

Minutes, Brewster Ponds Coalition, January 8, 2015

Board Members Present: Karen Malkus-Benjamin, John Keith, Rick Kuzman, Tony Ortiz, Gwen Pelletier, Konrad Schultz (by Skype), Tom Vautin, Dawn Walnut. Member attending: Nancy Ortiz. Guests attending: Peter Johnson, Hal Minis from the Brewster Conservation Trust.

President Karen Malkus-Benjamin opened the meeting with congratulations to Konrad, Susan Spencer and Bernie Whitaker for the successful publication of the first BPC electronic newsletter. Feedback and responses have been very positive.

PRESENTATION BY BREWSTER CONSERVATION TRUST

- Hal Minis and Peter Johnson attended the meeting to request support for a presentation on January 14 to the Finance Committee providing the Fin Com with information to support the continued purchase of open space and conservation land. Members of the Fin Com and citizens at the Fall Town Meeting expressed negative concerns about the continued purchase of land by the Town for open space and conservation, taking it off the tax rolls.

Points covered during the presentation by Peter and Hal covered the following:

- Conservation land provides watershed protection for Town wells, salt water embayments and ponds.
- Salt water embayments and ponds are already impaired and need protection.
- Town well fields, although protected, will be threatened as properties near the well fields are developed.
- Studies show that the cost for development of land is higher for municipalities than the cost of preserving land for open space. A Cape wide study completed in 2001 by the Association to Preserve Cape Cod showed that the cost for Brewster of development of property as residential is \$1.34 for every tax dollar the Town receives; the cost for open space is only \$.31 per tax dollar received. Averages from similar studies around the country are similar.
- As other towns on the Lower Cape face millions of dollar costs for sewage treatment plants, Brewster is in the unique position of avoiding those costs at the moment because of the amount of open space. As “build out” continues, it is important for Brewster to continue to add to protected lands.
- There is a need to educate the public about the value of open space to all of us for protection of our ponds, well fields and embayments.

Our Board voted unanimously to support the presentation at the Fin Com on January 14. Karen will attend the meeting, representing BPC. John Keith will draft a letter for presentation by Karen to the Fin Com, sending it in advance to all Board members for review.

Other Board members indicated they would attend the meeting if possible.

- Hal Minis asked the BPC board to also consider ways the BCT and BPC might work together relative to drainage from BCT owned lands into ponds. Horsley and Witten is working with BCT to develop solutions to the problem. Our Board agreed to work with BCT, recognizing an opportunity for maximum exposure and the educational value of our working together and with individual pond organizations. BCT will be back in touch.

MONTHLY REPORTS

- CLERK—Gwen
 - Karen and Board members congratulated Gwen on receipt of notice from the IRS that we have been approved for 501 c 3 status.
 - Minutes for the December 4, 2014, were approved unanimously
 - Gwen presented a list to the Board of reporting and filing requirements for both Massachusetts and Federal IRS
 - ❖ MA. Annual report due November 15 each year to Secretary of the Commonwealth
 - ❖ FEDERAL IRS. Annual report. Form 990 each year by May 15.
 - ❖ MA. File for Certificate of Solicitation if expect to raise less than \$5,000 per year. There is a \$100 fee for filing. We can file when reach that threshold. Board agreed unanimously to wait to submit this filing when we reach that threshold.
 - ❖ MA. Register with Department of Revenue in order to obtain Form ST that will allow BPC to make tax exempt purchases. Board approved Gwen’s completing the filing for this.
 - ❖ FEDERAL. Apply for non-profit bulk mail postal permit. Board approved Gwen’s filing for this.
- TREASURER ---Tony
 - Tony presented Income Statement, Reconciliation Report, and Balance Sheet for the period ending 12/31/2014, showing :
 - ❖ Total income of \$2,391.00,
 - ❖ Operating expenses of \$541.06
 - ❖ Balance of \$1849.94
 - ❖ Tony asked what kind of reports the Board would like to see regularly. Board members agreed on a one page monthly statement.
 - Tony informed the Board that he has opened a checking account with Cape Cod Five.
 - Tony also informed the Board that he has opened P.O. Box 459 for BPC. Tony and Rick Kuzman will have the keys. Rick offered to check the box regularly and get mail to appropriate Board member. Noting that Tony had paid the \$40 for box from his personal account, on a motion by Gwen, seconded by Tom, the Board authorized reimbursement to Tony of the \$40.00 fee.
 - Thank you letters to donors/members. Tony presented a draft of a letter that he will send to all members who made contributions. The Board approved the letter in principal. Dawn offered to work with Tony on formatting the letter, including use of our logo.
 - Tony indicated that he would file the 990E for the fiscal year ending 12/31/2014.
 - Rick suggested that we keep in mind that in future years we will need an annual audit of our funds.
- FINANCE COMMITTEE
 - Tony indicated that he will draft a proposed budget for 2015.
 - We discussed the need to focus on fund raising and development with the following issues to consider
 - ❖ Look at current list of members to recruit people for these issues
 - ❖ Fundraising and Development are really two different issues, one focused on money for activities and the other focusing on building membership of people who are interested in working to improve impaired ponds.
 - ❖ Nancy Ortiz will speak with her sister about fund raising possibilities
 - ❖ Providing a way for donations to be made on line through the website. Considerations for PayPal or Kickstarter.
 - ❖ When we write thank you letters to people who join or send donations, we need to develop a process/system so that all letters go with a return envelope
 - ❖ We should be recruiting membership from existing pond groups.
 - ❖ We reached no conclusions on these issues.

