

Cranberry Bog Working Group
Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2021
Meeting via Zoom

Amended and approved 3.15.2021

Recorded by Susan Provenzano. Formatted and submitted by Melinda Lindquist

Members Present: Melinda Lindquist, Alex Parra, Susan Provenzano, Luke Ascollilo, Helen Young, Ken Belitz
Members Absent: None
Cons Com Admin: Sylvia Willard
Public: David Jiang, Tom Brownrigg, Iva Mooney

Meeting began at 7:13 pm

Chair Ken Belitz began the meeting with roll call and read the Governor's open meeting Covid order regarding public meetings conducted via Zoom.

The first item on the agenda was the approval of the meetings minutes of January 25. There was one change made at the request of Parra. Belitz moved to accept them as amended and Lindquist seconded. The minutes were approved 6:0 as follows: Lindquist: aye; Parra: aye; Provenzano: aye; Ascollilo: aye; Young: aye; Belitz: aye.

Next the Group reviewed the Request for Proposal (RFP) submitted by MariAnne DiPinto of Three Oaks Environmental. Parra said the next step was to invite her to the next meeting, so that she finds out the goals of CBWG and then can get to work on the details of the proposal. Parra suggested March 15th for the next meeting with a site visit happening beforehand. The site visit will be on Thursday March 4th. After the RFP review a discussion of the public review timeline. Lindquist felt we needed to have the plan from DiPinto before doing a public Zoom meeting. Most people she has spoken to are still disappointed about not growing cranberries, but most people are okay with this as a secondary plan. Parra asked whether there were any responses to the Mosquito article, but Willard said she didn't seem to be any public response. Parra says the plan will probably not be ready until the end of April/ beginning of May. Belitz felt that the public would be appreciative if we have a well thought out plan instead of just an update.

Lindquist then brought up the status of the Bog House. She wondered whether it was on our plate or Cons Com or Selectboard. Belitz thought it might be considered as a residence for the firefighters. Lindquist felt we should put a value on it. Right now, it is part of the maintenance plan. The apartments are not up to code, so not a big value, but it does have some value. We need someone with experience to give it a value. The question then was does this group manage the Bog House or who? Ascollilo felt the Bog House was still would be under Cons Com and part of the agreement. Willard gave some background on the Bog House. The Town acquired the Bog in late 80's. Bottom two floors of the House were part of the 20-year lease. The top two floors were already occupied so initially not part of the agreement. When the top floors became available a license agreement for the whole house. So there is a history of Cons Com having a license agreement for the Bog House with tasks as compensation for the rent. Belitz felt that DiPinto should include this in her proposal. Belitz felt that this group would end up

managing this. Parra felt that whoever does the mowing, dam maintenance, and water levels would also have the Bog House.

As part of the public input, Liang asked regarding the water rights and Belitz explained that without cranberries there would be some loss of water rights but not all. Liang asked whether other agriculture could use the water rights. Belitz explained that there were limited crops and the only farmer interested would be to grow hay. Liang asked about water intensive crops, but Belitz and Lindquist explained that there had been no other farmers interested and the cost of converting to hay was too expensive. Parra also mentioned that the agricultural use had to be for profit and be able to use all 40 acres. The Bog is also very public and a challenging bit of land to do agriculture on. Liang asked if these criteria could be met would the group here the proposal and, yes, the group would hear a presentation.

The final item discussed was the status of the Curve Street dam. It is in fair condition according to the report from Office of Dam Safety. Management has been converted to DPW from Duffy. Willard made a proposal for Cons Com and had it approved. The dam report included that the dam may not need the control structure in the future. One concerning item in the report is that the flow of water is some undermining of the dam on the Curve St side. Belitz asked Parra to mention to DiPinto about the water control structure.

Belitz asked whether there was any other discussion items and Willard brought up that Cons Com wanted the Group to decide how to handle the Water Management report. Belitz asked whether we needed legal input. Willard said the Bog is part of the open space report which says the Selectboard needs to keep water rights. Belitz asked Parra for his legal opinion. This document preserves the water rights, which is in the goals of the Selectboard. Group reviewed the previous years report and discussed how to complete this year's report since Duffy no longer was harvesting. Belitz asked what legal exposure Cons Com would have. Parra and Ascolillo said none as all the information was truthful. Just the risk that Water Management may take away the water rights. Willard filled out the form and then the Cons Com head would sign it. Most felt that the report should be sent in as water rights are important and would affect the town's wetland and might affect the new conservation plan for the future. Liang asked for clarification on Chelmsford's water plan. Belitz explained that Chelmsford had wanted to have a well field using the water for the bog but have currently backed off on that plan.

There was no other public input.

Next meeting scheduled for March 15th, 2021 at 7 pm

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm