citizens and business community to invest in this key recreational, public infrastructure and economic development project.

MDOT has advised us that the pedestrian bridge being a municipal-state partnership and the right to name the new pedestrian bridge is a local decision. We suggest that this naming opportunity could provide the city with the ability to honor an important individual or group, or to perhaps use the bridge naming as a fundraising opportunity.

Below is a list of potential funders the city should consider for grant funding opportunities for the trail. It is an initial list and further grant research should be conducted as the city prepares the project budget. Gardiner Main Street has received a \$15,000 grant from the Bicycle Coalition of Maine and this grant may be able to assist this project.

50k to 120k	Maine Parks and Lands	<a href="https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/recreational_trails_program.shtml">https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/recreational_trails_program.shtml</a>	The Recreational Trails Program
Various	Department of the Interior/National Park Service	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=P21AS00509">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=P21AS00509</a>	Land and Water Conservation Fund Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program
Various	Alfond Foundation	<a href="https://www.haroldalfondfoundation.org/areas-of-focus/youth-and-community/">https://www.haroldalfondfoundation.org/areas-of-focus/youth-and-community/</a>	YOUTH & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS
Various	USDA Rural Development	<a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/me">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/me</a>	Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant

			Program in Maine
25M max	US Department of Transportation	<a href="https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants">https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants</a>	Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants. RAISE, formerly known as BUILD and TIGER.
VariOUS	Maine inland Fish and Wildlife	<a href="https://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/grants/outdoor-heritage-fund.html#when">https://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/grants/outdoor-heritage-fund.html#when</a>	Maine Outdoor heritage fund
10,000	Maine Community Foundation	<a href="https://www.mainecef.org/apply-for-a-grant/available-grants-deadlines/">https://www.mainecef.org/apply-for-a-grant/available-grants-deadlines/</a>	Community Building
10k-20k	Onion Foundation	<a href="https://www.onionfoundation.org/">https://www.onionfoundation.org/</a>	Environmental Projects
250k to 2M	US Department of Transportation	<a href="https://www.transit.dot.gov/TODPilot">https://www.transit.dot.gov/TODPilot</a>	2021 Competitive Funding Opportunity: Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning
250k	USDA Rural Development	<a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/initiatives/rural-placemaking-innovation-challenge">https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/initiatives/rural-placemaking-innovation-challenge</a>	RURAL PLACEMAKING INNOVATION CHALLENGE
15,000	Maine Community Foundation	<a href="https://www.mainecef.org/apply-for-a-grant/available-grants-deadlines/">https://www.mainecef.org/apply-for-a-grant/available-grants-deadlines/</a>	Conservation for All



CITY OF  
**Gardiner**  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES *Moving Forward*  
GARDINER CITY COUNCIL  
WEDNESDAY, November 25, 2023

**1. ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

City Council Present: Mayor Hart, Councilor Grant, Councilor Frey, Councilor Berry, Councilor Cusick, Councilor Greenleaf, Councilor Babcock.

City Employee's Present: City Manager Carlton, Kathy Cutler- City Clerk, John Cameron- Public Works Director, Todd Pilsbury- Chief of Police, Doug Clark- Waste Water Director, Rick Sieberg- Chief of Fire, Melissa Lindley- Economic Development Director, Dawn Thistle- Library Director.

Other Present: Secretary of State- Shenna Bellows, Dee Berglund, Aurelie Allen, Carol Schumaker, Connie Greenleaf, Kate Carnes, Debbie Kimball.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** There are no comments.

**3. PETITIONS / PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a) Public Hearing Regarding an increase to the Minimum Sewer Rate

**Mayor Hart opened the public hearing at 6:09pm. There being no comment she closed the public hearing at 6:10pm.**

**4. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a) Approval of City Council Meeting Minutes from November 1, 2023

**Action: Councilor Frey moved to approve the City Council minutes from November 1, 2023. Councilor Berry seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**

- b) Approval of a Mayoral Proclamation

*The City of Gardiner is taking this time to recognize Carol Schumaker for her time and dedication to the election, and the City of Gardiner. She has lived in the City for almost 24 years and has worked at the election every single year she has lived here. This proclamation includes making November 25, 2023, the 'Carol Schumaker Day'.*

**Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to approve the Mayoral Proclamation for Carol Schumaker. Councilor Cusick seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**