- MEMBERSHIP ---Tony and Rick

Discussion about membership development flowed from the Finance Committee discussion. The following points were part of the discussion:

- We need a Board member as liaison to this committee
- We need this committee to become active to help us grow
- For now, Tony is managing the database and Rick is involved with the process and has agreed to help with recruiting.
- Konrad reminded the Board that Ryan Burch from DNR had provided us with a database, containing 443 parcels, of pond front property owners. He encouraged us to take advantage of that list and begin reaching out to those folks now that we are gearing up our efforts to increase our membership.
- We need to be able to coordinate and take advantage of folks who are offering specific skills, for example the pair of “birders” who have offered to be helpful however possible.
- Tony indicated that in the database there were three people who had indicated an interest in fundraising and/or membership development: Barbara Godard, Ed Swiniarski, and Steven McKenna. Rick offered to contact these three.

- COMMUNICATIONS---Konrad

- Konrad submitted a written report highlighting activities over the past month and idea/thoughts for the future.
- The Website and January Newsletter have been successfully launched.
- On a motion by Gwen, seconded by John, the Board voted unanimously to authorize Konrad to set up a PayPal account on the website.
- Work has begun on a spring newsletter edition.
- We have had very good press coverage in local newspapers, on line editions, and radio stations.
- A BPC Twitter account has been established and is being managed by Sue Spencer.
- Konrad pointed out that we should be sure that we are all “speaking with the same voice” when we talk about BPC’s reason for being, that we have a core message. Board members agreed and that it needs to be more than a “sound bite”. Konrad offered to develop a draft of talking points of less than one page.
- The Town has approved videotaping of BPC workshops and broadcast them on the Brewster Public Access TV channel.
- Facebook Page. In Konrad’s discussions with Sue Leven about the possibility of BPC taking over the Brewster Ponds Facebook Page created by the Town, Sue has indicated that she wants to maintain the page under the Town’s management. During a brief discussion, Board members agreed not to pursue this request. On a motion by Gwen, seconded by Tom, the Board voted unanimously for Konrad to set up a Facebook Page under our name, Brewster Ponds Coalition.
- Konrad reported that BPC had received a letter from Paul Gasek informing BPC of a group opposing installation of solar panels on undeveloped Town owned land and suggesting that BPC might join in the opposition in a public way. Board consensus is that this is not an issue around protection of ponds and, therefore, not an issue for BPC to address.

- EVENTS AND EDUCATION---Dawn and Karen

Karen and Dawn submitted a written report detailing contacts and plans for workshops. Board discussion around the efforts and plans included the following:

- Efforts to recruit panel members have been mixed with availability of Steve Hurley from State DNR available only during the week.
- Significant consideration of whether to schedule some meetings with speakers for week nights and other workshops for Saturday.
- Concern that workshops in the past by Town and our own organizational meeting were on Saturdays.

- Consensus that we would like to keep workshops on Saturday and request from Board to Karen and Dawn to schedule on Saturday in late March for “History of Ponds” program. Left final decision on actual date and location to be set by Karen and Dawn based on availability of speakers and obtaining a location.
- Brief discussion of items that could provide incentive for attendees---soil testing, milkweed seed. Consensus that it is a good idea, but no decision to authorize expenditures at this time.
- April Workshop topic “Ecological Landscaping—Greenscaping”. Tentative date of Saturday, April 25. Concern re conflict with “Brewster Clean-up day” on Saturday around Earth Day and “Brewster in Bloom” weekend following that. Also need to avoid school vacation week, Easter weekend, and tax filing deadline. Date to be determined after reviewing all of these.
- Consensus that Brewster Pond Coalition should have a team to participate in Brewster Clean-up Day.
- Invasive Species re Pond Weeds being planned for June. Date to be determined.
- ADDITIONAL TOPICS DISCUSSED
 - Review of “Open Actions/Items”
 - ❖ Still need to identify person for 9th Board position still vacant
 - ❖ Identifying pond and neighborhood associations abutting ponds. Tom continues to work on this, a challenge because there is no such list anywhere so efforts are by contacts around ponds at this point. John will work with Tom, especially as he begins to prepare outreach to Pond Associations/Groups for summer meetings.
 - ❖ RESTORE YOUR SHORE. Konrad has had conversations with people in Minnesota. To create a similar program for the Cape will require support at local, county, and state level. Considerations include
 - Someone to take leadership
 - Involvement of Conservation Commission
 - Training volunteers to work with/teach homeowners
 - Possible involvement of APCC, AmeriCorps, Conservation groups.
 - 208 Wastewater Management Plan. Period for comments has passed. We will pay attention to the issue as discussions/plans proceed. There is a “Coastal Water Quality” workshop in May. Karen will send Board members the dates and information.
 - Issues for Spring Town Meeting. We want to be informed in advance of issues that are related to pond protection. There may be a proposal for a by-law relating to storm water run-off. We would like to invite Planner Sue Leven to the February Board meeting to provide us with information. Konrad will be in touch with her for that request and to see if he can get copies of the proposed by-law emailed to us.
 - Mill Ponds remediation plan. Karen has reviewed the study and commented that it is well done; there will be ways we can help with those plans in the future.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 5, 2015 at 6:00 PM

Submitted by,

Gwen Pelletier, Clerk