



WEST HARBOR POND WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Minutes for the Board of Directors Meeting of the West Harbor Pond Watershed Association January 31, 2024, 7:00 pm

Board Members Present: Will Anderson, Merritt Blakeslee, Michael Breen, Valerie Breen, Maggie Fairbrother, Judy Kildow, Dave MacFarland

Visitors, Sue and Alan Harris

Merritt Blakeslee, the President, opened the meeting and asked for and received approval for the Minutes of the Annual Meeting in August 2023.

With three terms for Board officers' terms, no officers of the Board were up for reelection, so there was no need for elections this time.

Valerie Breen next gave the Treasurer's Report. She announced the WHPWA had exactly \$11,754.77 in its bank account as of this date. She also asked for a vote on her proposed budget for fiscal year '24-'25, which she had prepared based on the expenses from the previous years., plus an additional thousand dollars for costs of repairing the siphon, which appears to have been damaged during the recent storm. Some discussion of several other items ensued, and the BOD took a vote to accept her budget for the coming year. This is the first year that the Association has had an official budget to follow with special protocols to adjust it if need be, as recorded in the by-laws for the Association.

Judy Kildow next gave the membership report that there are 39 paid members for this fiscal year, compared to 33 last year, 40 the previous year, and 56 the year before that. Valerie pointed out that our dues intake fell far below our annual expenses so that we need to work hard to increase the number of dues-paying watershed members to at least break even, or we could find ourselves in a difficult financial situation. Judy suggested we get a list of abutters to the pond, at the very least, and make the case in person or in writing to all of them about how they benefit from the actions of the Association and the members of the BOD. Maintaining the health of the pond to allow recreational activities, monitoring for health hazards to warn users in case of problems, and providing healthy habitat for the amazing array of wildlife the pond supports is but a small list of the values from the Association to all who use and enjoy the pond. \$15.00 in annual dues is a bargain for what everyone gets from it. Judy suggested we get a list of abutters and go door to door to encourage all to pay their dues. Since we don't have a current list of abutters, we agreed we would try to get one. We also agreed to put more information about what the Association does for the community into the local paper so that more people can understand its importance.

The next item of business was a brief report on the ongoing coordination we have with the Bigelow Labs, and since Judy Kildow is the BOD liaison with the Labs, she reported she is in the process of setting up a meeting with several members to discuss continued collaborations and potential projects that we might do in cooperation with the Lab in the future through joint grant funding. February will probably be the month for the meeting.

The BOD gave responsibility to Maggie Fairbrother a while back to investigate applying for a 319 grant to remediate NPS pollution. Maggie reported that she will attend a meeting in a few weeks that will help her further prepare the proposal but she already knows she needs more recent and more detailed data for it to qualify. She also needed help with adjusting excel work sheets to meet her needs. We all indicated we were willing to help her. The draft proposal is yet to be written.

The recent storms created much damage throughout our area, and the siphon for WHP stopped working. It is unclear why since no one has been able to investigate the problem, so we don't yet know what has gone wrong. Merritt contacted Chuck Fuller who agreed to have his group dive down to identify the problem. The BoD approved the expenditure of \$450 for Chuck Fuller's team to examine siphon pipe in harbor. Possible follow-up steps: hire Fuller to repair or uncover siphon in harbor; dive on pond-side of siphon pipe; blow out siphon with high-pressure water (Boothbay Harbor Sewer District), and give us a report, as soon as the ice clears.

In discussing the matter, it was suggested that we not only pay them the \$450.00 they estimated the dive would cost, but, to allow double the amount were they able to identify and fix the problem while already on the site. The BOD voted to allow those expenditures and asked Merritt to hire them to remediate the effects of further salt water intrusion into the pond. It was that suggested we find out if we are insured for damage to the siphon, and asked Merritt to call our insurance broker to find out if we are insured. [The latest news is that we are not insured for damage to the siphon so the Association will have to bear the costs.]

Regarding the storm previously mentioned, Mike Breen went down to the causeway to video the flooding and high waters and waves at the height of the storm surge. Merritt showed some of the footage which was stunning and it was suggested those videos be put on our website for all to see. We all thanked Mike for his courage to go out at the peak of the storm.

Regarding the Regional Water Quality Report that we attached to the meeting announcement the following items were discussed.

- Our water quality monitors announced they have suspended water quality monitoring because of ice conditions. They will let us know when they resume. Water testing suspended because of ice conditions.
- Cyanobacteria testing can be done at Bigelow Labs with their in-house machine. The toxic kind of this bacteria has not been found in our pond and hopefully will not, but with climate change and the possibility of it being found in our watershed, we shall remain vigilant and when necessary ask the Lab to test for us.

- Discussion of Boothbay Region Water District's report on water quality monitoring in Knickerbocker Lake and Adams Pond involved the discussion that we need to remain vigilant for toxic substances and increased pollution-bearing runoff in our pond as climate change creates unprecedented circumstances of increased amounts of precipitation in our area and warming temperatures, both of which create potentially hazardous conditions for the entire watershed. As the years go on, these features will need to be closely monitored to avoid toxic conditions and nutrient-driven algae blooms, and if they are found to be able to either neutralize them or at least alert those who might use the pond about them.
- Merritt gave a brief case for the Association to use the BRWD report as a model for our own monitoring. Right now, our system is rather haphazard, and we don't measure what the water district measures. Merritt felt that we should try to copy what they do in coordination with the Lake Stewards Program. Someone asked if that was necessary since the Water district was measuring for drinking water standards and we were doing it only for recreational reasons. Further discussions indicated we should add Total Phosphorus and Chlorophyll and cyanobacteria to our current monitoring and set protocols for depth and other conditions for consistency.
- For purposes of working with the Lake Stewards Program, we need to chart our Secchi disk data. We already have good data from Leslie and Ron.
- Need to begin testing for TP
- Need to collect cyanobacteria samples regularly and have them processed by Bigelow.

Merritt proposed we establish a Water Quality Committee and recruit new members in addition to those on the BOD who are already testing. We all agreed to send out a special request to our members and associates asking for volunteers, and indicating the skills required, the amount of time expected and other important requirements for membership. We also hope others will participate in Lake Smart training programs. The BOD wants to share responsibilities for data collection and data analysis. Susan Harris agreed to do some of the analysis and organization of data when she returns from Florida late spring. We hope others will step up when we send out our request soon. We shall also coordinate this work with Bigelow. This is a big step up for the Association's oversight of the Pond. Merritt promised to write up a few paragraphs inviting our members and associates to volunteer for this important mission of the Association, and the Secretary will send out the request.

Merritt and Dave will fix the water gauge at box culvert when warm temperatures return.

There was a discussion of whether to do a bathymetric mapping of the pond this year. With the siphon work coming up and the step up in monitoring, the BOD agreed to take this off the table for this year until there seemed an appropriate reason and time to do so.

Planning for 2024 was the last item of business. The annual meeting will need to be planned in the coming months. We discussed the possibility of a plant sale after not holding one for several years. Mike Breen, who volunteers for the Botanical Gardens indicated that the Asian jumping worms, which arrived in this area more than a year ago, have infested a part of the gardens and they have a policy in place not to allow incoming or outgoing plants as a result. Evidently this is an ongoing, very serious problem that a plant sale would only exacerbate. We decided against holding it. We are looking for other activities to bring us together and further community spirit.

There was no new business. Merritt closed the meeting at 8:30.

Submitted by Judith Kildow, Secretary, WHPWA