

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the West Harbor Pond Watershed Association,

Thursday, January 9, 2025 7 PM

Board Members Present: Merritt Blakeslee, Will Anderson, Valerie Breen, Mike Breen, Sue Harris, Dave McFarlan, Jill Bryant, Nate Cagle and Maggie Fairbrother.

Members Present: Al Harris

Treasurer Report: The current bank balance is \$8253.35. Valerie presented a proposed budget for 2025 of \$5,921. Val identified a cause for concern as we will have only approximately \$2,000 remaining for 2026

Proposed Budget:

Valerie clarified that the water testing in the proposed budget includes fecal coliform testing. Sue expressed the opinion that the allocation of \$500 for siphon may be insufficient given the amount spent on the siphon last year. We believe that siphon expenses will be lower this year. However, siphon repair expenses are unpredictable. The board members voted to approve the proposed budget.

Raising Dam:

Merritt discussed a potential project to raise the level of the dam in the box culvert to prevent salt water intrusion into the pond related to sea level rise. In addition, he provided background for Dirigo's current bill and apprised the Board of the potential cost of having requested an estimate from Dirigo to conduct an engineering study, including projected construction cost for raising the dam. Merritt will ask Rick Pershken, Project Manager with Dirigo Engineering, what the estimate is to prepare the engineering study requested. Merritt sought to identify potential funding sources for the project and spoke with Ham Meserve, a Rotary member, to see if he knew of government monies available to pay for this potential project. Ham mentioned the Rotary Club as a possible source to pay for the project. The Board will identify Rotary Club's process for requesting funding and see if the Rotary Club grants money for planning purposes. All this to emphasize the potential impact on the proposed 2025 budget.

Officers and Board Members:

Judy Kildow's resignation as director and Secretary of the Association and the resulting vacancy created by her resignation was discussed. Note that Judy, as Secretary, kept track of membership as well as overseeing the communication with the membership as a whole. Val, as Treasurer, also keeps track of membership by recording names of members, along with the amount and date paid by each member. Merritt can now send emails to the entire membership thanks to information provided by Judy. Judy's secretary role will be shared by Merritt serving as Corresponding Secretary, Maggie Fairbrother serving as the Recording Secretary (taking meeting minutes) and Valerie keeping track of the membership.

Merritt informed the Board he is resigning as President of the Board effective immediately. Will requested, and Merritt agreed, to remain President for three additional months. Merritt believes new leadership may lead the way to an increase in membership. Additionally, upon reflection, Merritt no longer wants the responsibility, the burden, of making sure everything happens that impacts the pond. In the recent past, as President, he managed activities including, but not limited to the following:

- Stopping the destruction of the Osprey nest first by noticing it being dismantled then, coordinated the many parties needed to construct and install a replacement nest, all while meeting the needs of each party.
- Overseeing the multifaceted, never-ending project, of keeping the siphon operational such as noticing it was not working due to damage caused by two significant weather events in January 2024, identifying, hiring and coordinate a diverse group of people to assess the damage, develop a plan and repair the siphon.
- Protecting the pond's water quality and diverse creatures who rely on the pond by getting DOT to stop using pesticides along relevant sections of the pond.
- Identifying and coordinating the repair of roadside damage caused by Asplundh Tree Service, contracted by the state to manage trees along Maine roads. This involved continuous monitoring and multiple meetings to ensure the damage was repaired.
- Keeping abreast of subdivision activity on the pond and informing the membership of such activity by conducting extensive research and generating a detailed memo outlining pros and cons of subdividing land adjacent to the pond.
- Coordinating and conducting numerous water testing activities with Association members and state groups such as Lake Stewards of Maine.
- Keeping abreast of loon activity on the pond.
- Many administrative responsibilities, ministerial minutia, some tedious some not.

Merritt likened the current role of President to being a parent who has to keep track of a child's many activities.

The other board members asked and Merritt agreed to generate list of things he could offload, tasks he finds oppressive, and possibly continue as President of the Association while doing those things he finds most helpful to the Association and, by extension, the pond, thereby getting some personal reward from his role.

The board will reconvene on Monday, January 20 at 7 PM and again on February 20 at 7 pm to review Merritt's list and determine how to distribute these responsibilities amongst the remaining board members, hopefully keeping Merritt as the President of the Association.

Building Membership:

The Board revisited the issue of increasing membership dues, something the Board previously approved but has not implemented because the increase was not voted at the annual meeting. The Board discussed briefly the potential impact on membership numbers if the dues are raised. Will to update website with "reminder" to pay dues.

Ways to build membership include: 1. Community projects which seem to attract new members, such as repairing siphon. 2. Take action promoting the Association on the Facebook page. 3. Restart social events sponsored by the Association thereby fostering a sense of community. 4. Change membership period to a calendar year from current fiscal year where dues would be paid in January rather than August. 5. Research alternative methods to submit membership dues including Venmo and Zelle both of which could make becoming a member easier, more modern. Jill will research process for accepting payment using Venmo and Val will look into utilizing Zelle.

Operation of Siphon:

The distinctive halo created by the water discharged by the siphon has changed shape but remains strong, indicating that the siphon is working. We anticipate that the longer the siphon runs, the better it will operate.

Campbell Cove Subdivision:

Development of land has not moved forward. Currently still issue with stormwater runoff. It is no clear whether the grass mowing adjacent to the pond will continue.

Water Testing:

Fecal Coliform Testing was conducted by Sue and Al Harris, as well as Merrit and Nate. Sue recommended that we reduce the frequency and location of testing this coming summer. Testing in October is difficult and analysis is complicated by the water district closing of parts of its operation. Testing this year gave baseline of where we have and where we don't have a problem. Sue submitted a report detailing the test results for E. Coli and Fecal Coliform for 2024.

Sue will continue to coordinate testing.

Alternative thoughts on fecal coliform testing: test more locations incorporating an element of exploratory testing. Example of additional locations to test is the middle of pond which gets great deal of runoff, as well as the creek at the south side of Chip Newell's property. Additionally, test in July and August when seasonal visitors are using the pond. North end of the pond appears to have greatest problems, south end has fewer problems. Consider moving Heron Cove testing closer to the houses. If incorporating more locations could allow the identification of a "hot spot," we will increase the amount of testing to monitor the situation.

Depending on the approach, more testing kits, including reagent kits, may be ordered if needed. Note, the water district has agreed to assist with increased testing. Goal is to determine the general health of pond, including whether it is safe to swim. If problems are found, take action - what action would need to be determined.

Marc and Maggie Fairbrother agreed to handle Secchi disc monitoring.

Ice in and Out monitoring is important. Leslie Volpe who used to track the dates of ice-in and ice-out has moved and Vicki Reinecke has graciously agreed to take over this important task. Need to clarify definitions of terms used to determine in and out.

Water column testing will continue. Salinity throughout the pond is higher because the siphon was off for a long time this year, first because of an apparent blockage, then in order not to interfere with the silver eel out-migration in the fall.

When the siphon restarted, the odor of hydrogen sulfide was low, barely perceptible, nothing like when the siphon first began operations in 2016.

Meeting concluded at approximately 9 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Maggie Fairbrother, Interim Recording Secretary