

## York River Stewardship Committee Meeting

### Minutes for the June 25, 2024 meeting at York Land Trust

Voting Members Present: Karen Arsenault, Allan Cawrse, Sally Harold, Joan LeBlanc, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Jim Smith, Judy Spiller (Chair)

Others: Phil Brekke (Alt), Beth Cromwell (Alt), Deane Rykerson (Alt), Paul Dest (Wells Reserve), Hannah Volk (NPS), Jenn Hunter (coordinator)

- 1. Welcome:** Judy Spiller opened the meeting at 5:30
- 2. Learning Opportunity:** Doreen MacGillis, in a recorded presentation, spoke about the Beginning with Habitat focus areas of statewide ecological significance, including the three areas in York that overlap with the York River watershed area. She discussed how areas are identified, why focus areas are identified, and the three areas in our region: Mount Agamenticus, York River Headwaters, and Braveboat Harbor/Gerrish Island. This data is discussed in our Stewardship Plan and helped make the case for designation.
- 3. Review of Minutes from May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting:** Mary moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Susie Rice. All approved.
- 4. YRSC Officers for FY25:** Paul remarked that the committee has been meeting for a year now. Judy Spiller had agreed to be chair for the first year to provide continuity from the Study Committee as our new committee began its work. Joan had agreed to potentially step forward after that time. Joan has now agreed to serve as our chair, Judy agreed to serve as vice-chair, Sally as treasurer and Karen as secretary with the intention of bringing others on in incoming years.  
  
Jim made a motion to accept the slate of officers as proposed, Mary seconded. All approved.
- 5. Coordinator Contract for FY25:** Judy stated that Jenn's contract needs to be approved. The Executive Committee discussed and agreed that the contract would remain similar, with the only update being the addition of 150 more hours for the year, from 1,200 to up to 1,350.
- 6. National Park Service Update:** Jenn heard in advance from Emma that our Cooperative Agreement year 2 amendment with the Park Service will be approved soon. She also stated that Hannah Volk, who previously worked with us during her NPS fellowship is doing a second fellowship with the Park Service and has some extra time to help us with communications activities and some mapping. Welcome back Hannah.
- 7. Communications consultant recommendations:** We issued an RFP that was sent directly to 19 firms and broadcast more widely; 3 applications came in. Jenn developed scoring criteria for the review committee that conducted the initial evaluation. Met with two firms to conduct interviews, Jenn checked references. The review committee recommends hiring Fluent, a firm in Westbrook. It's a limited contract with specific deliverables: communication strategy, branding, and website updates. We want to get them on board as quickly as possible; first step is to take them out on a boat trip and then to have them meet with our entire committee at our August meeting.

Motion to enter into a contract with Fluent for \$15,000 made by Joan and seconded by Sally. All approved. Jenn will contact the two companies and work on the contract with Paul.

#### **8. Coordinator Updates**

- Jenn continues to work with Paul on executing contracts for Watershed Grant Program recipients. We have sent out work scopes to all for review at this point. All three Town of York projects are rolled into one contract. All have target start dates of July 1.
- For the salt marsh restoration project, planning is just getting started. Jenn is working with the SMARTeams organizations for additional project support and input. Sally and Judy are interested in being involved. We are planning a community marsh walk at the beginning of the project. Joan is concerned about people seeing activity in the marsh and being worried about what we're doing. She asked if someone could record the session so it's available for outreach. Hannah might be able to.
- Jenn asked which committee members would be interested in attending the PWSRs Gathering in northwestern Vermont Oct 21-23 (Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers). About 6 or 7 people noted potential interest. It starts with a half day on Monday, full day Tuesday and half day Wednesday. Reimbursement available for mileage and lodging. Next meeting we will discuss logistics.

**9. Possible media event for Watershed Grants projects.** Jenn asked the group for input on the event: (1) media coverage, (2) photos, (3) do we want to make it more of a networking event, (4) when do we want to do a press release? We need a plan. The Outreach Subcommittee will discuss at its next meeting.

**10. Annual Report to boards:** Jenn will put together a 1-2 page document for committee members to present to town boards/councils for Sept./Oct. or include in meeting packets. Jim has a standing offer of boat trips for appropriate town officials, boards, etc. to introduce folks to our work.

**11. River Access Ad Hoc Committee:** Beth reported that there was a site tour based on the engineering study town did a few years ago. They continue to explore accessibility and parking issues and are trying to consider all factors including potential for increased use by commercial entities and town visitors. They also are looking at access and parking at other river sites including Scotland Bridge. Jim asked about walking across to the water, parking on the opposite side of Rte. 1 is dangerous. The dock will be for nonmotorized boats only and will not accommodate power boats.

**12. Public Comment:** Deane spoke of the stabilization plan for the McIntire Garrison before opening to the public. He offered a tour in Sept/Oct.

Mary made a motion, seconded by Jim, to adjourn the meeting at 7:05. All approved.

Submitted by Karen Arsenault, Secretary