

Minutes of the
Chilmark Pond Association Annual Meeting (Zoom meeting)
August 15, 2021

The meeting was called to order by President Salzman at 5 p.m. She started the meeting by thanking Tim Dewitt for all his help with the Zoom technology; he is clearly the “Zoom master”.

President’s Report

Ms. Salzman started with positive news by stating that the pond was in good health this summer with no toxic cyanobacteria blooms. The cool weather is one positive for overall health of the pond because high temperature contributes to the excess growth of cyanobacteria. There is no anticipated opening of the cut this summer.

Additional good news is that the CPA is fiscally sound. She acknowledged the excellent work that Ms. Mottau has done, especially with the new online billing system.

Ms. Salzman said she hoped more people would get involved with the CPA and encouraged members to contact her if they have an interest in serving in some way.

Minutes

Ms. Salzman moved on to the next item which was the approval of the minutes of the last Annual Meeting. Mr. Meinelt made the motion and it was seconded by Ms. Schaefer. The minutes were approved as submitted by Ms. Coe, CPA clerk.

Commissioners’ Report:

Ms. Cottle reported on the current pond situation. She stated it was at 36 inches but that the water had been up and down. It had lost three inches but then regained some depth with the recent rain. She added that the pond needed to rise another six inches before there could be any talk of opening the pond. Clearly there is a need for rain and a good amount is needed.

Treasurer’s Report

Ms. Mottau, Treasurer, reported that 117 tax bills were sent, to date 81 have paid and 36 are outstanding. She added that the new software has certainly streamlined the billing process. Many people paid by check. Current revenue of \$13,050.50 (Last year revenue was \$21,000 with more having paid.)

Ms. Salzman reminded the members that the CPA had authorized a donation of \$75,000 to the Chilmark Pond Foundation to help with their ecological restoration plans. \$48,577 of those funds remain.

This year in the fall (2021) the CPA plans to use some of these funds to pay the Marine Biological Lab (MBL) in Woods Hole to determine the sources of the nitrogen in Chilmark Pond (i.e geese, farm animals or septic). Once we know the sources and their relative contributions, we can develop projects to reduce the excess nitrogen.

Ms. Reddington, Executive Director of the Great Pond Foundation, was asked what that work might cost and she replied that it depends on how intense the study is. Testing for nitrogen loading vary from year to year. It could cost between \$20,000 to \$40,000.

Election of Officers:

Ms. Salzman said the Executive Committee has recommended a slate of officers for 2022, but she opened it up to any nominations from the floor. There were none.

The slate proposed:

Amelia Salzman, President

Andria Jason, Vice President

Susan Mottau, Treasurer

Kathryn Coe, Clerk

Martha Cottle , Commissioner

Walter Meinelt, Commissioner

Stephen Lewenberg, Commissioner

Motion was made to accept the slate proposed by the Executive Committee; the motion was seconded and approved.

Ms. Salzman thanked everyone for their continued support.

Authorizations:

Ms. Salzman also called for a motion to approve a \$25,000 expenditure by the Executive Committee in case of an emergency. She reminded everyone that this authority is renewed annually. (Steve Cohen, a former CPA treasurer, pointed out that the last time they borrowed was back in the 1970's when they needed money to clear Doctor's Creek.)

Motion to authorize the Executive Committee to spend up to \$25,000 in case of an emergency. Motion was made by Mr. Meinelt and seconded by Ms. Schaefer. Motion was approved.

BiodiversityWorks:

Ms. Salzman introduced the next item of business which is to enter into a formal agreement with BiodiversityWorks to help make sure we comply with the rules relating to protected birds when opening the pond during nesting season. They have been instrumental in guiding us to get the appropriate approval from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

In the past there had not been a formal agreement, but the Executive Committee feels now that given all the work BWorks has done around the time that the cuts are made, we should have a contract with them. BWorks is authorized to do this work by the state of Massachusetts and they submit data on endangered birds annually.

Ms. Salzman felt that the Executive Committee should seek permission to formalize the agreement and pay BiodiversityWorks for their work on an ongoing annual basis.

