

Cranberry Bog Working Group

Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2022, via Zoom

Members Present: Ken Belitz, Alex Parra, Susan Provenzano, Brian Murphy

Conservation Administrator: Sylvia Willard

Public: Iva Mooney, Warren Lyman, Mark Duffy, Caitlin Bonaventure (Mosquito)

Meeting began at 7:00 pm

Chair Belitz initiated the meeting by doing a roll call of all members, administrators, and public. He then recited the Massachusetts governors order for conducting public meetings by Zoom. This meeting was covered by the minutes and not recorded. Belitz also explained public input will be taken when the Chair asks for public input and will call on persons and each will have 3 minutes.

Agenda Item:

1. Review minutes from December 15. Willard had changes to Agenda items #2 and #4 and then the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. Notice Of Intent Bog Restoration: The plan had been sent to DiPinto, but Willard had not heard anything back.
3. Notice Of Intent on Phragmites control: Willard has worked on it for the last 3 weeks. She used as a guide a prepared restoration NOI that was successful. for a similar project on Nantucket. Belitz shared the Phragmites treatment plan for discussion. One concern was the disposal of the Phragmites stems and whether that needed clarification. Willard shared the project narrative, which had details of the plan. Murphy asked whether the Bog would be closed during spray treatment. Willard said signs would be posted to warn the public before, during, and after treatment. Belitz asked whether the plan was ready to endorse. Parra had reviewed drafts and felt that unless DiPinto needed to review it, he was ready to move forward. Belitz asked each committee member to comment, and all felt the documents looked good. Willard then shared the various images of the bog that illustrate the Phragmites locations at the bog. Everyone felt that Willard had done excellent work on all the documents. Discussion on which form was more appropriate WPA Form 3 or 3A. Parra suggested sending both in and let department decide. Willard also included the list of plant life created by Geltner. Parra motioned to send this on to Cons Com and Provenzano seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously. Parra queried who to notify about the work. Willard felt that the Chelmsford Cons Com would be the only group to notify of the work. All other abutters were more than 1000ft from the work, but some would also be notified just to be safe.

4. Notice Of Intent on Bog Dam #1: Willard reported on the site visit with Risso. There is about 500 ft of dam. A 2015 report from the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety (ODS) stated that, among other things, the crest of the dam needed to be brought up to make it level and to repair an area where there was undermining of the dam by water movement such as wave action. Need to find some fill and riprap, a place to store them, and get costs. Willard is working on this for a warrant article. Need to get the information to the Finance committee by January 24th. Believes Fin Com will ask if CPA money could be used and legal says that if correctly worded CPA funds could be used. That due date is February 11th. Parra says work was more extensive and difficult than he expected and hence will be more expensive. Duffy commented that beavers and muskrats are making the holes, but since the dam is gravel packed, the material only needs to be gravel. Hard to do but can get trucks in. Duffy also suggested that if the area was drained there wouldn't be that much water because of all the beaver dams upstream. He felt that downstream wouldn't be affected too much. Duffy explained the previous water control structures and how the beavers have changed the water dynamics. Parra asked about gravel. Duffy said there is enough in the gravel pit across from the Bog House depending on how involved you got. Willard said the ODS rated the dam as low hazard not Significant Risk like Curve Street Dam provided recommendation for repairs such as leveling the crest and filling holes and erosion caused by wave action. Duffy felt that armoring against the beavers would make things very expensive. Duffy said that to truly fix the dam it would be expensive, but one could continue patching.
5. Water Lilies – Provenzano reported that a group of Bog enthusiasts would like to try to limit lily growth and look to get permission from Cons Com. Willard said this might be a large project and bigger than they might expect. Belitz asked Parra would Cons Com help. Parra said yes but would need to do an NOI like the Phragmites removal and would need to submit it and go through the process. To be successful it would require a plan of how to get it done with some likely hood of success. Belitz suggested that we wait and see how the lily population affects the ponds next year (2022) and, in the meantime, design a plan to control lily pad growth.
6. Bog House – Willard reported she met with Municipal Facilities Committee (MFC) and Lyman to determine some of the needs from Fire Departments point of view. The plan is to come up with a cost analysis and present it to the MFC. The fire alarm system put in around 2012 works on two Verizon phone lines and over the new year weekend Willard received several alerts that there was a problem with the system. The alerts that there is a problem come only to Willard, not to Dispatch to solve. Lyman went over and found one of the lines was down. MFC has agreed to take on some of the maintenance and a site visit is scheduled soon to look at the system. MFC would like a more formal understanding with tenant and Cons Com like a lease agreement to find out who is responsible for what maintenance tasks. MFC would like a more formal understanding between Cons Com and tenants. Willard said the agreement is more of a license agreement instead of a formal lease. Belitz wondered who/what group would be responsible. Willard explained that the agreement is reviewed annually, and tasks are added and removed as needed and signed by Cons Com, Duffy, and Goddard. Parra commented that if he remembered that there were some issues with a lease agreement. He felt that MFC just wanted a clearer delineation of responsibilities. Bog House is in good condition, and we want to

