Minutes, Brewster Ponds Coalition, November 6, 2014

Board Members Present: Karen Malkus-Benjamin, Rick Kuzman, Tony Ortiz, Gwen Pelletier, Konrad Schultz, Tom Vautin, Dawn Walnut. ( An attempt to connect Konrad by Skype failed so we connected by telephone)

Dawn Walnut, in absence of VP Jon Keith and no elected president yet, opened the meeting

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Minutes for the October 21, 2014, were approved unanimously

Discussions and actions by the Board included:

* Election of Board President. After a brief discussion about responsibilities of the position, commitment required, and representation of the organization, the board unanimously elected Karen Malkus-Benjamin as president.
* Approved unanimously a Conflict of Interest Policy that had been sent to Board members ahead of time by Gwen. A suggested addition to the introductory line that had been recommended by John Keith by email was accepted. Motion by Karen, second by Konrad.The approved policy is attached .
* Reviewed the draft of the Articles of Organization. Voted unanimously to approve Gwen’s submitting. to the Commonwealth of MA, Secretary of State. Motion by Tom, second by Rick.
* Discussed current 501 c 3 status, filing with Federal IRS for tax exempt status, and access to current funds. At this time, Brewster Conservation Trust has set up a special Ponds Coalition account and is accepting donations on behalf of Brewster Ponds Coalition. Tony Ortiz, our treasurer, works with the treasurer of BCT to make deposits and will, as necessary, access the funds through the BPC treasurer for payments. Donations are tax exempt through the BCT. Tony will work with the BCT treasurer to be sure that donors to the BPC get a letter for their tax deductible status. Gwen pointed out that BPC cannot file for Federal 501 c 3 status until Articles of Organization have been filed with Massachusetts and been approved. Tax exempt status is not available until Federal 501 c 3 approval.
* Discussion of proposed Fertilizer By-Law on the Warrant for Special Town Meeting on November 17, 2014. After a substantive discussion, the consensus of the Board was to take no public position on the proposed by-law. We support the proposal because it gives the town credits for “nitrogen removal” in the process of waste water management, because we recognize that fertilizer is bad for the ponds, and because this creates a local by-law that can be amended. Without a local by-law, the fertilizer use issue would controlled by state regulations. However, the board believes that education about the issue is paramount and that it would be better if the education had come before creation of a by-law. The board also expressed concern about implementation of the by-law and the difficulty of enforcing it. There was general agreement by Board members that we would prefer to create educational programs and positive reinforcements, which stimulate action/change by Brewster’s citizens to improve water quality, rather than having the BPC champion new regulations as its first act.
* Development of an “open actions/items” list. Rick had suggested to Gwen that such a list might be helpful and she had developed one prior to this meeting. Tony also provided the form he had created of an ACTION PLAN. After reviewing both, the board determined that the ACTION PLAN document would be useful and appropriate for developing a strategic plan and that an “on going” list of “open actions/items” would be useful on a monthly basis. Gwen volunteered that she should be able to keep such a document “refreshed” each month and will do so, along with the minutes on a monthly basis.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

* EVENTS AND EDUCATION---Dawn and Karen
  + Workshop Planning
    - For January—“What is and isn’t allowed around ponds” in co-operations with Town Planner Sue Leven. During the discussion of these plans, the Board supported the approach from a “Ponds 101” point of view. Topics might include: what does “impaired mean”, what causes it, what can we do to help make it better; history of ponds in Brewster. There was consensus that the approach should be positive, not with a focus on laws and regulations and what cannot be done.

Dawn and Karen will plan for a Saturday, near the end of January. Possible locations are the Library or the Museum of Natural History. Tom offered to check with Museum of Natural History.

* + - Future topics and possible timing:
      * Invasive and nuisance plants, in the spring with possible DNR consultant, a hands-on workshop.
      * Storm Water Run-off. Prior to Annual Town Meeting in May. There may be a warrant article addressing the issue.
      * Emergent contaminants, pharmaceuticals, personal products. In the summer.
    - Possible speakers

The board discussed speakers and whether it will be necessary to pay some of them. The thoughts were first to attempt to recruit people who would be willing to donate their time. However, there was recognition there may be topics and people for whom we would need to pay a fee. Also, the board “brainstormed” possible speakers. The list includes: Seth Wilkinson, Sue Phelan, Robert Finch, the Brewster Historical Society, the Nature Conservancy.

* COMMUNICATIONS---Konrad
  + Website: He is still testing the website. Board consensus is that it is looking good. Konrad thanked Board members for their feedback. He indicates that, although it is a lot of work, he is enjoying the challenge and the opportunity to learn---more and more about ponds, but also the technical aspects of developing a website. He is developing a new page, “Beneath the Surface” and a section about pond degradation. Rick indicated that he has talked with two website developers about assistance but had no positive response yet.
    - Prior to the meeting, Konrad had sent Board members a link to a program and website from Minnesota, RESTORE YOUR SHORE, He indicated that there are videos that will be appropriate for posting or linking to our website. Board members thought we should also give more thought to how we can use more information and ideas from RESTORE YOUR SHORE.
    - The Board concluded, after a brief discussion, that the Website should include a list of Board Members and officers and the organizations email address. One person, would manage the email address and send contacts/questions to the appropriate Board or committee member. We concluded not to post the names of all the Coalition members.
    - It was concluded that it would be a good idea, when we have them, to post the names of Pond Associations and Neighborhood Associations abutting ponds, along with a picture of the pond and a link to websites or contact information for individual ponds
  + Newsletter, press releases. He reported that he currently has two committee members, Sue Spence and Bernie Whitaker, who bring excellent experience with media. He would like to be able to give them some information to work with and to begin working on a newsletter. He is still researching a platform for a newsletter. The Board thought that it would be good if we could get something out soon, with a list of Board members and a summary of what we are planning.
    - Tom Vautin reported that he works with publication of the “BREWSTER FLATS” electronic newsletter and would like to include an article/notice of the Ponds Coalition in the next newsletter, being developed now. It was concluded that he could provide a description of the Ponds Coalition and a membership form , inviting people to join.
* Konrad reported that he was having conversations with Sue Leven, Town Planner about the possibility of the Ponds Coalition taking over the BREWSTER PONDS page.
* MEMBERSHIP (No Board liaison or chair at this point)
* Tony reported that the database he has created shows that we have 65 members. He said that Nancy (his wife) couldn’t be here tonight but that she and B Goddard had volunteered to be on a membership committee. Nancy did a search of the data base to determine if people had volunteered for committees. Konrad had contacted people who indicated an interest in communications.
* During a discussion of how to recruit members and to involve them in committee work, we decided that a good approach for now would be to reach out to existing pond and neighborhood associations. Both Tom Vautin and Rick Kuzman said they would work with Nancy and B. Goddard to help identify associations and find a contact person. Tony will help set up a data base of the associations.
* FINANCE

Tony reported that we have contributions/memberships totaling $2061.00, representing 65 members. He noted that there had been 45 checks, some representing two memberships in a family.

Rick asked that at a future meeting we discuss and make a policy about who will have authority to write checks and about Directors and Officers Liability Insurance.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be Thursday, December 4. The Board decided to change future meetings to the first Thursday, instead of first Tuesday. That will allow us to use the larger of the two downstairs meeting rooms in the library. Gwen said she would check with library staff about the problems with skype to see if it will likely be an on-going problem.

Submitted by,

Gwen Pelletier, Clerk