

MWA April Meeting

4:30 p.m. Wednesday April 7 , 2021

President Dave Converse opened the meeting at 4:30 a.m. Present: Officers- Jennifer Hopkins (treasurer), Board members – Doug Coutts, Tom Latta, Heather Murphy, Hillary Potter, and Beth Torpey. Members: Valerie Dillon, Mary Pat Goulding, Patrick Hurley. (We met via ZOOM.)

Secretary's Report: Tom made the motion to accept the minutes. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: We seem to be doing OK. We have two new members-Dave's son and wife joined. We need to send out reminders regarding membership. The report was accepted.

Grant Status Update:

Prouty Beach: We are waiting for everything to start blooming. The city will start putting in the bike path. We need to recreate the buffer zone after the path is put in.

Regional Aquatic Nuisance Control: No news, but we should hear soon.

Proposed WUV Grant: MWA would like to apply for Project Development Grant of around \$8,000 to promote basin projects. Patrick shared a map with 300 potential wetlands restoration locations, the goal is to develop 5 potential projects. About \$2500 would be applied to coordinating with the towns Glover and Barton regarding stormwater projects identified in the TBP. The grant is due tomorrow. Heather made the motion to move forward with the grant and Tom seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Riparian grant: We were awarded a \$50,000 grant which will support Patrick part-time. There is funding for computer and software licenses and for office space. The grant was approved by the Fish and Wildlife Dept and is funded by the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. MWA needs to officially approve acceptance of this grant. Patrick will be paid 30 dollars an hour before taxes as a part time employee. The grant provides a fringe rate of about 15%. Northwoods is doing a similar project on the Barton River for Pete Emerson, this grant is modeled after that one. Beth and Mary Pat congratulated Patrick on the contract. Heather wanted to know how the partnership is going with Northwoods.

Jennifer made the motion to accept the contract. Beth seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Tactical Basin Work Plan (WUV grant): Patrick has been updating the plan and coordinating with all the partners. He has an interim report to share with Jennifer. The grant ends in July.

We are waiting for an implementation funding cycle for the Marina and Turnout grants.

Committee Reports & Updates

Aquatic species: Tom mentioned permits for the proposed milfoil control projects at Whipple Point and the Newport Marina have been sent out and we are waiting for the results.

Retreat Strategic Plan: Jennifer and Mary Pat met yesterday. We are losing membership because people don't know what we do. Mary Pat mentioned that we need to sell ourselves. Dave mentioned reviewing our mission statement. Are we a watershed association or are we a lake association? In the past we identified ourselves as a watershed association. Can we put together a symposium for our annual meeting with some experts? Our biggest problem was getting more members and getting them to understand the goals of a watershed association. We don't do a good job of selling what we do and why. We have a good strategic plan, but we are missing a step. Three possible committees: membership, community outreach and water quality. How do we get someone to lead the committees that are that big? Part of the message is that we are not just Memphremagog.

Both of the stormwater projects need funding. The city wants to do the marina project. It would be a good project to do first. We are at 100% design. We can't hire a director until we can tell them what to do.

Doug mentioned that he gets daily announcements from MCI and Dump. MCI has a massive membership drive going on. They are focusing on the water quality, which is an issue that galvanizes folks. MCM is pursuing the maritime center. MWA needs to reach out to the young folks to teach them about the watershed.

Jennifer mentioned that we are not selling ourselves. We need to do something like MCI is doing. We only got one response when we sent out letters to all the slip owners in the marina. Beth mentioned that we don't have the PR edge. Are there grants out there to promote PR? Can we be trained to use social media?

Patrick agreed with Beth. Beth responded that Northwoods struggled with PR as well. Beth mentioned they have a large paid staff, but they still have problems raising funds. Jennifer mentioned we had \$20,000 in funds, but we aren't ready to hire someone. Beth mentioned it would be nice to have someone on the board with our expertise.

Beth agreed with what Patrick said in that we don't want to pigeon ourselves into a hole. Jennifer said we need to have someone to coordinate ourselves. Patrick said he can provide a job description.

Patrick mentioned that a director doesn't need to be burdened with all the details. Heather mentioned you need a good supervisor if you want to hire an ECO AmeriCorp person, because they need training.

Mary Pat asked what are our next steps? Dave mentioned we could have Patrick provide a job description. We also need someone to help market us. Beth asked if we can use High Meadows funds to hire a PR consultant.

We need someone to do press releases. Hillary mentioned we could highlight certain issues in the hiring process. Marketing skills are huge at this point. Beth mentioned that Northwoods had a problem when they hired someone with no technical background.