keep it that way. Parra felt it was Cons Coms purview to deal with the House and not really the job of this group. He felt it should be part of Cons Coms and tenant issue. Willard explained the issue in that the apartments were separated from the agriculture storage. Lease agreements with the Town require Town Meeting which made it difficult. Duffy commented that he was pleased that Lyman's group addressed some issues. Parra felt items that were being discussed were major and thankful that MFC is willing to help. Willard was thankful for Lyman who has been a big advocate for the Bog House.

7. Warrant article – the warrant article is for a new alarm system at the Bog House. MFC suggested trying to use CPA funds. Belitz asked if the request would come from MFC or Cons Com. Willard volunteered to complete it. The warrant article would need to be completed by February 11th.
8. Beaver control – Willard said lodge on Dam #1 is eroding the dam but can't disturb it at this time. The beavers must first be trapped in order to remove the dam. Dam Safety wants animal holes filled and so beavers must be trapped during trapping season, which is through April 1st. Willard said need to find trapper, then get permission from Cons Com. Parra felt that this committee should make a recommendation. Group voted to suggest to Cons Com.
9. Ditches – Provenzano commented that the ditches at the Bog should be cleared every 5 - 10 years. Without clear ditches the bog becomes a swamp and wildlife especially turtles use the ditches to move around the property. At the last meeting DiPinto relayed that Alex Hackman said the blocked ditches would not cause increased mosquito population as long as other ditches were kept clear and the water flowing. Provenzano suggested clearing the main ditches and edge ditches as those were easy to access. Provenzano felt the variety of species that exist at the bog will lessen if the ditches get clogged. Parra felt it was not a necessary part of the management plan as there was not a clear restoration purpose. Duffy said when he started working the Bog the ditches were solid weeds. Duffy commented that not having proper drainage would make mowing impossible because the Bog would get too wet. Duffy also stated that when the Bog is really wet the muskrats flourish and add to the problem. Keeping the ditches open is necessary to maintain the Bog as it is and thus Parra then felt that clearing ditches should be added to the NOI.
10. Annual Cranberry Growers Report – Willard screen shared last year's report as a guide, which showed the Cons Com chair signed the report. Parra asked if this was the one that was delayed. Willard replied that was the Registration Renewal Request Form for Cranberry Growers required to apply for another 10 years of water use. This report is to address changes in the bog. Group motioned for Cons Com to sign the report and it was unanimously approved.
11. Open discussion – Mooney had questions on Phragmites NOI about details on the process. Parra answered that the NOI doesn't have all those details, but Cons Com does have a person lined up and cost would come from the Cons Com budget. Mooney also felt that Dam #1 has more effect than group might realize, and Chelmsford would be greatly affected if the Dam was eliminated. Belitz said maybe the Dam should be viewed as a shared resource and maybe

shared cost. Mooney then asked if both town's Cons Coms will meet to discuss what's happening at the bog. Normally the two Cons Coms meet in January and June, but Willard said nothing had been set up yet. Mooney also queried if anyone had thought to try Beaver Deceiver's on Dam #1. Willard reported Cons Com had but there isn't enough depth in the pond for the deceivers to work.

Next meeting: February 7, 2022, at 7 pm

Adjourned at 9:10 pm

Minutes approved on February 7, 2022

Minutes submitted by Susan Provenzano on March 2, 2022