

REPRESENTATIVE POLICY BOARD

LAND USE COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 9, 2022

MEETING TRANSCRIPT

Peter:

October 9th at 5:30 and this meeting's being recorded. First order of business is the safety moment. I was enjoying reading this myself. I like the last one the best, "Create a stress-free zone in your home where you can relax and de-stress in peace." That should be a priority for all of you. Read it all because there's some good info on there. Our next, number two, approval of the minutes. Can I have a motion?

Brian:

So moved.

Peter:

Did you get the second, I didn't.

Jennifer:

No I didn't. Who seconded?

Jamie:

Jamie.

Jennifer:

Thank you.

Peter:

All in favor?

All:

Aye.

Peter:

Okay, so carried. I need to have a motion here to vary the agenda. Item number three has to be by Steve Vitko there, he was supposed to give us our safe yield model from the reservoir. I'm sure you all got that information, but I was contacted and I believe it has to go to management to go through a different process. So I need a motion to vary the agenda and we're going to pass that on to a future meeting.

Jamie:

I'll make that motion.

Brian:

Second.

Peter:

All in favor?

All:

Aye.

Peter:

Opposed?

Mark:

Nay.

Peter:

All right. Well the ayes have it. Thanks, Mark. Okay, John Triana, updates please.

John:

All right. Good evening everyone. For October at the end of the month, we are at 73% full for our surface water supplies. Last year we were at 87 and the long term average is 66. The month of October we got about two and a half inches of rain, which is about an inch or so, a little bit more than an inch below the long term average. Last year was a very wet October, so going through the dry summer this year we are still at a deficit about three inches for the fiscal year. Land we need for the water we use program, and we have talked to and corresponded with property owners in Cheshire of 50 acres and three acres in Prospect of 40 acres, North Brantford, Beech Street and Poms Lane Properties. I contacted Martha about the status of the title report. Apparently the town clerk at North Brantford has limited hours where you have to make an appointment for it and then you only have an hour or so to work in there and it's really restrictive. So things are going very slow for the title report coming out of that.

Rental houses Skiff Street, we had new testing done at the house to develop an updated estimate of the demolition costs. Forestry update, nothing in bold, so nothing has changed for any of the timber sales, but Casey has been hard at work at other things and continued working on the US Forest Service landscape scale restoration grant request, coordinated with collaborators and Josh and I have helped a lot, Rochelle's helped a lot. And the deadline, I believe is tomorrow to get all the stuff in. Also, so we monitored the Nathan's Pond slash wall harvest for deer getting inside the slash wall. It looks like they've gotten in at least once, if not multiple times. And so Josh had a drone fly over that to see if there was any more evidence, see if we could see any deer using the remote sensing equipment.

And he also communicated the evidence of the deer to the other partners who have worked with us on the slash wall harvest and are doing the long-term research on it. We met with a Scenic Drive Guilford property owner about who has access over a right of way. This is over on the far western side of the Genesee property. We met with the... Or this is actually, Casey met with the owner of Extreme Landscaping at the Gillard Tree Farm. Last year we donated an overgrown tree for the Pardee Seawall Park down in the annex part of New Haven. And we're looking to do the same thing this year as well.

They'll probably come and pick it up the first week of December. Worked with operations to install culvert and proposed intermittent water course crossing. This is for a future timber sale that we're planning on in the [inaudible 00:05:23] area.

And he hosted a tour at the Seymour slash wall for DEEP Forestry and Nature Conservancy personnel. In Recreation, we had the North Brantford Women's Club Walkathon this year, which took a break during the COVID period. Had a good turnout, 170 participants, no problems there. A bird walk with the New Haven Bird Club over multiple West River Lakes had 23 people. Boat rentals ended for the year at Lake Saltonstall all the rental boats went back to storage at Gaillard and the docks were removed from the Lake. Recreation staff have attended one event with the water wagon, that was down in Milford. Everything went well and Jeff and I attended a meeting about water wagon responsibilities. Approximately 1300 fingerling sized walleye were stocked at Lake Saltonstall also in the month of October.

