

Cranberry Bog Working Group  
Meeting Minutes  
July 10, 2023 via Zoom

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Members Present: Alex Parra, Susan Provenzano, Helen Young, Brian Murphy, Ariella Rebbi

Conservation Administrator: Sylvia Willard

Public: Iva Mooney, Ravi Pathak, Mark Barrow, Warren Lyman, Chris Spinney,  
Mark Barrow, John Ballentine, Mark Duffy

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Meeting began at 7:05 pm

Chair Murphy initiated the meeting by doing a roll call of all members, administrators, and public. He then recited the Massachusetts governor's order and rules for conducting public meetings remotely. This meeting will be covered by the minutes and not recorded. Murphy 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. June Minutes - No one suggested any changes. Parra moved to accept the minutes, Young seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
2. Cranberry Bog NOI - Willard sent out the title page and narrative for the NOI. Murphy and Parra will read the NOI and comment to Willard.
3. Water levels - Murphy summarized that a 5" board was removed before a major rain event earlier in the year, but not returned afterwards. He feels the ponds are suffering because of the lower level and asked if an NOI was necessary to deal with the water levels. Parra replied that after consulting with DiPinto Cons Com does not need an NOI in order to adjust the water levels in order to dike maintenance. Provenzano moved that the group ask Cons Com to replace the board in the Fiske St. Pond. It was not seconded and therefore dropped. Ballentine said water levels have been monitored and currently water levels are only 3-4" higher even after all the rain. Ballentine offered that the Friends group assist with the water level maintenance effort. Spinney asked for a management plan, so he can understand the adding/removing of the boards and felt it shouldn't be arbitrary. Parra agrees that a plan is a good idea but worries that the dike isn't strong enough and would follow Duffy's recommendations. Parra believes the dams and dikes are porous and worries about the water pressure. Duffy believes that if the goal is to keep the most water in the ponds then there is a risk to the dikes. Willard commented that the ODS has different tests for strength but the tests cost is \$30-\$40k.

Provenzano commented that because of the lower water level the wildlife has reduced significantly. Willard disagreed, but list was at least 4 -5 years old. Barrow mentioned that in a past meeting a hydrologist was suggested to do a study and he wondered were that went. Murphy said he could ask someone from the south shore. No resolution to this issue.

4. Joint meeting with Chelmsford - Heart Pond levels were controlled by the group. Currently there was no interest in the water supply by the town of Chelmsford.
5. Peer review for Cranberry Bog Dam #1- Weston and Sampson has declined as they didn't want to comment on another firms work. Murphy asked if there were other firms. Willard doesn't know of any offhand. Risso had felt it was ready to go. Parra said that in a previous report Sampson and Weston has said not to raise the level of the dike but to reestablish the existing material/dike. After concerns were expressed, Stamski & McNary redid the measurements and feels sure that their plan would not result in the lowering of the water level. Parra is comfortable with going ahead with the NOI without peer review. Murphy expressed concern that there would not be enough freeboard space and it would affect how the public could use the trail. Spinney said the level was only an inch about the water level, so currently it would be flowing constantly and require maintenance. There are other options that could be looked at. Murphy and Parra will meet with Stamski and McNary to discuss more options.
6. Annual Maintenance Agreement - at Select Board hearing McLane said there would be a violation if amount is over 10k. One solution was to be under \$10k and Duffy agreed to reduce his bill though it would still need to be approved by Cons Com. Parra said future activities will have to go out to bid. Ballentine commented that there is an in kind portion to this agreement and that there needs to be a division of labor and it would be great to define this division of labor for Friends of the Bog and Duffy. Murphy said a lot of the work would be defined better in the mowing NOI.
7. Bog House - Having visited the Bog House apartments, Murphy commented that the Bog House apartments were not very fancy and didn't even have central heat. Ballentine said that in the CBAC report the renovation would cost 750-800k and that was about 10 years ago. Apartments for town workers are needed. Parra felt the current living value of the Bog House was not worth it and renovating was very expensive. There is also Article 97 issues that create another problem.
8. Community Input - Lyman commented on the Bog House income in it's current or modestly renovated two apartments and could get some income as long as building codes were met. The previous report also suggested that there was a pretty good ROI if the House was renovated. There is a possible Article 97 waiver because of the small area. Ballentine said the town needs a facilities group to properly look at options.

9. Next meeting - August 21, 2023 at 7 pm

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm

Submitted by Susan Provenzano