

Meeting Minutes
Weir River Estuary Park Committee
Tuesday March 15, 2022, 4:30pm
Remote - Call in Meeting

This is a Tri-Town Committee, appointed by the Boards of Selectmen for Cohasset, Hingham and Hull, not a non-profit Watershed Association. Formed in 2002 approved in 2005, the goals of the WREP Committee are; to **Preserve** the rare and idyllic setting, **Expand** public access and low impact recreational opportunities, **Protect** the historical and geological integrity, **Protect** and restore natural resources and biological diversity, **Conserve** a contiguous corridor of open space and healthy habitats, **Develop** educational opportunities and foster stewardship, **Establish** Community support for land and estuarine habitat protection and maintain working relationships with Town Selectmen, Conservation Commissions, Planning Boards and Advisory, Open Space and Harbor Development committees, local Land Trusts, Land preservation organizations, and related regional state and federal agencies.

1. **Call to Order** by chair Sharon Allen (Hin), Tom Bell (Coh), Judeth Van Hamm (Hul), Scott Plympton (Hul), Mark Bounagurio (Hin) present. Dick Avery (Coh), Patti Coyle (Hin) were absent. Meeting called to order with quorum at 4:40.
2. **Minutes** from the meeting 01/11/22 were approved for posting.
3. **Opening:** Sharon informs members of Remote Meeting Law details.
 - a. Mark introduces our guest participant, Emily Sullivan, the Hingham Conservation Manger. Emily has been in this role for 6 months. The tri-town conservation agents have recently met and have been focused on fixing the tidal gate at Straits Pond.
4. **Updates by Town:**
 - Tri-Town:** Tom Bell reports:
 - a. The tidal gate at Straits Pond has been repaired and now automated and functioning.
 - b. Straits Pond Watershed Association (SPWA) is working with a Woods Hole group and other organizations to prepare a preliminary sediment survey to better understand baseline conditions of the pond so that recommendations can be made for improved tidal flows.
 - c. There is a technical advisory commission which meets as needed and consists of representatives of the EPA, NOAA, SESIM, DCR, Mass Bay Estuary Program, SPWA, and other public and private organizations.
 - i. Funding for flow improvements will require letters of support.
 - d. During the recent SPWA annual meeting, Hull Town Manager, Phil Lemnios and Conservation head, Chris Kraforst delivered a must-see video presentation of the issues with the Pond. This can be found on SPWA website.
 - Cohasset:** Tom Bell: reports the following:
 - i. Tom to invite the Cohasset Conservation Agent, Charlotte (?) to meet with us.
 - ii. There are 24 new homes up for development in the Rattlesnake Run section along Straits Pond.

- iii. The developing group had received approval for a subdivision in 1999, but never filed paperwork. They must now start the permitting process from scratch. They are suing the Town of Cohasset to move forward.
- iv. Tom discussed wetlands protections that may impact development:
 - a) There are many vernal pools to be recognized and certified. This provides a 100' barrier of non-disturbance. The ACEC boundaries and Rattlesnake Run as a dedicated perennial stream provides a 200' buffer.
 - b) A vernal pool is a closed depression and contains no predatory fish, has the presence of fairy shrimp, and a lots of wood frogs.

Hingham: Mark Bounagurio:

- a. Mark discussed plans for upcoming Estuary Cleanup Day and offered suggestions for getting better publicity.
 - i. We need to be asking for more volunteer assistance. Coordination with other groups would be helpful (NSRWA, CZM, and Wild Cohasset).
 - ii. Ask the towns for use of their portable electronic signs for public notice.
- b. In addition to trash removal, consideration needs to be given to removal of invasive plants such as bittersweet and garlic mustard seed.

Hull:

- a. Scott provided an overview of the proposed Walking Path to the Island in Straits Pond via Eastman Road project. Expectations are for this project to be voted on at Town Meeting in May.
 - a. Tom voiced concerns about the impact of wildlife habitation disruption. This also includes concerns about public access. We are strongly against dogs being allowed in such a sensitive spot. There is a need for good communications.
- b. Judeth discusses the need for open space along George Washington Blvd. It is a danger to pedestrians. The highway needs bike lanes and walking lanes.
 - a. Judeth asks for a future discussion on Solar Personal Rapid Transportation
 - b. She notes that she is running for a membership on the Hull Light Board and is promoting clean energy

5. Tri Town-Annual Report:

- a. Sharon reports that we have completed the Annual Report and it has been sent to the appropriate town administrations to be posted.

6. Estuary Clean Up Day

- a. Date is Saturday, April 23 from 9:00 to 12:00 with a gathering and picnic hosted by the SPWA.
- b. DPW coordination is underway

7. New Information

a. **South Shore Eco-Fest:**

- i. New. In Cohasset, scheduled April 29
- ii. Sarah Burgess is the coordinator. We (WREP) should consider a table.

8. Next Meeting:

- a. Motion to hold our next meeting on Tuesday, May 10, 2022 at 4:30. This will be a Zoom call.
Approved.
- b. **Meeting Adjourns:** 5:58PM