

Cranberry Bog Working Group

Meeting Minutes

June 6, 2022 via Zoom

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

Conservation Administrator: Sylvia Willard

Public: Iva Mooney, Warren Lyman, Chris Spinney

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 remote. 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. Reviewed changes suggested by Willard and Young and then the Minutes were approved unanimously.
2. Goal of the Goals and Objectives document is to specify goals and steps to achieve those goals. Belitz wants it as a reference point for the group. Would like members to review it and comment on it by the next meeting.
3. Willard talked with Duffy about removing the beaver lodge on Cranberry Bog Dam #1. Duffy has promised to get to it by the end of June. Willard has found soil to use for the dam in Westford. Duffy felt that the beaver lodge will need a mini excavator to remove the dam. Unsure of how much material will be needed until dam is removed. The plan is to use the same material as with the Greenough dam as that has worked well. Willard has also put together an Emergency Certification form as a permit to the removal of the lodge. Duffy may need to have the water level lower to remove and make repairs.
4. Water management and bog pond levels – Willard has talked with Chelmsford who would be willing to come to talk/discuss water management with the group. Willard hopes that the person who comes is the one who has been involved in water management at the bog in the past. They can join in on July 11th, so that may be the groups next meeting. Willard went to Chelmsford and took pictures and took pictures of the ponds there for water level reference. Belitz will be out of town on July 11th. Parra feels that this meeting was pretty important and since it seems that four of the group can be there, we will plan on the July 11 meeting.
5. Phragmites control – Willard said today (June 6) through Wednesday (June 8) that Bakewell will be in town treating various problem plants. He should be treating the bog at some point

during that time. Willard has posted in the Mosquito and posted signs at the bog -indicating that pesticides would be used on those days. Belitz asked that signs be posted at the parking areas that areas are being treated with pesticides.

6. Native water lilies – Belitz initiated discussion by commenting that there is only open water for about 15 feet from the shore and the rest is solid water lilies. Spinney shared his screen showing his findings on the water levels in the Fiske Street Pond from his kayak. He reported that there are five water control devices, which have flash board risers. The two ponds at the bog are the Fiske Street pond and the Elm street pond in Chelmsford. Spinney presented a map of the ponds including locations of beaver dams. When traveling through the ponds, Spinney found that the Phragmites are floating and the beavers had made deep channels through them. His report included photos of the water control devices at Heart Pond and the Cranberry Bog. At Cranberry Bog Dam #1/Martin Street Pond there were no boards and Willard commented that Duffy removes the beaver sticks blocking the riser. Spinney feels that the mess of sticks after the riser is a beaver dam. Parra asked why the blockage below is an issue and Spinney replied that the blockage could cause back pressure into the riser. But that is not happening yet. On the Fiske Street Pond there is one riser. Spinney suggested some sort of protection that would prevent beavers trying to block it. After talking about the risers, Spinney discussed the water levels of the Fiske Street Pond. Since there is only one riser the flash boards control the water level in this pond. When examining water levels, Spinney showed that rocks and plant life that had marks indicating that water levels have been much higher. Belitz asked about width of flash boards and Spinney said any combination of boards could be used to control the water. Spinney commented that the plant life diversity improved as he went up stream where there were less lilies. The images of exposed root balls indicated that the water levels were up to 8 inches higher. Eight inches also is apparent on the risers. Water level currently is 21 inches below the top of the dike. His conclusion is that water levels could be substantially raised without issue. Spinney agrees that when the bog was in agriculture he could see the regulation of the water, but now feels that even with a big storm the pond and riser could withstand it. Spinney said he and his neighbors would be willing to watch. Belitz also commented that there is a lot of exposed land. Belitz feels that with this information the group could make a recommendation to ConsCom that another 8” board be put in. Willard was concerned about large storms. Spinney commented that the deeper the water the less dense the water lily population. Belitz feels the current system requires no effort but the ponds are dying. Higher pond water levels will need to be managed by a group other than ConsCom. Parra feels the first question is to get a professional opinion on how much the ponds can be raised without needing a lot of management. Willard asked whether an H&H study is what Parra wants. But Parra would like something simpler and Spinney saying maybe Duffy knew. Parra concluded that talking with Duffy would be the first step and that he would talk with Duffy. Spinney will continue to do research.

7. Open discussion – Parra would like to schedule and work up a plan of winter cutting of the area below Dam #1. Belitz asked if Willard asks Duffy or put out to others. Would plan to do it in the winter as that area is very wet. Parra wants us to be ready to create a NOI and maybe present at the fall town meeting. Provenzano motioned that the group ask ConsCom put in another 8 inch board be placed in the Fiske Street dam. The motion was seconded by Murphy

and passed unanimously. Belitz will work with Spinney to make a presentation to ConsCom on June 30.

8. Public discussion – Mooney of Chelmsford thanked Willard for forwarding the information of the kayak and water trail proposal by Spinney. She also asked that the project objectives from 3-Oaks Environmental and Spinney water level power point also be sent to her. Mooney said the people coming on July 11th were good people for the water level discussion. Also shared that the dam on the Chelmsford side had a vote on the water level there. Lyman commented that water flowing through the bog was monitored by Streamways from 2013 to 2015 and that data should be available. Willard will check on when the Fiske Street dam overflowed.

9. Next meeting will be on July 11th at 7 pm.

Meeting adjourned unanimously at 8:51 pm