Brian:

Question John, is that... John?

John:

Go ahead.

Brian:

Is that the first time we've stocked walleye or is walleye something we've been standardly stocking there?

John:

We've been stocking it for many years now.

Brian:

But it's been walleye for many years. That was my question.

John:

Yes. Right.

Brian:

Okay.

John:

So in consultation with DEEP Fisheries, we've talked about the management there and I can't remember how many years ago. It's probably like 20 years ago was when we first started stocking walleye and it's been very well. So we've gotten a lot of good press off of it, a lot of good word of mouth through angling communities, especially now with all the stuff online. So yeah, this is common for us. Any other questions on that?

Okay. Hearing done, we'll move on. The permit holders at the end of October, slightly under 5,000 where at the end of the last month we were slightly over 5,000. And when you look back at last year, we were still at a little bit riding more of the COVID bubble, that continues to deflate as time goes on. Special activity permits only one issued by Linda in the last month. Other items, encroachments and agreements. For the agricultural agreements, we issued a PO, excuse me, to charter rope to clear woody invasive plants from the Matthew Street field in Prospect. This is a field that we used to rent out to the town for soccer and they ended their rental of the field well over 10 years ago, maybe 15 years ago. So it got pretty overgrown with some invasives and we've beaten it back, we're going to make sure it's all perfect now.

Guilford, Saw Mill Hill Road, we executed a license agreement renewal which will allow us to allow chickens over the property line. Not such a big deal there, it's pretty simple. And trespassing, we recorded instances of trespassing in the last month. We're including tree stands, mountain bikers, anglers, graffiti, and people walking on the property without permits. Invasive plants. In the last month, Josh treated and documented invasive plants in Bethany and North Brantford. Mapped about 150 acres as such and treated just over eight acres. The deer hunt started at the end of October. By the end of the month we had five deer that were harvested, one was out of Prospect and then four were at [inaudible 00:08:47]. So far by the end of October, all those were bucks, there were no does taken yet by the end of October. I don't know if she's had any reports of does in the last week or so.

With Guilford town engineer, I responded to a question from her about the protection of our property as open space, let her know what the Department of Public Health has over us in terms of regulation. It's all very restrictive, we answered them on anything that we do on our property. Tennessee Gas Company, forwarded information from them to other RDB staff about work that they're doing on their gas line easement that crosses our properties in Hamden, Bethany and Woodridge. West Rock Ridge access, we talked to the trail manager there about blocking off the road that goes up to the ridge there. But the place where the rocks are are not on our property, it's all on state property so I know he's talked to the local ranger, local supervisor who's down at Sleeping Giant. She handles West Rock as well and I believe they've already moved the rocks to get it back in where they were to block access.

The fire behind 256 Amity Road in Bethany. We checked on the status of this ground fire behind Capazo Landscaping. Last I heard it was still smoldering in the middle of October and they continue to put water on it. We've gone back there to look at, there's no issues and no problems, no threats to the public water supply at this point. It's just water that they're putting on it.

Mark:

John?

John:

Yes, go ahead.

Mark:

It's out.

John:

Yep.

Mark:

As I heard it, yeah, I talked to somebody in the fire department, it's out.

John:

Okay.

Mark:

But they're going to be responsible to restoring the land to original, whatever that means.

John:

Yep. Right. Original condition.

Mark:

Yeah, that's right.

John:

Thank you. Josh performed a drone flight at West River Water Treatment Plant to document the DAF project construction. For easements, I filed a water main easement up in Cheshire for property at 687 South Main Street, that's a new development that's going in there. Bat hibernacula, we met with engineers and the risk management team to discuss the possible entrance to the Big Gulf Tunnel for a bat survey with the DEEP biologists. Haven't come to any conclusion on that, just discussions at this point.