Dave asked what is our next move? Mary Pat said we could start looking for someone who had media expertise.

Hillary mentioned when she did the census some people were not happy with MWA. She wished she had a list of things we had done. Patrick mentioned story maps as a marketing godsend. Beth agreed that there are some great story maps and art that goes along with it. Hillary suggested we hire someone to do a story map.

Dave mentioned we are butting heads with DUMP. Hillary thinks we should partner with DUMP. Hillary doesn't know why we are digging our heels against them. Dave said we both want the same thing. Hillary doesn't think we are backing our goals with science. Jennifer has a problem that there is a distortion in information coming from DUMP. Hillary mentioned again that we should have a meeting with DUMP. Mary Pat simply wanted to share that the board met and decided the lake is not in crisis. Doug said we are the odd man out. He said we need to sit around the table. We all need to be on the same side. He feels the issue is really heating up especially on the Canadian side. We have to be the voice of reason and compromise.

Hillary thinks the state should be looking for another landfill site. Hillary feels we should unite with DUMP to not have leachate processed here. Jennifer said our focus should be where the trash is going to be put 10 years from now. Vermont needs to be looking for another site. Hillary said the main push of DUMP is to not put leachate in the lake. Hillary thinks we should extend an invitation to meet.

Mary Pat is concerned we have a lot going on, but she didn't want our main goal to be getting rid of the dump. Doug thinks DUMP will want us to sign that leachate will never be put into the lake again. Maybe we should vote to meet with DUMP. Jennifer made the motion that our president invite DUMP to meet. Tom mentioned that we should meet right away. Are we prepared to sign off on "no more leachate ever"?

Hillary thought Ben could be there and be the voice or reason. Beth thought someone from solid waste could be there. Doug thought we should start with a few folks first. Mary Pat asked if he had a chance to meet with Mr. Fortin. Jennifer will send the conservation information to Dave.

Youth Discovery: We are moving forward. Newport City and Newport Town and St. Paul's will be coming. Stan and Mary Pat will be meeting soon. Thanks was given to Valerie for her input.

Rubenstein proposal: They have requested \$5000 to personalize for Lake Memphremagog and print the booklet. Heather and Hillary feel we could possibly do our own booklet. Valerie mentioned there is a lot more to the booklet. Doug thought we could take the booklet and tweak it. Doug said you would have to start from scratch. Jennifer suggested she contact Rubenstein to find out what we are really getting with a \$5000 purchase.

Interview: Mary Pat mentioned VPR wants an interview this week. The reporter wants to know why we do not support the Lake in Crisis designation initiative of DUMP. Hillary mentioned that we were not opposed to DUMP going after this designation. It was decided to wait for the meeting with DUMP before doing an interview. (Please note the Executive Committee approved doing the interview prior to meeting with DUMP.)

Partnership Updates: We have agreed to assist the Conservation District by providing \$75 towards upgrading the kiosk signage at the head of the bike path at Eagle Point.

Ducks Unlimited: Mary Pat wrote a letter to Patrick Raney that there is still a place for MWA in the project. Patrick wrote back they were still waiting for permits and we still are in the running in the long run.

MCI: Fun and games continue. We discussed the topic earlier.

MCMaritime: They are leasing the snack bar and ticket booth and are putting out a newsletter. Doug spoke of the Memphremagog Maritime Education Center. MCM is applying for a \$300,000 grant. The grant is a federal grant and is really complicated. Dave is negotiating the rental of the Gateway Building. He would like to see MWA very much involved. Doug said MCM is on track. The City Manager & Mayor are in favor of the proposal. Doug spoke of a previous visioning exercise which had an education center being a key outcome feature. The grant decision is expected in October and would be for three years, a waiver foregoing the matching fund requirement has been submitted.

Boat Parade: Hillary was waiting for a date. There will be two Boston whalers. Can we meet on 17 April, Sat at 9:00 am at the Gateway outside. Perhaps 10 July for the parade. OK, tentative.

VIP Patrollers & Cyanobacteria Lay Monitors: We need someone to oversee the VIP program. There are two spots for the lay monitoring program-one being in South Bay, which is hard to get covered. Heather thinks it's critical to get the data from South Bay. Cyanobacteria monitoring is a once a week commitment and requires training. MWA has been the liaison for both programs. We should continue the programs. Jennifer wondered if we could write down what needs to be done and then enlist someone. Valerie said she would coordinate with Hillary.

Other: Doug mentioned a Geotourism report that was done in the past. Tom Barry wants to know how we are proceeding.

Newsletter: Hillary needs others to write articles.

Scholarships: The applications went out. We got 4 back.

The meeting adjourned about 7:10.