

MINUTES
APRIL 28, 2010
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
LAKE ONOTA PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED (LOPA)

The Board of Directors meeting was officially called to order at 7:17pm.

Directors Present: Bob Race, Gail Light, Dorothy Mara, Joe Cancilla, Marshall Raser, Walt Pickwell, Mark Selkowitz, Tom Dailey, Jeff Rose, Lew Cuyler, and Bob Quattrochi.

Voted: The Minutes of the January 13, 2010 and October 28, 2009 Board of Directors' meetings were unanimously approved.

Gail Light distributed the Treasurer's report and commented that the membership dues stated on the report were for the first quarter only. Dues received prior to January were included in the previous report. Membership is down slightly but contributions have increased, probably due to the Zebra Mussel (ZM) issue.

Voted: The Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

Voted: A motion to approve an expenditure of LOPA funds up to \$7,000, for the year 2010 Onota Lake season, to match the city provided funding for paid monitors when state personnel or LOPA volunteers are unavailable at the boat ramp was approved by a majority with one dissenting vote. (see Zebra Mussel Task Force Update)

Voted: A motion to build a LOPA FACEBOOK page with an initial emphasis to find volunteers for the Burbank Park cleanup effort was unanimously approved. (see Burbank Park Cleanup)

Voted: A motion to implement a multi-year dues structure was defeated in favor of coordinating it with the membership drive of 2011 and aligning the drive with LOPA's fiscal year. (see Membership)

Voted: A motion to give Gail Light the authority to roll over LOPA's CD at the shortest term and the best rate was unanimously approved.

Old Business and Committee Reports.

Water Quality and Weed Control:

Bob Race reported that the water quality as stated in the January report was unchanged. The overall quality of Onota Lake is very good. Lew Cuyler said that he'd been rowing since early April and concurred with Bob's assessment.

Lake Recreation and Water Safety.

Bob Race reported for Jack O'Brien, who was unable to attend the meeting, that the safety buoys would be installed soon. Jim McGrath said that depending on remaining monies in the city budget at the end of the fiscal year, that he would attempt to procure a new and consistent set of buoys. Bob said that until that happens, LOPA will continue to use and install the old equipment.

Citizen Education and Public Relations.

Lew Cuyler discussed at length, his efforts to persuade the mayor that more needs to be done to preserve the lake from the threat of Zebra Mussels. Lew said that Jack Shephard, from Boston, who is in charge of public access to Massachusetts Great Ponds, is unwilling or unable to deny anyone lake access even if they have an infected boat. Without a facility to clean boats or the ability to deny access to infected boats, we will lose the battle. Lew said that the mayor has been unresponsive to his letters. Bob Race thanked Lew for his letter writing efforts. Jim McGrath commented that the web site onotalake.com is alive, active, and current for any comments, issues and studies that pertain to the lake.

Fish and Wildlife.

Tom Dailey reported that there has been four stockings of brown trout this spring. Tom said that the ice fishing over the winter month was very successful for the fishermen. There were seven northern pike that had weigh in over 20 pounds, with the largest being 29 pounds. Tom also agreed that the lake looks good in terms of the weeds and that the drawdown seemed to be effective this year.

Burbank Park Master Plan.

Jim McGrath reported that there was no activity again this quarter on the plan.

Camp Stevenson and Witawentin Property update.

Bob Race reported for Dick Laureyns that there is planned development for five single family homes with access from Churchill Street to the Onota Lake shore line north of Parker Brook. Sewer and water access has been negotiated with the Blythewood Association. There is no purchase and sale agreement as yet, but there appears to be a single developer for all five parcels.

Tributary monitoring.

Jerry Krupka reported that LOPA is suspending water analysis of the tributaries for this year. The reasons include; the consistency of data, little use of the data base at this time, and the expense of the sample analysis. Bob Race commented that in lake sampling would continue. Jim McGrath commented that the city would continue with its in lake analysis for e-coli.

Zebra mussel task force update.

Bob Race said that the ZM Task Force team had developed a number of recommendations, and asked Jim McGrath to comment. Jim described the team as being made up of numerous stakeholders from various state agencies including: himself, representing Pittsfield Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces, Jack Hickey and Lee Hauge of LAPA, and Dennis Regan of the Housatonic Valley Association . Jim said the final recommendations had been presented to the public at Crosby Elementary School in early April. The recommendations were forwarded to Ian Bowles, the Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs. These would become the road map for the state's response to the ZM situation. Although there was not unanimous consensus on all the suggestions, the report was developed from thoughtful input of all the stakeholders, and represents numerous suggestions that all agreed on. The state and city have begun to implement these recommendations. Jim expressed disappointment as regards Laurel Lake except for on going monitoring. Bob Race also expressed frustration and had written both the Governor and the Secretary of Environmental Affairs to highlight the fact now that Laurel Lake has reopened and has no inspection or boat cleaning requirements, all the lakes in Western Massachusetts have a greater threat of infestation. Lew Cuyler had that letter entered into the record at the Crosby School proceedings. Mark Selkowitz was able to get copies of the letter to the Governor's aid and the Mayor. (Ed note: no response to date)

Jim McGrath reviewed LOPA's 2010 and beyond action plan which was submitted to the city last fall. LOPA hoped that the city would take a leadership position on the recommendations.

Jim discussed the city's response to each point of the plan.

