

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes for March 26, 2024 meeting at York Land Trust

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Sally Harold, Karl Honkonen, David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Judy Spiller (Chair)

Other members present: Alternates Philip Brekke, Stefan Claesson, Beth Cromwell, and Deane Rykerson; Jim MacCartney (NPS); Jenn Hunter (coordinator)

Guests: Mike Masi (presenter), Mike Sinclair (York Harbor Board), Mike Modern (Chair York Parks and Recreation Board), Ron Nowell (York), Ella and Meghan from York High School

- 1. Welcome:** Committee Chair Judy Spiller opened the meeting at 5:30 and welcomed former Wild & Scenic Study Committee member Mike Masi to make his presentations first regarding the Shellfish Conservation Commission and second about the "Shell and Claw" York River oyster and crab business that he and his partners are hoping to get a license to farm on a location in the York River after a public hearing by Maine Department of Marine Resources on April 22.
- 2. Learning Opportunity on Shellfish:** Mike Masi gave two presentations: one on the Shellfish Harvesting Program for York and one on his green crab harvest and proposed lease for an oyster farm in York River. Both presentations will be added to the website after the meeting.
- 3. Review of Minutes** from the February 27th meeting. Correction that Mary Marshall was not present and Jim MacCartney's last name needed to be corrected. Karl made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Susie, and approved unanimously.
- 4. Committee/Subcommittee updates and business items**
 - a. Judy Spiller for Executive Committee** explained that we were asked to write a support letter for a brook naming after Marion Fuller Brown and that the committee received the naming proposal in advance. Mike Modern representing the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus and also Chair of York Parks and Recreation spoke briefly about the naming opportunity of a previously unnamed brook on Mt. Agamenticus (not in but very near the York River watershed) that his group would like to name in memory of Marion Fuller Brown. Marion was well known in York, in the state of Maine and nationally for her work in conservation and the environment. Judy Spiller made a motion to support the naming opportunity to honor all Marion's work and achievements, seconded by Karen and unanimously approved. Jenn will write a letter of support to be reviewed by the Exec Committee and sent to Robin Kerr.
 - b. Mary Marshall** reported that the Ad Hoc River Committee approved moving forward with the paddle craft dock proposal for Grant House. Mike Sinclair will go to the Select Board to get necessary approvals, targeting November ballot to revise ordinance to allow the dock.
 - c. Jim MacCartney:** the FFY24 DOI budget was approved with level funding and \$150K for the cooperative agreement for our PWSR. President's budget request for FFY 25 is to fund the York and Housatonic Rivers at the same level as the other PWSRs -- \$300k per river, which results in about \$200K going to each river in the cooperative agreement.
 - d. Sally: April 4th workshop 5:30-7:30.** Sally asked the group to go through the surveys that were sent out, prioritize objectives and send them back to Joan by the 30th. They will be used during our April 4th gathering and will help advise our discussions on priorities.
- 5. Proposed FY24 budget allocation for the Cooperative Agreement amendment:** Sally reported that we received a budget with three columns. The last one is for FFY24 funds (state FY25). There are two major changes from the FFY23 allocation: (1) coordinator contract amount is higher because of budgeting for

12 months of time when previous year's budget was for only 8.5 months, plus we are adding 150 more hours for the year; and (2) less money for the watershed grants program, however we are combining FFY23 and FFY24 funds together for upcoming projects selected. We do need budget approval by the Stewardship Committee for the federal award. Sally made a motion to accept the FY25 budget (FFY24 funds) as presented which requires an amendment to the existing cooperative agreement, seconded by Judy and approved by all.

The five-year Cooperative Agreement with the Park Service started last June and ends in April 2028.

6. **Proposed RFQ for communications/branding services:** Jenn reported on the changes/edits that had been made to the version the committee had: (1) left website language more open, without knowing how much work is needed to improve functionality, (2) took out reference to our "draft communication framework," since that hasn't been reviewed by our full committee yet, and (3) added a new first item under "to apply." Karl made a motion to approve the RFQ as written and discussed tonight with changes noted, Sally seconded the motion and all approved.
7. **Application Review teams:** Jenn noted that for the Watershed Grants Program the evaluation criteria are already in place and noted in the RFP. Team members would review individual grant applications, then meet together to discuss and decide on funding recommendations to be made to the full committee. Mary, Karl, David, and Sally volunteered to be on the team. Joan previously volunteered. For the RFQ for communications/branding services, evaluation criteria were not spelled out and we could get a variety of proposed scopes/activities. If we get many applications, Jenn proposed doing the initial review and provide a smaller slate of applicants for the review team. The Outreach Subcommittee, plus Susie Rice, will serve as the review team. There is an April 23 deadline, with a 2 to 3 week review period, with the option to request interviews.

Recommendations for funding awards for both watershed grants and for the communications consultant will be presented to the committee at the May meeting. Scope of work and contract negotiations will fall to Jenn and the Wells Reserve for June.

8. **Public Comment:**

Ron Nowell: Ron spoke of his concern about the fact that the York River is a major spawning river and is being blocked by the mud dam at Smelt Brook that creates the Bell Marsh reservoir, not allowing alewife to get up river. He was proposing a fish ladder and wanted to ask for our help.

Deane Rykerson: He announced the 2024 Tide Mill Conference taking place on May 4, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Kittery Community Center, hosted by the Tide Mill Institute.

Meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.

Next meeting April 23, 2024

Submitted by Karen Arsenault, Secretary