

Cranberry Bog Working Group

Meeting Minutes

April 12, 2021 via Zoom

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Members Present: Ken Belitz, Melinda Lindquist, Alex Parra,  
Susan Provenzano, Helen Young.

Member Absent: Luke Ascollilo

Conservation Administrator: Sylvia Willard

Public: Iva Mooney, Warren Lyman, MaryAnn DiPinto, Carlisle Mosquito

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Ken Belitz initiated the meeting by doing a roll call of all members, administrators, and public. He then recited the Massachusetts governors order for conducting public meetings by Zoom. This meeting was covered by the minutes. Belitz also explained public input will be taken when the Chair asks for public input and will call on persons and each will have 3 minutes.

The first item on the agenda was approving the previous meeting minutes. There were three corrections and clarifications and then minutes were approved unanimously.

Belitz next introduced MaryAnn DiPinto and her initial report. DiPinto began by reviewing her process and the goals.

DiPinto spoke to Kubel and Stone from National Heritage. They were aware that there have been sightings of endangered species, but there is no protection around bog property. National Heritage said they would look over the plan and get back to DiPinto with some recommendations for the conservation of Blanding's Turtles.

DiPinto next wanted to review the goals and looked at what regulations would need to be met to reach/maintain those goals. Belitz asked to cover the goals first. Three main goals are: maintain open spaces, control invasive species, and maintain trails. In the document each goal had extra text and then text on how to reach those goals. Belitz briefly summarized each goal and asked if there were questions from the committee.

Young asked what adding woody debris to prevent growth would that look like? DiPinto said that woody debris would be piles of stumps or logs placed in strategic areas that wildlife could live and hide in. Willard commented that in other projects woody debris is often added to vernal pools.

Parra asked about the ecological restoration goals. He felt that eligibility criteria needed to be substantiated before going before the Conservation Commission. He wondered how will invasive plants be handled? This bog is a monoculture. The bog is unique in that it is still open and controlling the invasive plant species and encouraging other plants would create a place wildlife would enjoy. Parra commented that this area would need to be improved before presenting. He then asked about National

Heritage responding, which he felt was very doubtful, so Parra asked DiPinto to add features for Blanding's turtles and blue spotted salamander. Parra asked Willard about Duffy's concern that some of the items planned may make it hard to maintain the bog for mowing. Parra liked the framework and would like to move on to the specifics such as meeting the criteria. Ultimately the group wants a plan that will conserve the narrative of mowing and maintenance specifics. Parra likes the goals and methods, but not sure they are all possible. Need to know how often one would have to the Cons Com for approvals.

Lindquist commented that it was a good plan and she liked the structure. She too questioned the addition of woody debris and wondered how the beavers would play into this plan.

Belitz also liked the format and queried what do we need to do next? DiPinto would like to go back to the bog to see the Bog and see what needs to be done. Would like to meet with Duffy and would be flexible with her time. She will be around until June. Belitz liked the adaptive management idea and wondered what the state would think about it. DiPinto felt that if goals are clearly stated and have methods to meet them and alternatives then the state should approve. DiPinto felt she knows the regulations well and has done restorations and now needs someone with experience and expertise to get the goals done. Since there would not be any dredging the state should be ok with the plan. DiPinto recommended Beaver Solutions and the use of beaver deceivers to control the beavers in the area, but admitted that sometimes the deceivers can't be used. Beaver solutions would build and maintain controls. DiPinto felt the bog would need to find a balance with the beavers and muskrats.

Willard reported that she had updated Gary Boge from DEP on the bog status what was happening, so he is aware of upcoming NOI. Willard commented that a Beaver Solutions employee was out a few years ago and the bog may not have enough depth for a deceiver. Law do not allow lodges to be moved and now holes are showing up on Cranberry Bog Dam #1. There is now also an issue with Chelmsford blocking water more water, so the current water level now low. Willard stated that Wood Duck boxes can be put up just have to confer with the Wood Duck person.

Lyman commented that DER usually takes a backhoe and digs, but the town doesn't want that. He wondered if a farmer could plow to overturn the bog mat. Warren mentioned that the CBAC report had information about the bog content from cores taken a few years ago. DiPinto said simple plowing will not move enough earth to mix. Lyman encouraged DiPinto to review the report for any helpful information. Parra commented that DiPinto should to talk with Duffy regarding breaking up of the cranberry mat. Willard mentioned that need to be wary of the former irrigation system, which is a mix of plastic and metal. DiPinto asked about Bog Dam #1 location and Willard clarified the location and that it was part of Dam Safety. Mooney commented that the pump had been removed from the pump house. Belitz commented that irrigation system removal might work to break up mat, but added that town residents prefer to see the cranberry plants. DiPinto mentioned that it would be possible to preserve a section with the cranberries. Parra mentioned that the places with maximum disturbance seem to get a lot of invasive plants. DiPinto would talk with Alex Hackman about avoiding invasive plants. DiPinto stated her plan going forward will be to:

- Ask about plowing effects,
- Beaver control especially at Cranberry Bog Dam #1.
- Find out more about irrigation.

- Learn more about the flumes and boards and how they are manipulated.

Lyman mentioned that the CBAC report of 2017 might provide information such as core samples and elevations that were taken done by Stamsky & McNary. Willard and Lyman will look for the report and get the information to DiPinto.

Mooney asked that the plan and cost would be? DiPinto said first she would determine when and how often the mowing and cutting would need to be done. Then would have to file an NOI for ecological restoration with Cons Com to do each of these. From there an order of conditions would be created which sets the rules. Two weeks before a public notice goes out. Schedule a public hearing and commission and public can ask questions. May continue if not all questions met. Public meeting is scheduled before the order of conditions is met. After the plan is approved and then the plan will go out to bid.

To qualify, the proposal must meet certain conditions, which was sent out in a document earlier today. DiPinto asked whether if the group wanted to review all the steps. Belitz felt we were too early in the process. DiPinto summarized the immediate needs of goals, location map, flooding impacts, controlling invasive plants, National Heritage restrictions. While reviewing the forms, Willard asked about project type as the form lists six items and Willard doesn't see where our bog fits. Eventually, Willard found WPD Form 3 Appendix A where a checklist had a limited project definition which had another option that might work for our bog. DiPinto agreed.

The final topic of the meeting was planning the various future meetings. Originally April 26<sup>th</sup> was supposed to be a public meeting, but Belitz felt not ready. DiPinto needs at least 3 weeks to gather the next round of information which brought the group into the beginning of May. May 10<sup>th</sup> would be the next meeting where DiPinto would have more details and then present to the public. Lindquist mentioned that the Cons Com should have its own presentation before the public meeting. Beltiz felt a quick brief to Cons Com on May 13<sup>th</sup> and then a public meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Summary of future meetings:

May 10 – CBWG meeting where DiPinto presents more plan details

May 13 – CBWG members brief Cons Com on this plan

May 24 - if all goes well then public meeting

May 27 – Next Cons Com meeting where they can comment on public meeting

April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting canceled.

Information for the public meeting will be made available to the public if in outline form before the meeting if it happens. Information for the May 10<sup>th</sup> may be put on web sites.

Meeting adjourned by Young, Parra Seconded and adjourned unanimously at 8:34 pm

Minutes approved at the May 10, 2021 meeting and submitted by Susan Provenzano