Motion was made to authorize the Executive Committee to establish a year to year contract with BiodiversityWorks to cost between \$1,600 and \$2,500. The motion passed.

Ms. Salzman then said that was the end of the Business portion of the agenda and asked if there was any other business. No one had any additional business.

At this point Ms. Salzman adjourned the annual business meeting and invited a number of guests to make presentations.

Presentations:

Biodiversity Works

Ms. Olsen gave a bird update for Chilmark Pond. She added that final reports which summarize 15 years of their oversight will be forthcoming with an invoice for the year's work.

She reported that this season there was one pair of piping plovers but no chicks. There had been one nest on the west side of the cut, but crows got into the nest; the plovers then moved further west, but this nest was destroyed by an overwash. There were no oystercatchers and no least terns. Dune grass growing on the east side of the cut is making nesting difficult.

She said Chilmark Pond's best year was 2020 and the worst has been 2021. The overwash from storms has been tough and also the overabundance of predators has grown because of humans leaving food around and having open compost heaps, for example, which attract skunks and crows.

There were some oystercatchers at Lucy Vincent (2) with four to five eggs.

She added that the endangered birds in the State and island-wide are doing better.

The Chilmark Pond Foundation

Speaking on behalf of the Foundation was Mr. Allan Holt, chair, Ms.Emily Reddington the Executive Director of The Great Pond Foundation reporting on the scientific work and Ms. Salzman as an ex officio board member.

Mr. Holt began by expressing how grateful the Foundation is for the collaboration with the Chilmark Pond Association. He added that Ms. Salzman has been invaluable in the plan to move the Foundation forward to restore Chilmark Pond to ecological health. He mentioned that starting with dredging to improve pond water circulation is really the low hanging fruit. The really hard part is the science which will determine additional projects. Ms. Reddington will be key here as the Chilmark Pond Foundation has partnered with the Great Pond Foundation (GPF) so we won't need to reinvent the wheel about how to restore the three parts of Chilmark Pond.

Mr. Holt stated how impressed the Foundation is with the speed and efficiency of the Departments of Health for Edgartown, West Tisbury and Chilmark in responding to the cyanobacteria pilot program MVCyano.

Re: dredging, Mr. Holt said that the permit involves many different local, state and federal governmental agencies, but they have begun the application process. In the meantime they will launch a fundraising effort to help raise the estimated one million dollars needed for the project.

Mr. Holt then turned over the presentation to Ms. Reddington who talked about the science involved.

Ms. Reddington said that Mr. Holt has been addressing the short and long term goals to restore the full health of Chilmark Pond.

She displayed a number of visuals which showed current Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) sampling sites and mentioned weekly testing at the sites on Chilmark Pond which they test spring through the fall. The Foundation's projects include Eco monitoring (sampling and data analysis), Cyanobacteria monitoring, and dredging, which includes key management components designed to increase the success of flushing and circulation.

She discussed a number of areas of study in addition to the nitrogen analysis work with the Marine Biological Lab (MBL) described earlier in the meeting:

1. Water quality testing plus data on elevations and opening dynamics
2. Biodiversity: study organisms large and small from crabs to cyanobacteria to diatoms
3. Watershed: look at nutrient loading on Chilmark Pond
4. Cyanobacteria: take science and risk assessment data and make it user-friendly for the public
5. Algae blooms: these are caused by heat and excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) which promote plant growth.

Ms. Reddington reported that currently there is no bloom present in the Upper Pond and the Lower Pond was downgraded. Good news for the year (2021)

Key questions to remember for the future:

What will we learn?

What other additional projects may emerge?

A few questions were asked about the Upper Pond behind Lucy Vincent.

Ms. Reddington said there isn't enough staff to do weekly testing in the Upper Pond and so there isn't enough data.

When asked about the timing of dredging, Ms. Reddington said the permitting process can take a few years. Next year is probably not an option given all the agencies involved. Mr. Holt echoed the same view and added that the Foundation still has fundraising to do. He commented that they are looking at least a million dollars and then there are questions about acquiring or renting a dredge.

