

Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council

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Monthly Board Meeting

Aspray Boathouse, Pawtuxet Park, Warwick – June 7, 2010

Board Members Present: Bob Nero, Fritz Benz, Jack Donovan, Scott Goodinson, Rita Holahan, Jack Lancellotta, Ginny Leslie, Paul Lockett, Michael Maddalena, Brian Manning, Carl Mattson, Ed Soltys, Gary Trott

Board Members Absent: Ross Adrain, Arthur Langlais

Guests: William Patenaude, RIDEM Office of Water Resources

James Johnson, Scituate

Call to order

Chairman Bob Nero called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. A quorum was present.

Wastewater Treatment Facilities Update

Bob welcomed Bill Patenaude of DEM who provided an update on what he termed the heroic work of the wastewater treatment plant workers in Cranston, Warwick and West Warwick after the record flooding of this spring.

In Cranston, the plant was spared the disastrous flooding damage

that the plants in Warwick and West Warwick experienced; the worst damage in Cranston was to the Pontiac pumping station which was totally flooded.

In Warwick, the destruction at the plant was devastating and disheartening for the staff that had spent much time running a clean, efficient plant. The staff there was planning their restoration even as the flood was going on, by hiring contractors and ordering parts and equipment. For the first couple of weeks, a lot happened fast as the staff rushed to get the plant up and running as soon as possible. As of the date of the PRA meeting, the Warwick plant was still not up to secondary treatment, but should be soon; tertiary treatment will restart the same time as secondary.

In West Warwick, secondary treatment started again a couple of weeks ago and tertiary treatment should be running by early July. Much of the operation of the plants is with temporary electrical systems and it will be a long time before the permanent electrical systems are back. The complex computer systems that run all the equipment will all have to be replaced as well.

The pollution levels are not better than expected. The repair work will be paid for by FEMA and the Rhode Island Intermunicipal Trust. FEMA has the authority to pay to get a plant back to the standards at the time of the damage; they will pay for the very costly phosphorus removal upgrade at Warwick, since Warwick had signed a consent

agreement with DEM before the flood. EPA will also be helping out by making upgrades in Warwick to make the plant as energy-efficient as possible. The Army Corps has looked at the berm in Warwick and may recommend raising it to prevent a re-occurrence; funding for this project has not been identified. Bill noted that the Emergency Management agencies in Rhode Island do not take WWTPs into consideration when they do disaster planning.

The board members thanked Bill for his informative presentation. Fritz suggested that we have a speaker who could talk to us about river flows/water level dynamics; Bob Nero said someone from the US Geological Survey office would be good. Rita asked Bill if we could get copies of the operating reports of the three Pawtuxet River plants which the plants submit monthly to DEM.

Approval of May, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Bob said that he had reviewed Roberts Rules of Order recently and learned that the chair can accept the minutes; the board does not have to vote on them. Bob accepted the regular and special meeting minutes from May.

Roberts Rules also recommends that the board vote to accept the agenda at the beginning of each meeting.

FY 2011 Municipal Contributions

Cranston, Scituate and Warwick have paid for the current year. West

Warwick is willing to meet the new \$5,000 funding level but will not pay arrears. Coventry did not pay the current year and the PRA is not a line item in the new fiscal year budget. Scituate will be paying \$2,800 for the coming year. Chris D'Ovidio, the PRA lawyer, has discussed the issue with Warwick City Solicitor and will be contacting the solicitors of the other towns soon.

Main Stem Status Report – Paddle Event

Mike Maddalena and Paul Lockett did reconnaissance along the main stem and provided a report. There are some areas that are quite free of debris, but there are some areas with large clumps, including a shed with fences, bikes and kids toys on top. There are three dumpsters in the river, two past Elmwood Avenue and one past Jefferson Boulevard. There are new sand bars and small islands. Mike and Paul managed to cut a path through a very large obstruction downstream from Route 37. In summary, the river has some areas with huge amounts of trash and other areas that were swept clean. There is also substantial erosion under Route 95 near the billboard. Paul also reported that the water quality changed dramatically after the effluent from the Warwick treatment plant entered; there was an obvious plume of gray water.

It was agreed that clean-ups should be planned and the Great Pawtuxet Paddle should be rescheduled. Motion: On a motion by Jack Lancellotta, seconded by Fritz Benz, the board voted to reschedule the Paddle to Saturday, October 9th (Columbus Day

weekend); the three people who did not vote for the motion preferred October 16th.

James Johnson, New Associate Board Member

Bob introduced James Johnson of Scituate, a dedicated freshwater fisherman who started the Scituate Bass Anglers and has a deep interest in conservation. He will attend our meetings and events but will not vote.

Bob agreed to set up a bylaws committee to review the issue of absentee board members and other issues.

Nominating Committee

The July meeting is our annual meeting with elections. Fritz, Scott and Jack Lancellotta agreed to serve on the nominating committee.

Executive Session

Motion: On a motion by Carl Mattson, seconded by Scott Goodinson, the board voted to go into Executive session at 8:40 p.m. The session lasted until 9:07.

Clean-ups

Veterans' Square clean-up/tree removal will be held on Saturday, June 19th. We will have a truck and backhoe to pull trees out of the river. Gary Trott will put up flyers in the neighborhood to encourage volunteers. There will be a lot of branches and we will need a chipper

for them.

Howard Conservation Area clean-up will be held on Saturday, June 26th. We will focus on the canoe launch, which was underwater during the flood. Stone and mulch will be ordered.

Fletcher Avenue (Cranston) clean-up: Mike reported that Cranston Councilman Bob Pelletier has asked for a list of participants in the clean-up so he can recognize and thank them at a council meeting.

Properties

Jack Donovan reported that there will be a tax sale in Coventry for 2.35 acres including a mill in Coventry Centers.

Bob reported that the Harris mill property (f/k/a Holiday Products) adjacent to the connector piece between the Phenix/Harris and Arkwright Riverwalks has been sold in a tax sale. The PRA will get in touch with the new owners and pursue getting that connecting piece of the old railbed.

clean-ups. There is concern that this year's paddle, tentatively scheduled for June 26, may have to be postponed because of river conditions (downed trees) and water quality issues.

Adjournment

On a motion by Scott Goodinson, the board voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Leslie, Secretary