And at Chamberlain we coordinated the moving of the posts for the bluebird boxes so there will be coincident with the piezometers that will make it safer for our crews when they mow the dam because with all the grass and the golden rod, everything grows up very high and we've hit the piezometers more than once. Having the bluebird boxes there on posts will help prevent us doing that again in the future. A few articles for you to read this month on a variety of topics and that's all I have and if anybody has any questions I'll be happy to answer them.

Brian:

John, I got two questions, this is Brian Eitzer.

John:

Go ahead.

Brian:

First question is in terms of the piezometers and the bluebird boxes. With the piezometers right next to the bluebird boxes, is there any concern that someone going out to check them on a regular basis will cause the bluebirds not to come to the boxes if there's too much disturbance?

John:

No, I check bluebird boxes myself actually in the field across from Bob Harvey's house. I check those and I check them on a biweekly basis, and that's all we do for the piezometers as well. Just people walking by, even opening them up every other week doesn't affect the birds at all. They're pretty resilient for that.

Brian:

Okay. That was the question one. Question two, when we talk about the recreation permits, I was wondering if we went back four or five years and looked at the numbers, are we still substantially higher than we were four or five years ago? Is it almost back down to where it used to be?

John:

No, we're still above where we were pre-pandemic. We are still on part of the wave that came in during the pandemic in 2020. So we have not gone down there. If you remember, I believe, I'd have to go check the numbers, but I believe that we were hovering around 4,000, right around 3,900 to 4,000. And so if you look at the report here, we had 4,900, so we're we're still like a thousand higher, but at the peak of the pandemic we were at 6,500.

Brian:

No, I understand.

John:

That shows you that the... Yep, go ahead.

Brian:

No, I understand. I was just curious if some of the people who signed up because of the pandemic will end up being long-term permit holders and keep our numbers up a little bit.

John:

Right, and that's what we hope. So we have made even more concerted effort to add more things, more events to get people out there. We've gone out and we've reblazed all but one of the recreation areas. That's on my list to do this year, big Gulf is the last one that has to be repainted. And also we've made a more concerted effort to clear the trails as well because there were some, especially at Sugar Loaf that had not been maintained for a long time. So having myself, my staff out there more often with equipment has definitely helped the matter and we're trying whatever we can do to keep the people who came to us during the pandemic, to have them stay for a longer period than just two years.

Brian:

Great, thanks.

Peter:

John, I have a question.

John:

Yeah, Peter, go ahead.

Peter:

The fire behind Capasso, how'd that start?

John:

I don't know, I never heard how it got started. I mean a lot of times... I believe it was a giant pile of wood chips and mulch and so forth and when you get into piles of organic debris like that, with the right conditions, they can ignite themselves because all the bacteria and everything cooks in the middle. And if someone all of a sudden moves it and then it gets a flush of oxygen, it can start a flame. I don't know if that's what happened-

Peter:

I thought I heard-

Mark:

Spontaneous.

Peter:

I thought I heard that it was spontaneous combustion, but I don't know that for a fact.

Mark:

Peter, you better be better. Be careful, Peter, behind your place what you're burying there.

Peter:

There's nothing there except [inaudible 00:15:39]. I got a home for you, Mark. No, and thank you. But it's kind of like when you put the hay in the hayloft, get that heat and combustion and it can take off.

John:

Yeah.

Peter:

Yeah. All right. Any more questions for John? Except for Mark. Okay. Our next item on the agenda's other land use items. I would like... Sunny, you're here with me, right?

Sunny:

Peter, yep.

Peter:

Hey, me and Sunny and management have spoken and I'm going to turn it over to Sunny in a minute. They like some ideas coming down the pike for us to think about before our next meetings that we can bring to their attention. You want to reiterate on that, Sunny?