1. A boat wash facility has been set up at V's car wash at 730 West Housatonic St. and will be available by May 15th to clean infected boats. The city, LOPA's Dick Laureyns and Ed Vella Jr, the car wash owner, have been instrumental in making this happen.
2. Education and Public Relations has been supported by numerous actions taken by the city including:
 - Public Service announcements with Larry Kratka on local and county radio stations.
 - A manned display table for outreach and education at the Third Thursday and Live-at-the Lake events,
 - New signage and dedicated Kiosks have been erected at both lakes' boat ramps,
 - Distribution of state brochures at marinas, fish and bait shops, sport stores, libraries etc.,
 - Printing and stocking of self certification forms at both of the city boat ramps,
 - Assistance in the development of a documentary of the ZM issue by LAPA West, and
 - Boat cleaning seminars at the local car wash station.
3. The self certification form was updated based on the recommendations of the ZM Task Team, and are available for completion and signature of boaters.

4. Although the state was unwilling to deny permits for fishing tournaments to clubs which had sponsored tournaments in infected lakes in the prior 30 days, as recommended by LOPA, the state is recommending that every fishing club has a conservation officer who will be responsible for the completion of the self certification form by each participant, on the day of the tournament. The city has been in contact with all clubs that use the lake.
5. The city has installed two signs, and a chain to alert boaters of the self certification process when ramp monitors are unavailable. The city has hired interns to staff ramps from Thursdays to Mondays and is looking for volunteers to man other times. Volunteers can call Jim McGrath with their availability.

Bob Race reported that LOPA had asked the city to provide ramp coverage for up to 84 hours per week when volunteers are unavailable, going through the end of the season. The cost of the additional manpower could be supported by exchanging the weed control budget for this year to support the ramp effort. Bob also asked the mayor about the possibility of a tax abatement, for volunteers over the age of 60, up to \$750 in property tax reductions on the basis of minimum wage per volunteer hour. In addition, Bob, suggested that LOPA share the ramp monitor costs with the city for times when volunteers and state personnel were unavailable. A motion to approve an expenditure of LOPA funds up to \$7,000 for the 2010 Onota Lake season, to match the city's funding for paid monitors when state personnel or LOPA volunteers are unavailable at the ramp, was approved by a majority vote with one dissenter. Jim McGrath agreed to take LOPA's suggestions on the weed budget, cost sharing and tax abatement to the Mayor's office for further discussion.

An emergency Action Plan was submitted to the Mayor's office by LOPA last fall. Jim McGrath discussed the city's response to this plan if ZM are discovered. Jim agreed to immediate notification of state authorities if ZM are detected, and to encourage the DCR to conduct a survey analysis as to the extent of the infestation. Jim said that state officials would be reluctant to close the lake and the Mayor would not support the idea. Jim could see some merit in eradication efforts and would entertain the use of scuba teams to remove mussel beds. The idea of an immediate six foot drawdown would not be supported if it were requested for mid-season, and still has some questions about its effectiveness.

Other issues discussed with no clear action plans included: lake closure to all if ZM are detected, deep drawdown effectiveness, the magic biological treatment (zequanox) not yet EPA approved and about three years away, access control of the lake through control of the parking lots, a fee for use structure and ramp monitoring with enforcement. Dorothy Mara emphasized that LOPA wrap its PR message around lake preservation with a theme. 'Wash your boat, save the lake' is more preferable than lake closure or fishermen vs owner issues. It was determined that much research was still needed as it relates to each of these suggestions. Jim McGrath agreed to form a team with LOPA volunteers to explore these issues and to make recommendations back to the LOPA Board of Directors. The team would start immediately. Anyone interested in joining should contact Jim at 499-9344. Jim suggested that he and LOPA representatives should meet with the Conservation Commission to discuss the feasibility of each of these ideas.

LOPA Website Update.

Jerry Krupka reported the LOPA website onotalake.com is up and running. He asked everyone to take a look at it and comment on any changes or suggestions for improvement. There is a link on the site to email Jerry with any comments.

Burbank Park Cleanup.

Marshall Raser reported that he and Jim Ditello plan a park cleanup for May 15th at 9:00am. Carr Hardware will provide supplies. Marshall put out a call for volunteers and asked Lew Cuyler to coordinate public communications.

Marshall offered to build a LOPA FACEBOOK page for the volunteer efforts. A motion to have Marshall Raser develop a LOPA FACEBOOK page, with the initial focus on obtaining volunteers, was unanimously approved.

Volunteer Hours Reporting.

Bob Race restated the need for volunteers to submit their hours through the end of June for the city to get matching funds (\$25.00 per hour) on our s319 Grant and to email the number of hours to him.

Membership.

Mark Selkowitz and Jeff Rose developed a list of Non-LOPA lake front home owners using addresses based on tax billing. To this they are adding Rowing and Sculling club members, Fishing Derby entrants and people that moor their boats at the Onota Boat Livery. A letter outlining LOPA's Mission, the benefits to lake users for joining LOPA, a reference to LOPA's website for more information, and our need for support is being sent to these people in the hope of increasing membership. Mark Selkowitz suggested that Williams College be solicited for a contribution, which he will coordinate with Tom Dailey. A motion to implement a multi-year dues structure was unanimously defeated in favor of incorporating the new structure with the Annual Membership Drive, and coordinating its timing with LOPA's fiscal year. Mark and Jeff's solicitation of new members will continue as proposed at the current (\$10.00) basic membership rate.

CD Rollover.

A motion to allow Gail Light the discretion to rollover LOPA's CD at the shortest term and best rate was unanimously approved.

LAPA-WEST Directors Meeting/Workshop.

Bob Race distributed flyers for the LAPA-WEST spring Directors workshop which is held on May 1st at the Controy Pavilion.

Next Meeting.

The group sentiment for the summer meeting was to hold it on a mid-week night instead of the Saturday morning at the Controy Pavilion. It was felt that attendance did not increase with last year's shift in schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph Cancilla
Recording Secretary

NEXT MEETING:

The next open meeting of the Board of Directors of LOPA is scheduled for Thursday, July 29, 2010 at 6:30pm at the Controy Pavilion. As always, all are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please mark your calendars.