

York River Stewardship Committee

York Land Trust

January 23, 2024

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Sally Harold, Karl Honkonen, Joan LeBlanc, David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Jim Smith, Judy Spiller

Other members present: Alternates: Philip Brekke, Beth Cromwell, and Deane Rykerson; Paul Dest (Wells Reserve); Emma Lord, Jim MacCartney, and Hannah Volk (NPS); Jennifer Hunter (coordinator)

Guests: Mike Sinclair, York Harbor Board; Bob Gray, Kittery Water District Board; Clayton Smith, Kittery

1. **Welcome:** Committee Chair Judy Spiller opened the meeting at 5:35. Judy announced that Ed Henningson resigned and new candidates would be interviewed by Eliot Select Board, and she asked if there was anything else to add to the agenda. She said there would be 20-30 minute learning opportunities at upcoming monthly meetings.
2. **Review of Minutes** from November and December: **Sally made a motion to approve both the November and December minutes, seconded by Mary; all approved.**
3. **Quarterly Budget:** Paul Dest reported that it will be a simple report for first year and would be more complicated as we moved on as the cooperative agreement is amended and funds added.
4. **NPS Update:** Jim M reported that Congress passed a CR (Continuing Resolution) to extend funding of the government until early March. Hopefully there will be a detailed budget in the future but that is unknown. Jenn asked about a timeline to approve our budget. Jim suggested it would be good to have a draft in February. Hopefully we will be at parity with other rivers but we can assume we will at least receive what we got this year. Funds awarded in the first year can be carried over.
5. **Community Grants Program:** Jenn announced that the goal was to issue an RFP on February 1st. She asked the group for any substantive feedback on the RFP and that any other smaller issues be sent in an email to her. First question posed was the timing of application deadline:
 - April 10th or April 30th? **April 30th** was the decision
 - Title of grant program: **York River Watershed Grants Program** was the decision
 - Need to establish a page limit and font size
 - Progress report? Will be spelled out in contract agreement. Useful to add a sentence in RFP about deliverables
 - Is overhead allowed? In-kind match?
 - Question 2 on application form: “are you an authorized agent representing the town”? Who is the contact?
 - Permit application: If project needs permitting, applicant needs to request a longer time frame.
 - Matching funds: discussed and determined to keep idea of matching funds loose.
 - Is match a criterion for evaluation?

Jim made a motion to accept the RFP with the changes as presented, seconded by Mary: approved.

Jenn announced that at a future committee meeting, committee members would be asked to serve on the evaluation team. She also asked committee members to provide her with any email addresses of contacts from town committees/civic/community groups/others who might be interested and eligible to submit proposals.

6. **Establish a Communications and Outreach Subcommittee:** Judy suggested that there were several components to this committee: operational, communication/email platform, messaging and logo and they fell into two buckets: organization collateral which included the logo, website design, and community outreach which included events, printed materials (brochures and fact sheets). Group develop content and contract with a designer. The group would come up with a list of “products” we might need and make recommendations to the whole committee as well as recommendations for events and general messaging. Hannah suggested that there was someone from the Park Service who could help with logo design and branding.

Deane, Beth, Karen, Judy and Hannah volunteered.

7. **Discuss December Marsh Restoration Presentation:** Judy asked the group if they wanted to pursue this concept?

- Jim S asked if we wanted to “shadow” what the Feds are doing to learn? It might be good to partner with US Fish&Wildlife. It was noted it would likely be several years before they are ready to undertake restoration work on their new site.
- Jenn commented that we were invited by MCHT to learn more about the restoration work and participate in a statewide coalition.
- Sally suggested that we should have Jenn speak with YLT about the marsh restoration project.
- Joan suggested we authorize Jenn to have conversations with partners regarding marsh restoration to scope out a project concept for the committee’s consideration in the future.

8. **Committee Member Updates and Requests for Future Agenda Items**

- Committee workshop: Joan suggested trying to get a brainstorming session scheduled for a weekend date in March. We also want to have a speaker on a specific topic at each regularly scheduled meeting.
- Ad hoc River Access Committee: Mary reported that the town lawyers made the decision that there can be a pier at Grant House for non motorized boats. The Town will initiate a survey to see where it might be placed. Has to go to the Harbor Board and an RFP process needs to be put in place.

9. **Public Comments**

Mike Sinclair, representing the Harbor Board, asked if our committee could write a letter to let Town officials know about the trash problems along the river since the Town has removed its dumpster. Garbage has been dumped into porta potties and elsewhere and there is concern that it will eventually end up in the river. Judy suggested that the committee would provide a letter stating our position. Joan and Jenn will write a draft for March deadline.

Meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.

Submitted by Karen Arsenault, Secretary