Sunny:

Oh, sure, absolutely. Thanks for, I would say, bringing that up, Peter. I think you and I had conversed, I had sent an email as well. I think I'm just looking for ideas and special topics. I know normally I would say John, I would say cracks his head a little bit on, I would say, developing these ideas, getting the speakers in line. And I think we have, I would say, the next two or three lined up and I was wondering if I would say ideas from, I would say, the committee members to suggest what they would like to hear in the upcoming, I would say, at LUC meetings. So if you have, I would say any list, you can pass it on to me, John or Jennifer or Peter, whichever way I think if you want to kind of, I would say pass those messages on or in the next LUC meeting, you can suggest if you have anything this meeting, I would still, I have my pen, I have my paper so I can still take notes.

So either way it doesn't matter. So any ideas, any suggestions, topics that you would specifically want us to address that you would like us to hear? I would say I'll put it on the agenda then get everything I would say ready and we can schedule, I would say the speakers and things of that sort. So that is one that I had actually touched base with Peter and wanted his input as well as the committee members and perhaps [inaudible 00:17:47]. Thanks Peter.

Peter:

You're welcome, Sunny. Any questions or any that you'd like Sunny to look into now? Mark Levine please. You got to have something, Mark, come on.

Mark:

Well, I'd like to see, do something to develop a program for inner city kids to come on our land and do things, especially at Lake Maltby. Now whether that's making summer camps, summer school programs, providing bus or paying for a bus, whatever, to get these kids to see what nature's like. What some kind of guy, it's I brought this up before. The pandemic, it's kind of put a thing on this, but John can't do it all and you need to put somebody in charge to develop a program working with New Haven and West Haven and Hamden, the inner city kids to get them to see what it's like. Fishing, turtles, trees, whatever. I've spoken about this before and I think we should really look into that.

Sunny:

Definitely Mark. I think we will take it up. I think there are, I would say a few things that we do as part of, I would say our communications outreach and that's a different group that works. They do have, I would say children coming out to the Lake Whitney. There is a center that gives, I would say lessons and I would say the history of the Whitney Dam and things. But I can work with the team and I think between John and I, we can work with the team to see how we can do this as well as some of the other teams too. Like Steve Vitko's team gets involved in some of the other activities related to school. So I think we can talk to these teams to see how we can actually develop the summer program. We'll keep you posted on that for sure.

Mark:

I appreciate it. Just bring up the thing about the quote that this very... It just reminds me of this young girl who had just gone through the program and I don't know whether she was quoted or was a little

video on it, and she said it was the best day of her life. She touched a turtle, caught a fish, and she had never been in the woods before. And as what we do, we should really promote more of this.

Sunny:

Sure.

Brian:

Along those lines.

Sunny:

I'll keep you posted on the updates. Go ahead, Brian. Yep.

Brian:

Along those lines, a couple years ago during the height of COVID, we heard how our environmental educator at the water center was doing a lot of stuff through Zoom. I mean, had a presentation from her. Is she now pushing back more, getting back into the classroom and out of Zoom and getting the things going?

Sunny:

Yeah, I think that's what I'm hearing too. I'll confirm that and maybe we can actually have, I would say Lisa come out and give, I would say. And I think one of, I would say, going back to Mark's earlier point, she was the person whom I was referring to where she was reaching out to students. I know she's working with the schools for some pollinated gardens and with the other groups. So I'll certainly have Lisa come and I would say give a special topic on it to see how it's going. Update on that for sure.

Mark:

Go see where those kids are coming from and you'll know what I'm talking about.

Sunny:

Yep.

Mark:

Go see where those kids are from. And she's all by herself, she needs an assistant, we've never given this woman any kind of help. She's booked solid just about in all her programs. I'm not saying that she doesn't work hard and I understand she works very hard, but she's one person and we have to develop something. You check where those kids come that go to her programs and you tell me if that's diversified.

Jamie:

I'm not sure if she's going to be able to disclose the personal information of those kids.

