

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

November 28, 2023

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Allan Cawrse, Sally Harold, Ed Henningsen, Karl Honkonen, Joan LeBlanc, David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Jim Smith, Judy Spiller

Other members present: Alternates: Philip Brekke, Beth Cromwell, and Deane Rykerson; Paul Dest (Wells NERR), Jennifer Hunter (coordinator), Jim MacCartney (NPS), Hannah Volk (NPS)

1. Committee Chair Judy Spiller opened the meeting at 5:35.
2. Approval of revised Meeting Minutes for September 26, 2023. Moved to accept by Sally Harold, seconded by David Marshall. Unanimously approved.

Approval of Meeting Minutes for October 24, 2023. Moved to accept by Ed Henningsen, seconded by Mary Marshall. Unanimously approved.
3. NPS PWSR Program Updates: Jim M. reported that the Interior Department Environmental Appropriations bill passed in the House. Hopefully the agency will remain flat funded for W&S, not decreased. Don't know if the lower amounts for York and Housatonic rivers will be adjusted through this process. Paul working with our DC delegation. Jenn asked if this lower funding issue for newly designated rivers could be resolved with the agency funding request for FY25 in the Greenbook that is just getting underway, so we are not dealing with a similar issue a year from now.
4. River Access Ad Hoc Committee Update: Mary reported that this joint Harbor Board, Planning Board, Select Board committee met for the first time. Trying to find an appropriate river access point for non motorized boats. Looking for increased public access. Grant House was suggested because of parking and bathrooms. There are different access point options at Grant House, but many unresolved issues need to be addressed. They do have a target of getting any necessary ordinance amendments on the ballot for November 2024. Meetings continuing to be held on the second Tuesday of each month, 6 p.m. at the Police Station.
5. Community Grant Program: Jenn began the discussion stating that there were already allocated funds available in the budget for this year and that for this first year we should keep the process simple. Hannah compiled and shared information from other PWSRs, many have similar grant programs. The program can change over time, but Jenn proposed some preliminary ideas and timing to begin. Total amount available in the current award is \$47,000. The group can add to this in the Year 2 cooperative agreement that will be in place July 1, 2024, so a larger amount could be available to fund projects.
 - Jenn asked for volunteers to help review details for the RFP including evaluation criteria, application form, etc.
 - Review committee to evaluate proposals and make recommendations to the full committee. Discussion about how this would work.
 - Funding levels \$1000-\$10,000

- Outreach to entities who might want to submit a grant. Need to develop a list of potential applicants.
- Target dates:
 - February 1 - RFP issued
 - April 15 - final application due date
 - Award announcements made by end of May
 - Contracts begin July 1

Discussion ensued regarding reporting requirements, how funds are disbursed, coordinating committee involvement with some projects, project presentations, and other details. RFP should have a reference to the Stewardship Plan. The committee will revisit its Conflict of Interest policies as the grant program is rolled out.

- Joan LeBlanc, Sally Harold, Mary Marshall and Allan Cawrse volunteered to assist Jenn with RFP development, plus Hannah Volk from NPS.

6. Stewardship Committee project ideas: Jenn began the discussion by stating that there were no “rankings” in the plan although based on study and current available information she identified what she considered higher priorities for the committee’s consideration to identify projects it wants to directly pursue or fund. She would like to develop a “pipeline” process where committee members could identify key priorities and partner organizations could identify projects they would like to see us undertake or support. In the future, ideally the committee deliberates and has ideas for specific projects prior to the annual work plan submittal to NPS. There is no structured process at this point, but there is funding in the current award and likely in Year 2 as well. The group identified a few more project areas to add to the list and ideas for further evaluating options including looking at impacts and costs, and identifying related objectives from the plan.
7. Planning for December 21 meeting on salt marsh restoration: the discussion will be about marshes systems and restoration needs and approaches. Staff from Maine Coast Heritage Trust have been working with a group focusing on holistic saltmarsh restoration to improve marsh resiliency. Jenn will invite some of the landowners with marsh systems and some committees that are focused on marsh resilience so they can learn more.
8. Other business/updates from committee members: Jim S. following up on Beth’s concern about a landowner violation on the river suggested she call Code Enforcement as it should be addressed by a town entity. Joan mentioned she was recommending York River as a potential site for water level monitoring as part of a northeast regional monitoring effort through NERACOOS.
9. Public comments – none.

Mary made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Sally.

Submitted by Karen Arsenault, Secretary