- c) Consent to approve a Mayoral appointment to the Parks Committee  
**Action: Councilor Grant moved to approve the Mayoral appointment of Margaret Barter, Cathy Calgano, Mark MacDonald, Tamara Whitmore, and Melissa Lindley to the Parks Committee. Councilor Frey seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**
- d) Certification of the November 7, 2023, election results  
**Action: Councilor Berry moved to certify the election results from November 7, 2023, results. Councilor Greenleaf seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**
- e) Cobbossee Trail Report from the Cobbossee Trail Committee  
*More information regarding this can be found on the City of Gardiner website.*  
Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to accept the Cobbossee Trail committee report. Councilor Berry seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.
- f) Consent to spend \$16,000.00 in remaining ARPA funds to replace the Bobcat Side by Side  
*We currently have a Bobcat side by side, purchased used, quite a few years ago. This current UTV is beyond repair. This is a big asset to the city, to have this tool for the volunteers working around the city so they can transport their necessities needed to do the work they do.*  
**Action: Councilor Berry moved to approve spending up to \$16,000 in ARPA funds to replace the Bobcat Side by Side. Councilor Grant seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**
- g) Advise and consent to an increase to the minimum Sewer rate  
*City Manager Carlton- Just a reminder of what we are asking for is a 30% increase shared across the board for the users. Councilor Grant- why is it just an increase on Gardiner sewer users, not on everyone who uses the service? City Manager Carlton- The other towns using this service will see an increase at some point, they pay a portion of the overall budget for wastewater. Gardiner citizens are the only rate payers for wastewater. The other communities will see an increase when phase two increase goes out. Mayor Hart- This is always painful to increase because it hits the most vulnerable, the solution that they came up with is a way to spread it out to everyone instead of just to the larger families.*  
**Action: Councilor Cusick moved to approve the 30% increase to the minimum sewer rate effective for the January 2024 billing. Councilor Frey seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**
- h) Approval of a large event on December 1, 2023, in Dearborn Park; Tree Lighting  
**Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to approve the large event in Dearborn Park; Tree Lighting. Councilor Cusick seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**



- i) Approval of The Celebration of Lights on December 9, 2023

**Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to approve the event Celebration of Lights. Councilor Grant seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**

- j) Department Head Reports

*Thank you to the department heads for the reports.*

- k) Consent to Council appointment to District 2

*Request for her to fill the vacancy for the remaining 3 weeks. Veronica was sworn in and is now serving in this seat.*

**Action: Councilor Cusick moved to approve the appointment of Veronica Babcock to fill the vacant seat in District 2. Seconded by Councilor Greenleaf. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**

#### 5. CITY MANAGER REPORT:

Paving has concluded in the city for the year, with some of the projects not finished that were supposed to get done. We would like to get some of this work done before the great race early this spring. We had FEMA on sight this week on Harrison Ave, for a sight inspection. We are at a roadblock because of joint ownership with the Water district, but that is getting figured out. Harrison Ave is starting to tilt away, and cracking. This will not get fixed until spring so we will have to get creative with plowing this winter. There will be a neighborhood meeting about Harrison Ave. I have been in contact with a few engineers about the facility here and what it would take to get a new building, and I am hoping to hear back this week. City Hall will be closed Wednesday November 22nd at noon, and closed Thursday November 23rd for Thanksgiving. Gardiner Rotary has invited City staff for breakfast Thursday November 30, 2023, to be recognized for all their hard work. City Hall will be open from 10am-4pm that day.

#### 6. CITY COUNCIL REPORT:

**Mayor Hart:** We have moved the seating arrangements in the council room to make it easier to identify who is responsible for what area. Welcome to our new District 2 representative Veronica Babcock, thank you for serving early. We have several events coming up this holiday season: Shop Small Saturday, Dearborn Park Tree Lighting, and Celebration of Lights just to name a few. Make sure to check the calendar so that you do not miss anything. I hope everyone has a safe and happy Thanksgiving!

**Councilor Grant:** Welcome Veronica., we appreciate your interest to serve, and to have another woman on the council. We are coming into Thanksgiving, I want to let you know how thankful I am for the city staff, our front line, and our community. Everyone is so important, and we thank you for all that you do so selflessly each day.

**Councilor Frey:** Welcome to Veronica Babcock.

Office of the Mayor & City Council | 6 Church Street | Gardiner, ME 04345

207-582-4200 | 207-582-6895 (fax)

[www.GardinerMaine.com](http://www.GardinerMaine.com)

**Councilor Babcock:** I am excited and honored to serve the city.

**Councilor Berry:** Councilor Grant mentioned the \$600,000 that was awarded to Gardiner for the act of transportation from DOT, which could potentially be used for sidewalks, does that have a timeline on when that money will evaporate? The point being is why not slide this money into a project we can get started now versus the possibility of losing it. There should be a game plan set in place so that we do not miss this opportunity. Councilor Grant- City Manager Carlton and I are collaborating with DOT regarding this.

**Councilor Cusick:** Welcome Councilor Babcock.

**Councilor Greenleaf:** Nothing to report.

## 7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a) Enter into Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A § 405(6)D-Contract negotiations.

**Action: Councilor Cusick moved to enter executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A § 405(6)D-Contract negotiations at 7:05pm. Councilor Frey seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**

## 8. ADJOURN:

**Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:59pm. Councilor Berry seconded the motion. No further discussion. Unanimously approved.**

2023 MEETING DATES  
12/20/23