Mark:

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Doesn't have to disclose them. It's Madison, Guilford, Cheshire. Those are where they're coming from. Woodbridge, Bethany, you don't have to know where kids are coming from really.

Jamie:

I was just answering your question, Mark.

Mark:

I know that, but I'm just telling you don't have to ask what nationality, just have to know where they're coming from. Just ask what school systems she deals with and you'll know. And that's all I'm going to say about it.

Peter:

All right, thank you Mark and Brian. Did someone else have a question, Jenn?

Jennifer:

Yes, I just wanted to say Lisa DiFrancesco also does a summer program with children from Common Ground High School. It's the Environmental Careers summer camp, and it's to get them interested in careers in water utilities. So just to let you know, the Watershed Fund usually grants an award every year to help her do this. So just a little FYI.

Peter:

Thank you everyone. Quite a bit of feedback.

Sunny:

Thank you for that update. Excellent, thanks.

Peter:

Yes. And Sunny, we got a little feedback. Everyone else on the committee, just think about it and bring it up randomly or reach out to us and we'll have Sunny put it on the agenda, do some homework for us. Right, Sunny?

Sunny:

Absolutely. Yeah. Perfect. Thanks, Peter.

Peter:

You're welcome. Okay, we're setting the calendar year for 2023. Everyone got the dates? Let's face it. It looks good right now, but you never know what comes down the pike. We did move one date right, Jenn, because of Passover?

Jennifer:

Yes, that's correct.

Peter:

Yeah. Okay. So do we need a motion on this or do we just let this ride?

Jennifer:

You could do a motion. You could just do a consensus, committee consensus is fine.

Peter:

Yeah. Yeah. Can I have a consensus on this?

Mark:

Looks good.

Brian:

Good.

John:

Looks good. It's all right.

Peter:

Okay. All right, there you go, Jenn. Thank you everyone. Joe-

Brian:

Just curious, how do we decide which ones are 4:30 and which ones are 5:30?

Peter:

Well, who decides that?

Jennifer:

It's always been like this since I started eight years ago and so I just kept it.

Brian:

I know it's been like that. I was just curious why some summer months are 5:30, some are 4:30 and stuff like that. I was just curious what the reasoning was.

Mark:

The reason was that those are field trips and in September and October it starts getting darker earlier. So if we went on a field trip, we just didn't want to run into darkness. If I remember correctly. If Mr. Harvey's here, is he here?

Mark:

All right, so is that correct there, Bob?

Bob:

Yes. During the winter months when we used to be meeting down at the authority, that's when the meetings would be a little later to allow people get out of work. During the summer months we tried to have them earlier because we were doing field trips or remote meetings. But it's hit and miss.

Peter:

Exactly.

Mark:

It was mainly because when we were in September and October, it was still warm enough to do field trips.

Peter:

Right.

Mark:

And we, And then we used to do the field trips on Saturday morning.

Bob:

There were times-

Mark:

Until we got lost one time.

Peter:

I got lost a couple times. Go ahead, Bob, you were saying something.

Bob:

Yeah, a long time ago there were times when the committee would meet on Saturdays so that we could do trips and not run into a problem losing daylight. It would be early morning trips.

Peter:

Well, like I said, we got a consensus-

Brian:

Okay. I was just curious about it. I'm fine with the schedule as it is.

Peter:

The November meeting we have Joe Oslander. Joe, can he hear us?

Joe:

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I sure can.

Peter:

Okay. Joe, that's your baby in November, correct?

Joe:

Yes.

Peter:

Okay. Before I move on, is there anyone else from management here that want to speak or anyone from the RWA? I thought I saw Charles. Anyone? I guess not. Our next meeting is December 14th at 5:30 and I'll bring the cookies if we're in person. How's that, Mark?

Bob:

Probably won't be in person.

Peter:

All right. I think this was a pretty good meeting for being virtual. So thank you everyone. Need a motion to adjourn.

Mark:

Second.

All right. All in favor. Goodnight everyone.