Additional questions regarding dredging were asked. Ms. Reddington replied the dredging season is usually Nov. to March because they need depth in the pond and to avoid disturbing protected birds. Discussion included the possibility of a shared use of a dredge. The dredging usually takes about a week. An additional issue revolves around what to do with the dredged material pulled from the pond. Various ideas are being discussed around the island on how to deal with these materials and the possibility of the nitrogen rich dredged material having some composting benefit for some local organizations or farms.

Ms. Reddington was guardedly optimistic that the winter of 2022-23 might be a possibility.

Edgartown has dredged annually for ten years but flushing capacity is key. The annual cost is probably around \$100,000. In addition their permit is worded to give them authority to "maintain" for ten years. She added that better weather would reduce Edgartown's cost.

Comments were also made that the dredging could cool the pond and thus reduce the possibility of the cyanobacteria blooms. But as for how that would influence when to open the cut, Ms. Salzman reiterated that a strong hydrostatic head which requires considerable water depth is

needed to have a successful flushing of the pond. You probably don't want to open in the summer because the shallower pond gets too hot and then you have blooms.

Some other questions were asked about widgeon grass; Ms. Reddington said they need to look at underwater vegetation in general but that widgeon grass can be good because it sequesters carbon.

Another question was asked about geese and swans adding to the nitrogen loading; she said data is pending on that and referenced the work that the CPA plans to fund the Marine Biological Lab to identify the sources of nitrogen in the pond.

On the issue of fertilizer, Mr. Hans Solmssen of Abel's Hill Association is trying to educate its members to not use any kind of fertilizer. He pointed out that even so called organic fertilizers are ultimately harmful to the ponds.

Mr. Holt added that what will be needed is for Chilmark town government to have input and respond on the fertilizer question.

Martha's Vineyard Commission.(MVC)

Mr. Alan Turner, executive director, noted that MVC has been testing in some areas for 24 months using the MEP stations and they have water testing results online.

He mentioned that Bill Wilcox and Sheri Caseau have been testing four times a year in island ponds. Clearly phosphorous and nitrogen are a problem.

What are we going to do to clean up the ponds? It is a problem all over the Cape and Islands. The Cape has been able to install sewers, but that isn't the answer on parts of MV.

There will need to be innovative solutions and water quality regulations.

An example of an innovative solution is in Tisbury where they installed a "permeable barrier" or wall of vegetable oil to block nitrogen in the groundwater from reaching the pond. Other innovative technologies can remove nitrogen from septic wastewater .

Mr. Turner mentioned the use of a dredge and cited use on Nantucket with dredging.

Another area of interest is the creation of the Cape and Island Water Trust Fund. The government has passed a 2.75% tax on short term rentals for waste water projects. He also said that the government has allocated \$20,000,000 million in funding, but towns need to have a Water Quality Management Plan, called a 208 plan. Chilmark and other up-island towns are working on Water Quality plans for their ponds which they hope to have ready in late fall.

Mr. Turner also said that climate change has different effects on different ponds, especially on the shallow ponds where temperature and rainfall directly affect the ponds. Ultimately, you will need five or six solutions depending on the kind of pond.

Mr. Turner noted that Ms. Liz Durkee is the Climate Change Coordinator for the MVC and that the MVC supports transparency on what research and data exists for the ponds. Mr. Turner emphasized that in order to do outreach to the public about the health of the ponds, transparency and communications are key.

Ms. Salzman says the Chilmark Pond Association wants to work hand in glove with the MVC. She sees the MVC as an essential partner in this effort and she stressed the need to get better at coordination with MVC and improve our efficiency.

Mr. Turner added that MVC drone technology has added a spectrometer to help gather additional data.

Ms. Salzman also encouraged people to check the Chilmark Pond Foundation website for MVCyano link that has a map of the Pond that includes weekly risk level information.

There being no additional business, Ms. Salzman adjourned the meeting at 6:14.