

York River Stewardship Committee

Minutes for the October 28, 2025 Meeting

Voting members present: Karen Arsenault, Beth Cromwell, Karl Honkonen, Joan LeBlanc (Chair), David Marshall, Mary Marshall, Susie Rice, Jim Smith

Non-voting members present: Philip Brekke (Alt), Deane Rykerson (Alt), Jenn Hunter (Coordinator)

Guests: Clayton Smith, Bill Goodwin

1. **Welcome:** Joan opened the meeting at 5:35 and welcomed guests. She announced that Pete Murray from York Parks and Rec, who was scheduled to join this evening, is switching to our December meeting.
2. **Review of Minutes of September meeting:** Mary made a motion to approve the minutes, Susie seconded, all approved.
3. **FY26 Budget & Quarterly Financial Report:** Sally put together the budget and quarterly financial report that was included in our meeting materials. Jenn explained each budget column and how the numbers were arrived at. There were no questions on the budget report.

Joan reported that we are operating with a cautionary approach, trying to be careful with our spending based on current uncertainties with future appropriations, so that our money can be carried forward for next year's expenses if needed. Our current cooperative agreement ends in April 2028 and cannot be extended beyond then.

4. **Executive Committee/Administrative Updates:** Joan announced that December will be Paul's last meeting and that Jake Aman will be Paul's replacement for Wells Reserve award management and committee involvement. He has already started to attend Executive Committee meetings. November 7th is Paul's retirement party at the Wells Reserve. She reminded the group that there wouldn't be a meeting in November. Our next meeting will be December 16th.
5. **Project Updates:** Jenn shared some slides and reported that the 2024 Watershed Grants Program projects have been completed with the exception of the Save Kittery Waters project, which was extended through March with a no cost extension. Deanne spoke about the Save Kittery Waters walk on his property last Friday and what they discussed for water quality, septic system care, and yard maintenance. He suggested talking about these issues at a future Outreach Committee meeting. Discussion followed about microplastics and laundry, including products that capture microplastics.

Salt Marsh Restoration Project - Jenn received the draft final report from Northeast Wetland Restoration and made extensive comments and returned it to Geoff to finalize soon. She mentioned her presentation at the YLT annual meeting and the project info sheet developed by YLT. The final report will go onto the website and in the newsletter. The project team is working on outreach communications. MCHT will be leading the next steps. Sally is assisting with permitting. Our group will remain involved in the project, with possible roles with monitoring, outreach, and perhaps helping facilitate restoration of other salt marsh areas in the watershed.

Jenn reviewed the status of the six new Watershed Grants Program projects and highlighted the Blue Ocean Society project that is underway. They already had a program at York Middle School, and Jenn connected them to York and Rice libraries, York Parks and Rec, York Land Trust, and York Harbor Board for watershed coordination for additional education programs and clean ups.

6. **Outreach Activities:** Jenn reported that she issued the newsletter in September and October. She can track use with MailChimp and on average 55-60% get opened out of the approximately 570 sent each month. Please encourage others to sign up. Outreach Committee met for the first time in October after a summer break. Blue Ocean joined the meeting and it was very productive to learn more about their programs and areas for collaboration. Parks and Rec and York Conservation Commission will attend the November meeting to discuss their project. Boat tour materials are being formatted over the winter. Next annual report will be due to the towns for reporting after the first of the year. We need to determine whether we should “table” at spring elections, along with the other events we have planned. Historically we haven’t done that. We need a calendar of events so that we can determine where we want to participate.
7. **River Access Ad Hoc Committee Update:** There were two meetings in October, one was a Selectboard meeting when the plan was presented to the members for a vote on moving forward with permitting, which will be ready in time for the 2026 election. The Board voted 4-1 in favor. Concerns around parking and project cost were voiced. Jenn suggested that the River Access Committee should hold a public meeting before May to share information with townspeople.
8. **Public Comments:** Bill Goodwin thanked Jenn for organizing the salt marsh walk for him and others to participate in.

Philip suggested developing some branded merchandise, similar to what York Land Trust has done.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55

Submitted by,
Karen Arsenault, Secretary

Approved: 12/16/25