

Meeting Minutes Thursday, May 7th, 2020: Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Cynthia Scott, Paul Stanley, John Little, Wendy Scott, Tom Bryce, Brian Jerose, Ellen Fox, Ranier Lucas, and Lindsey Wight

- 1) Meeting was called to order at **7:00pm with a check-in about wellbeing and what signs of spring folks are seeing – birds, flowers, lambs, hops, daffodils, cows out on grass, early corn planting; enjoying more time in the woods than usual.**
- 2) Review of April meeting minutes – **WS motions; CS seconds; all in favor.**
- 3) Administrative business

Project Manager – **welcome to Ellen Fox, our new Project Manager. We are excited to have her join us and look forward to integrating her skills and ideas. Thanks so much to the Board for your support and assistance during the hiring process.**

Quarterly Report – **Cynthia went over our quarterly report. We have a new type of account with TD Bank, which will accrue more interest for us. Again talked about organization expenses and potential issues with audits – Lindsey does keep receipts for the things she expenses for.**

- 4) Outreach/Projects

Tree plantings: **We began planting in Sheldon this week, as did the folks from Redstart. Easy to socially distance and plant safely. Still plenty to do; will likely wrap into next week. Happily, the digging is easy and the weather has been nice. Two funding sources: DEC Woody Buffer Block Grant, and Pur Projet. Pur Projet requires 75% success rate, so we will have some of their funds earmarked for follow-up visits.**

Education/Outreach: **Ranier is working to create online content, including getting a video of a Bugworks session. The Edible Rain Garden will most likely be planted at the Jay/Westfield school; just trying to confirm a location and then we will move forward with that project – the outreach portion of this project will be delayed; hopefully we'll be able to do school programs in the fall.**

The Aquatic Invasives grant from LCBP will involve mapping Japanese knotweed in several municipalities, and then doing a demonstration of control efforts. One of these is using metal mesh (stainless steel?) to do manual, but hands-off control. We will hopefully identify a public spot where this demonstration can provide education, as well.

Other comments/ideas? **Share with Lindsey/Ellen/Ranier.**

- 5) Grants/projects update

Lindsey provided a prepared document about the potential budget changes due to COVID-19:

The Good: Our planting funds (DEC and Pur Projet) for this year are secured. Our LCBP grants (Aquatic Invasives – mapping Japanese knotweed, Ed and Outreach (Edible Rain Garden), and Organizational Support (collaborating with other organizations, and a new computer) are secured. We have funds for Bugworks through W&S, so we just need to figure out how to apply those in this new reality. We are wrapping up our first round of VAAFMs funds that have supported Jenevra and Ranier. We have the High Meadows Fund grant that will help with watershed resiliency in our headwaters towns. We also received an Emergency Grant from LCBP to help cover Project Manager time, and to create online content.

The Bad: The Woody Buffer Block Grant for next year is uncertain/unlikely. The LaRosa Program has been cancelled, so we are losing some organizational support grant funds, as well as the ability to have samples analyzed.

The Uncertain: We have two project development grants (through WUV and DEC) that are in questions, simply due to timelines and social distancing requirements.

Overview: So far, it seems like at worst, we will be down ~\$42,000 from our expected budget.

Unfortunate, but not insurmountable. Major losses are the tree planting funds for next year, and the ECO

AmeriCorp funds. We are also uncertain about what funding may be like from the State next year.

UPDATE The day after this meeting, Lindsey learned that we **WILL** receive the tree planting funds for next year. So our major loss is what covers ECO AmeriCorps time, and water sampling.

Water sampling – we plan to continue sampling with our turbidity meter at least at a few spots – continuity is important. We do also have some old kits that we could try to refurbish. We won't be able to use these to compare across years, but if we have specific concerns, it's better than not sampling at all. Forestry Suppliers has a Hach kit that tests Phosphorus/Phosphate for \$140; warrants looking into.

Dean Wright is interested in having some sampling done – could do with kits, since not comparing from years – above and below where the cows have access. NRCS may riprap some of the bad spots there?

6) Events

AmeriCorps River Clean-up – if allowed, they are interested in still coming up and cleaning a chunk of river (probably in late June). Will wait to hear more from them, then arrange our role and the location.

Annual River Clean-Up – planned for Westfield on July 18th. Still do with a small group? Let's discuss at the June meeting.

BGABGA – Not sure if Summer Sessions will happen. If we can do a music event, we'll need to fundraise. Paul says that Franklin County Dairy Promotion would sponsor.

7) Next meeting – June 4, 2020 – MRBA office?

July 2, 2020 – Annual BBQ?

August 6, 2020 – MRBA office

8) Public Comments and well-wishes: Need to improve back roads and culverts – less gravel during storm events. Push towns to improve culvert sizes and ditches.

9) Adjourn: JL motions; BJ seconds. Meeting adjourned at 8:20.