

# Memphremagog Watershed Association (MWA) Annual Meeting

August 13, 2024

5:30–7:30 p.m. aboard the *Newport Belle* vessel

docked at the Eastside Marina Newport, VT.

**Attendance:** President, Tom Latta; Vice President, Marnie MacKenzie; Treasurer, Jennifer Hopkins; Secretary, Mary Pat Goulding; Board Members: Karen Hruby, Beth Torpey; David Converse, Immediate Past President; MWA Members: Murial Brown, Stan and Jane Chop, Doug Coutts, Carter Finegan, Charles Goulding, Mercedes Petite, Jerry Stokes, MWA Staff; Gabryel Gianoni, Patrick Hurley, and Kendall Lambert; Also attendance: Ed Barber of the *Newport Daily Express* and John Aldridge of MemSEC.

## **The meeting was called to order 5:57**

**President's Report:** President, Tom Latta welcomed everyone. Mr. Latta reported that 2024 has been a very active and productive year for MWA. The following are MWA's highlights of the year:

In addition to Mr. Hurley and Ms. Gianoni the project team has added Emily Symes as a project coordinator. The Project team has been doing incredible work with Riparian restoration, Lake Wise evaluations, Lake Watershed Action Plans for lakes in the Memphremagog Watershed.

MWA will be launching a 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth Discovery Program (YDP) on The Northern Star vessel this fall. This program is a complement to the YDP held at Prouty Beach each spring for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. There will be four schools participating in this program for two days on the boat. These programs are important to raise the awareness of our local youth to the benefits of a healthy watershed.

For the past four years MWA has been doing hand removal of Phragmites along the Prouty Beach shoreline. Progress has been made to slow the spread of this invasive species, and more work is planned.

The MWA has been offering scholarships to local high school graduates since 2012. A scholarship committee consisting of Don Hendrich, Lynn Jenness, and Sara McKenney have been evaluating applications from secondary schools in the Watershed and recommending recipients. Recipients need to be planning careers in science. MWA has given \$28,000 in scholarships. In 2024 MWA provided four scholarships of \$500 each. The MWA scholarship committee of Don, Lynn and Sara have resigned and the new scholarship committee beginning in 2024 will be Mariam Tatum, retired physician, John Holcomb, retired physician, and Elijah Appleton, teacher North Country High School.

Mr. Latta introduced Kendall Lambert who has been hired as MWA's Administrative Specialist.

Mr. Latta praised and reported on the Aquatic Invasive Species Program spearheaded by Ms. Hopkins. In addition to the Greeter Program at the Gateway Center there is now a Greeter Station operating at Strawberry Acres. This station is staffed 12 hours per day, seven days per week. Unfortunately, efforts to place a decontamination unit at Strawberry Acres has been stalled by the State of Vermont since the proposed unit is being used at another location. Mr. Latta also reported that Ms. Torpey is spearheading

some invasive species removal in South Bay. DASH (diver assisted suction harvesting) removal will be taking place at the Newport Marina and at South Bay in the next week or two. Mr. Latta explained that these efforts are important to improving the quality of Lake Memphremagog and other Lakes in the Watershed. As a Vector Lake boats leaving Memphremagog without proper decontamination can carry invasive species to other lakes. Mr. Latta explained how DASH works as well as Benthic barriers, which are also used to stop the growth of invasive species. Previously Benthic barriers have been used at the Gateway, but they have unintended consequences such as tearing and getting caught in propellers.

**Secretary's Report:** Approval of August 10, 2023, Annual Meeting Minutes. Ms. Goulding asked for additions or corrections. Hearing none Ms. MacKenzie moved to accept the minutes as written. Ms. Torpey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**Treasurer's Report:** Ms. Hopkins reviewed the Profit and Loss report for 2024 as of July 31, 2024. Due to the efforts of MWA's three employees and Mr. Hurley's skill in obtaining and maintaining grant funding enables MWA to cover salaries and some operating expenses. Ms. Hopkins explained that MWA is doing well financially. She indicated that the negative balance as of July 31, 2024, is due to reimbursables that have yet to be billed. The year ending 2023 showed approximately a \$25,000 income. There were no questions. Mr. Torpey moved to accept the Treasurers report. Ms. Hruby seconded. Motion carried.

**Nominating Committee Report:** The Nominating Committee proposed slate is as follows:

Proposed for two-year term ending 2026 – Stan Chop

Proposed for three-year term ending in 2027 –Michael Croteaux, Jennifer Hopkins, and Beth Torpey

Continuing Board Member:

Ending in 2026 – Farley Brown, Mary Pat Goulding, and Karen Hruby

Ending in 2026 – Tom Latta, and Marnie MacKenzie

Honorary member – Heather Murphy

Continuing Environmental Affiliates – Ben Copans, Basin Planner, VT DEC; Peter Lapine, MCI representative and Ariane Orjikh, MCI representative.

Ms. Petite moved to accept the proposed Nominating Committee slate by acclamation. Mr. Goulding seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**Project Manager's Report:** Mr. Hurley and Ms. Gianoni provided an overview of MWA projects. The entire presentation can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/1I152NJfHQ8>

MWA currently is supporting three project employees. During this field season the employees are spread out across the Watershed assessing water quality, choosing projects to mitigate stormwater runoff, coordinating with subcontractors and reaching out to private landowners. MWA has received 20 grants totaling approximately \$1.5 million. The current and proposed projects reviewed during the presentation include:

- A stormwater diversion project in Newport City
- Shadow Lake two restoration projects
- Valley Brook, Morgan – beaver analogs to prevent erosion; replacement of four culverts and plantings to prevent stormwater runoff
- Mad Brook and Bald Mountain Brook, Westmore – decommissioning of forest roads
- Stabilize a forest gully on Crawford Road, Newport City
- Restoration of flood plain on Palin Farm Road
- Continuation of phragmites removal at Prouty Beach shoreline. Mechanical and spot spraying will be included this season.
- Lake Watershed Action Plans (LWAP) have been completed for Willoughby, the Averills, Echo, and Seymour lakes. Mr. Coutts asked if Derby Pond would be considered for a LWAP. Mr. Hurley said that is a possibility.
- Albany culvert cage protectors to prevent the beavers clogging. This project is one of MWA's projects in partnership with NorthWood Stewardship.
- VT Fish and Wildlife has acquired five properties to be conserved for public use on the Clyde, Johns and Barton rivers. These acquisitions were supported by MWA.

Mr. Hurley invited the group to participate a River Cleanup event on the Clyde, September 14, 10 am –1 pm.

Finally, Mr. Hurley explained MWA focuses on the Watershed in addition to Lake Memphremagog. The rivers are conveyors of sediment and pollution; and Lake Memphremagog manifests symptoms of these added nutrients; so, we work upstream.

**Other Business:** None was proposed.

**Adjourn:** Ms. Torpey moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:38