

York River Stewardship Committee Meeting

Minutes for the May 28, 2024 meeting at York Land Trust

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Allan Cawrse, Sally Harold, Karl Honkonen, Joan LeBlanc, David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Judy Spiller (Chair)

Other members present: Philip Brekke (Alt), Beth Cromwell (Alt), Deane Rykerson (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Jim MacCartney (NPS), Jenn Hunter (coordinator)

1. **Welcome:** Judy Spiller opened to meeting at 5:30
2. **Review of Minutes from April 23rd meeting:** Mary moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by David Marshall. All approved.
3. **York Watershed Grants Program:** Jenn provided a presentation of the Review Team findings and recommendations for the committee's first round of grants. Five applications were received from a variety of types of applicants for a variety of project types. The only area that was not covered was historic resources. Applications:
 - **York Land Trust:** Expansion of McIntire Highlands Preserve (\$10,000)
 - **Town of York-River Access Ad Hoc Committee:** Dock for Paddle Crafts Access at Goodrich Park – Design Phase (\$10,000)
 - **York Parks and Recreation Department:** Kayak Tour Series (\$6,000)
 - **York Conservation Commission:** Pesticide and Fertilizer Education (\$6,000)
 - **Town of Kittery & Save Kittery Waters:** CreekSmart Campaign (\$9,000)

Jenn described the review process and the evaluation criteria and discussed each proposal. The review team recommended funding all projects with some caveats, including increasing the Kittery award to up to \$10,000 for enhanced coordination with other initiatives.

Joan made a motion to approve what was proposed on each of the projects. All in favor.

Next steps were to notify the grant recipients, develop work scopes and contract agreements. Once contracts are in place, Jenn will work on a press release with the announcement of awards and start of projects in early July. Jenn will firm up project liaisons and roles, if applicable. Project management will be ongoing.

4. **Salt Marsh Restoration Design Project:** Jenn reminded the group of the presentation last fall by Jeremy Gabrielson and Tatia Bauer from Maine Coast Heritage Trust about the needs and opportunities for salt marsh restoration projects for the York River, working with the SMARTeams network. The York Land Trust would be interested in working with this group but currently is under resourced. Jenn asked if the committee is ready to allocate funding for the design phase of this type of restoration project. She confirmed that the restoration specialist Geoff Wilson would be able to complete design work this year with funding. Jenn asked for flexibility in developing the project in terms of expansion to other sites, adding monitoring, organizing permits and funding for implementing restoration, and community engagement. She suggested allocating more funds than the \$100 per acre for the 75-acre site, to accommodate additions to the approach and work scope. She will utilize the expertise from the SMARTeams network that will serve as a design review team.

Joan remarked that it was an excellent opportunity to work on this: such a project would help ensure watershed resilience to climate change. Susie agreed and supported including monitoring in the early design and planning phase. Karl asked what future costs might be, were there other funds, federal and otherwise available for restoration, are there other organizations we could partner with? Discussion

followed. Karl made a motion to authorize Jenn to scope a project and enter into an agreement with a contractor for up to \$15,000 to fund the design phase, seconded by Karen and passed unanimously.

5. Committee/subcommittee updates

a. Outreach Subcommittee/Communications Consultant Review Team: regular meeting start time moved from 10:15 to 10:00. Meeting with two communications consultants on Friday as part of the interview process.

b. York River Access Ad Hoc Committee: Mary noted that the group is working on ordinance changes for November to allow a longer dock length for municipal docks only. The other ordinance change is for the Shoreland Ordinance. She said the group asked about water quality monitoring studies. Joan noted the State DEP estuarine testing done periodically and that our committee is aiming to have DEP present at a meeting in the fall. Mary noted the group's interest in pursuing ADA standards for design. Philip offered to be a resource on ADA designs that can best meet needs.

6. Outreach or reports to boards/councils: Judy reported that the Committee needs to draft an annual report. Each town needs to hear a report from a committee member. The aim is to reach out to each community in the fall with a simple report: a one-page summary of what we have accomplished in the first year. The Executive Committee can work with Jenn to develop the report and get on meeting agendas.

7. Review and input on Draft Communications Strategy Framework: this is a guidance document that we will share with communications consultants, not an official framework. Has information on what other PWS rivers have done and objectives from Stewardship Plan included. Jenn confirmed that the group is comfortable with sharing the document with the communications consultant to help jumpstart future work with the Committee.

8. Public Comments: None

Joan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Sally. All approved.

Minutes submitted by Karen Arsenault, Secretary